

Weekly column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
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Congratulations are in order for the more than 400 student musicians who captivated a standing-room-only audience at the Combined Band Concert held at Warwick Valley High School's gymnasium on March 19, 2024. The concert featured bands from Park Avenue Elementary School, Sanfordville Elementary School, Warwick Valley Middle School, and Warwick Valley High School.

These performers included the Fourth Grade Band, marking their debut performance under director Ryan Muehlbauer. In addition, the fifth- and sixth-grade bands from the Middle School were led by Ashley Head, and the seventh- and eighth-grade bands were directed by Peter Van de Water. The High School segment showcased the Jazz Ensemble, the Honors Wind Ensemble, and the Concert Band, all expertly conducted by Megan Shafer.

Music education's broader impact was evident as these students displayed not only musical prowess but also the fruits of holistic development fostered through their engagement with music. Studies indicate that music involvement enhances language development, IQ, spatial-temporal skills, and academic performance, underscoring music education's multi-faceted benefits.

Moreover, it cultivates creativity, social skills, and discipline, enriching students' lives with personal fulfillment and broader cognitive benefits. Recent research from the University of Southern California reinforces the significance of music education, highlighting its role in nurturing adolescents' well-being and societal contributions. This study emphasizes the importance of expanding music education programs, particularly in light of the prevailing mental health crisis. It advocates for equitable access to empower students from all backgrounds, instilling confidence, competence, and hopeful expectations for the future.

As we celebrate Warwick Valley's student musicians' achievements, let us continue to champion music education. We recognize its transformative impact on our youth's cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

Fourth-grade mathematicians continue to practice adding and subtracting mixed numbers. Using the *conversion strategy* students have been solving real-life word problems. Mastery of that skill allows students to focus on multi-step problem-solving. Students have also been engaged in some collaborative work and communicating with each other the different strategies to solve

multi-step problems. They are continuing to gain an appreciation for the different ways that can be used to arrive at solutions.

Sanfordville Elementary School

Second-grade students were visited by Ashley Hickey from the Orange County Water Authority. She worked with students every day on a lesson that focused on water and its importance. These lessons tied in with their current science unit focusing on matter. Students had a wonderful week learning about the many forms water can be. Ms. Hickey shared a groundwater model and students learned how water exists in different bodies of water and landforms. Students traveled around as a water droplet to explore how water changes as part of the water cycle. They also applied vocabulary with various collaborative games, such as Jeopardy.

Mr. Hall came into second-grade classrooms for Agricultural Week. He read a story to the students called *I Love Strawberries*. After the read aloud the students were able to complete a hands on activity that illustrated the different stages of a strawberry's life cycle.

The school community was treated to a night filled with musical, gymnastic, dancing, and comedic performances. Our students performed their acts to a packed house. Those in attendance were treated to about 60 performances throughout the night. Thank you to our PTA and the many volunteers for putting together such a wonderful show that allowed our students to showcase their many talents.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Fourth-grade students began their transition to the Middle School with the annual fourth grade into fifth-grade orientation. Park Avenue students visited the Middle School on Wednesday and Sanfordville visited on Thursday. Each day started with a greeting from the Middle School Wild Cat and performances from the Honors Symphony Orchestra and Band. The administration, led by Principal Jared Yapkowitz, then presented to the fourth graders what a middle school day would look like for them next year.

An exciting point in the morning came when our newest middle schoolers sampled some fresh pizza straight from our cafeteria. Students were in awe of the fresh lunch options at the middle school and full of excitement. The highlight of the morning came when our Wildcat Ambassadors took the fourth graders on small group tours of the building. This was the opportunity to not only see all parts of the middle school, but to ask questions to current middle school students. Of course the morning wrapped up with some giveaways for the fourth graders, and high fives and smiles. We can't wait to welcome all of our new students in the fall.

Tia Thomson's fifth-grade scientists have been immersing themselves in the fundamental concept of gravity, unraveling its mysteries through hands-on experimentation. Witnessing the

descent of a pencil and a ball, they observed firsthand how objects fall with the Earth's gravitational pull, grounding their understanding in real-world phenomena. Next they encountered the formidable resistance of air. Understanding that air resistance acts as a hindrance to falling objects, the students explored the opposing force. They were able to understand the relationship between gravity and air resistance. Students then made vibrant posters depicting objects in free fall. Each poster showed the intricate balance between gravity and air resistance. Through their artistic interpretations, the students not only demonstrated their understanding of these scientific principles but also celebrated the beauty of physics in action.

Warwick Valley High School

Warwick Valley High School's Mock Trial team showcased its exceptional talent and dedication during its first competition, setting an impressive precedent for the season ahead. With rigorous preparation and unwavering commitment, the students navigated the complexities of legal proceedings with finesse and expertise. Their hard work paid off as they advanced to the quarterfinals, a testament to their proficiency and teamwork. In April, they will once again demonstrate their legal prowess as they strive for excellence in the upcoming rounds, poised to leave a lasting impression on the competition. Their remarkable achievement not only reflects their skills but also underscores the collective spirit of collaboration and determination within the team. As they continue on their journey, they embody the true essence of perseverance and excellence, representing Warwick Valley High School with pride and distinction on the mock trial stage.

Orange-Ulster BOCES proudly hosted the prestigious 2024 Humanities Honoree Awards Ceremony and Breakfast. The esteemed event served as a platform to acknowledge and celebrate the remarkable achievements of high school juniors across the county who have distinguished themselves in the realms of arts and humanities. These students were recognized for their exceptional dedication, skill and unwavering commitment to the arts and humanities. Congratulations to Olivia Samberg and Sara Venter on earning this prestigious award.