

Weekly column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
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Last week, Warwick Valley High School hosted its annual elective fair, captivating students with a diverse selection of academic pathways to explore. Offering a robust selection of electives also provides Warwick students with the opportunity to influence the direction of their education. This path includes chances to delve more deeply into specific areas of interest or learn practical skills later in life. The elective selection process instills a sense of ownership in our students, which can even help them become better decision-makers later on.

The electives fair is a dynamic event that gives students invaluable insights into course content and potential career trajectories. This is done through direct contact with teachers and students already immersed in their electives. This peer sharing aspect of the fair is critical, in that it gives younger students a relatable student's eye view of what they can expect from a course that has piqued their interest. Notably, our rising eighth graders from both Warwick Valley Middle School and Greenwood Lake Middle School participated, and had an enjoyable time seeing the exciting academic possibilities awaiting them in high school.

Students explored tables set up to explore the many electives that WVHS has to offer. These electives include veterinary sciences, engineering classes, creative endeavors like ceramics and set design, fashion design, business, computer science and robotics, art history, and even medical interventions. That's just a small sampling of the exhilarating spectrum of elective opportunities Warwick Valley students have to pursue their passions.

By offering such a broad range of elective subjects, Warwick Valley empowers students to make informed decisions about their academic journey and future aspirations. The elective fair exemplifies the school's dedication to fostering curiosity and personal development among its students. This approach ensures that each individual has the opportunity to explore and pursue their interests within a supportive learning environment.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

Park Avenue's annual One Book, One School event began on January 29th. One Book, One School is about reading to our children and connecting with our community through books. When children experience an adult reading to them, they learn to read more easily and become better readers in the process. When they experience a community sharing a story, they enjoy learning more. The book distributed this year, *Frindle* by Andrew Clements, is a fun, light-

hearted read about an irreverent boy named Nick who invents a new word that makes a big impact on his town; and the story of his sometimes contentious, but ultimately rewarding relationship with his English teacher. Along with the books they were given, courtesy of our wonderful PTA, students received a reading schedule. Digital chapter read-alouds done by our Park Ave teachers are available each night on the library media center's website put together by Mr. Spicehandler.

In partnership with their third grade buddies, kindergarteners recently learned about the Lunar New Year. Students learned about different characters before making a paper lantern decorated with a dragon. These lanterns will be used for the students' "mock" parade around the school on Friday, February 9th. Students have also read several of Grace Lin's books such as *Fortune Cookie Fortunes*, *Dim Sum for Everyone* and *Bringing in the New Year*. After reading, one of their comprehension conversations focused on comparing different cultures' new year celebrations.

Third grade kicked off February's first full week with some special guests. Members of Warwick's Historical Society came to Park Avenue to teach the students about barn raising tools and methods used when people first farmed in this area. Students could see and touch wood and tools dating back to the 1800s. Mr. Johansen described problems people faced when building barns and clearing land. He then showed the students the simple solutions used. Third graders loved this event!

Sanfordville Elementary School

Ms. Nyland's class sent letters to Punxsutawney Phil, the famous groundhog. The students wrote persuasive letters, trying to convince him to see his shadow or not. They also wrote a sentence describing what they would do if there were six more weeks of winter or an early spring. Students then signed and illustrated their letters. They sent the letters to the Punxsutawney Groundhog Club to read them to Phil. They also joined a Zoom meeting hosted by Groundhog Club members. The students got to see Phil and learn more about his life and Groundhog Day.

As part of the 4th grade's 100 Acts of Kindness Project the students brought in items to donate to the Warwick Humane Society. They wrote thank-you cards for workers and volunteers. This aligns along with the Reading like a Fan reading unit because the anchor texts are *Saving Winslow* and *Moo* by Sharon Creech. This focuses on protecting animals. Joany Schmick from the Warwick Humane Society came to educate the 4th graders and she was wonderful! She brought some of her furry friends with her as well.

Our students and staff celebrated the 100th day of school on Friday, February 9th, with a parade. Students completed various 100 Day activities to celebrate the day! In class and at home students made projects and participated in activities that represented 100 using their 100s chart. In honor of this milestone, students and staff led a Centenarian Parade through Sanfordville!

Warwick Valley Middle School

This week, Warwick Valley Middle School saw 50 randomly selected students participate in the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) testing. This rigorous assessment, referred to as the "Nation's Report Card," the purpose of the exams is to offer a comprehensive snapshot of student performance across various academic subjects. Schools across New York State and the entire country are randomly chosen every couple of years. Warwick was selected to participate in ELA and Mathematics. Our 50 students joined thousands of others nationwide in contributing to a robust dataset that informs educational policies and practices at the local, state, and national levels. Many of the students who participated shared their excitement about contributing to national data.

NAEP randomly selected the student participants, so that Warwick Valley Middle School ensures a representative sample, allowing for accurate assessments of student achievement.

Our students' involvement in NAEP testing is one way to display Warwick Valley Middle School's commitment to academic excellence and continuous improvement. Once randomly chosen to participate, we embraced our opportunity to benchmark student performance against national standards and identify areas for growth. NAEP testing insights enable educators and policymakers across the country to make data-driven decisions aimed at enhancing educational outcomes and ensuring that all students receive a high-quality education.

Our 50 selected students play an integral role in shaping education's future, both locally and nationally. Their performance contributes to a broader understanding of educational trends and challenges.

Warwick Valley High School

Warwick Valley High School's yearbook is a collaborative endeavor that involves students both in class and through extracurricular activities. Students have the opportunity to participate in the Yearbook class, where they actively engage in photography and contribute to the layout design of our annual publication. Together, they curate a collection of memories that reflect our school's diverse experiences and vibrant community.

The Yearbook Club offers another avenue for students to participate in the creation process. This ensures that our yearbook truly represents our school spirit and shared memories. The Yearbook/Publications course, a computer-based class, focuses on graphic design and the production process of creating the school yearbook using Adobe Suite software. Students learn layout design, copywriting, captioning, headline writing, advertisement sales, basic photography, and computer proficiency. They use Photoshop and Jostens' Layout Pro to create, edit, and master advanced publishing techniques.

Completing this course provides students with opportunities to take on leadership roles, develop new skills, shoulder individual responsibilities, and collaborate effectively within a team. This is to complete the yearbook. Additionally, students acquire essential life skills in time management, marketing, and design principles.