

Weekly column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
February 28, 2024

This EdTalk is the first in a series of three in which I will share with you current data and projections from our latest Long Range Planning Study. The articles will focus on three main topics: Enrollment, Demographics, and Housing. Once again, we worked with the Western Suffolk BOCES Division of Instructional Support Services, Office of School Planning & Research, to assess recent demographic factors and make projections through 2033.

As I have said in previous years, conducting enrollment studies is a critical aspect of effective educational planning. When we plan for our district's future, we rely on the comprehensive, objective data presented in these studies. This includes valuable insight into the number of students expected to attend school in the coming years, as well as trends in enrollment over time, and the demographics of our student body.

Our Long Range Planning Studies provide information essential for forecasting staffing needs, allocating funding, and making informed decisions about programmatic and facility-related planning. Additionally, they help evaluate outreach and recruitment efforts. The information gathered also informs policy decisions at the local, state, and national levels.

To begin, here is a quick look at our student enrollment as of January 1, 2024, including a school-by-school breakout:

Current WVCSD enrollment: 3,676 students
Park Avenue Elementary School (grades K-4): 473 students
Sanfordville Elementary School (grades K-4): 793 students
Warwick Valley Middle School (grades 5-8): 1,068 students
Warwick Valley High School (grades 9-12): 1,342 students

Overall, enrollment is projected to remain stable through 2033 in elementary and high school grades. A gain of 126 students or 11.8% is anticipated in the middle school grades. It is shown that elementary and middle school classes are expected to reach their projected peak enrollments in 2029 and 2033, respectively. In contrast, the high school grades are predicted to enroll the most students in 2032. District enrollment is expected to peak in 2033, when 3,842 students are anticipated; this is 166 more students than are currently enrolled.

It is worthwhile to recognize that this type of planning is a dynamic process. Periodic updates allow district trends to be included. Changes in school enrollment can be affected by factors such as fluctuations in the number of children being born. These factors include the number of

families moving into a community, and/or the number of children attending non-public or charter schools.

Enrollment studies cannot be overemphasized. They serve as a valuable tool for ensuring public school systems' success and sustainability. Our next two EdTalk columns – March 6 and March 13, 2024 – will look at the latest demographic and housing trends for our district respectively.

In other district news, Sanfordville Elementary School organized their first Annual Valentines for Vets Celebration on February 16. This was after a weather-related cancellation of Valentine's Day. Veterans from the community were invited to be honored for their service. Notable guests included representatives from Congressman Patrick Ryan's Office, the Mayor of Warwick, and local law enforcement. The event, coordinated by teachers Mrs. Carla Overbey and Mrs. Sue Havell, featured patriotic performances by students. It also featured a continental breakfast, and a heartfelt farewell from the Grade 2 students. Veterans were presented with handmade Valentine's cards, crafts, and goodie bags crafted by students and staff. The event was made possible by generous donations from various groups and businesses. Special recognition was given to the dedicated SES staff and volunteers who organized and executed the celebration. Appreciation was also extended to the PTA, Sanfordville families, and other supporting organizations for their contributions.

The WVHS Drama Club is gearing up for their Cinderella production with three performances scheduled for March 15 & 16, 2024. Tickets are available February 26. A special senior citizen performance and tea was added on March 14, exclusively for seniors within the Warwick Valley Central School District. This offered early seating, refreshments, and the show for \$5. Cinderella's classic tale features enchanting music and magic, with rehearsals giving a sneak peek at the captivating performance. For inquiries or ticket purchases, contact the Drama Club at wvhsdramaclub@wvcsd.org or (845) 987-3050, #22500. Don't miss the opportunity to experience the timeless charm of Rodgers & Hammerstein's Cinderella brought to life by the talented cast.

WVMS students recently competed in Spelling Bees, with Sean Whelan (7th grade) and Fiana Goldenberg (8th grade) emerging as champions. These winners will advance to the Regional Spelling Bee at OU BOCES in March, representing their school. The Scripps National Spelling Bee program, which has a long history dating back to 1925, aims to inspire curiosity and celebrate academic achievement. WVMS Principal Jared Yapkowitz led the Spelling Bees, where students worked toward the mastery of 300 challenging words. The competition was a success, with participants receiving medals and enthusiastic support from their peers and teachers. Now, Sean and Fiana are set to compete regionally, showcasing their spelling prowess on a larger stage.