

**Weekly column: EdTalk**  
**Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach**  
**May 15, 2024**

The Warwick Valley Central School District honored its teachers last week during National Teacher Appreciation Week. Much like other schools across the state and the U.S., Warwick Valley schools, administrators and PTAs provided special lunches, breakfasts, snacks, treats and activities for our teachers. The purpose of this initiative was to recognize and appreciate our teachers.

Warwick's teachers are special. Our teachers range from senior teachers near retirement to new teachers in their first year at Warwick Valley. Teaching is more than a job for them, and we see their commitment every day. We see that our teachers love what they do. Our teachers heard that calling and chose a rewarding, yet sometimes challenging, profession.

On a personal level, our teachers bond with students and support them by helping them through tough times and cheering them on during times of celebration. Warwick teachers connect with students in multiple ways, reaching them where they are and guiding them to become life-long learners. Success isn't the same for each student and our teachers recognize that and push each individual to achieve their personal best. Our educators adopt a broad perspective on student achievement. They prioritize life skills over test scores, engaging students in activities such as creative writing, research and project-based learning to prepare them effectively for the future. Our teachers are driven by a passion to help others, and that translates into helping students be the finest versions of themselves that they can be.

Our educators understand the importance of student motivation. They acknowledge the necessity for tasks to be both attainable and interesting to capture student interest. Employing tools like rubrics, exemplary models, and projects, they facilitate this process. They prioritize distributed practice over last-minute cramming, promoting lasting and meaningful learning experiences. Furthermore, they emphasize the relevance of course material to students' lives, addressing the fundamental question of its personal significance.

The school district, the Warwick Valley Board of Education and the Warwick community realize and appreciate what our teachers do every day. Thank you.

***Here are some highlights from our schools this week:***

**Park Avenue Elementary School**

Student Council members embarked on a walking field trip to Warwick Village Hall. There, they met with Mayor Michael Newhard for a tour and information session on local government. The students learned how village government works and village services. Student Council members also told Mayor Newhard about some of their own activities. These included raising money for

Toys for Military Tots, Wreaths Across America and for first-aid kits donated to the Warwick Valley Police Department's K-9 officers.

The Student Council also held their annual pinning ceremony, an evening event, inviting parents, Principal Biniaris, and community leaders. The event started with the Nam Knights Orange County Chapter rolling in with their motorcycles and the students running over to greet their friends. Our young school leaders worked on many projects with these men this year and they became great friends. Watching the surprise on the students' faces and seeing them greet each other and their friends with a handshake was special. They worked so hard to serve, inspire and lead with every project they took part in this year.

Thank you to Mayor Newhard for joining us and recognizing each student with a certificate for their service. Thank you to Chief Rader, the Warwick Police Department and their K-9's. Our students surprised them with two K-9 First Aid kits for Fritz and Rocky.

### **Sanfordville Elementary School**

Kindergarten students took on field trips to Wright Family Farm. During their visit the students planted pumpkin seeds and took them home. They are so excited to see if their pumpkin seed will grow into a pumpkin by the time they return to school as first graders. When the students returned to school they were so excited to share with everyone what they did on their trip. They rode the hayride, explored the beehive, interacted with a baby cow, fed the donkeys and goats, and rode the pedal tractors and the cow train. The kindergarteners rode the bus to Stanley Deming Park for a picnic lunch and fun in the sun. Thank you again to the Wright Family Farm for planning an amazing day for our youngest learners.

On Principal's Day, students and staff showed their appreciation for the leadership Mrs. Maraia and Mr. Ferraro provide day in and day out by decorating their offices with creative posters and dropping off cards, letters, class written books and gifts. Mrs. Maraia and Mr. Ferraro can't express how grateful they are for everything everyone did for them! Thank you to all our students, families, teachers, staff, PTA and Sunshine Club for making the day so special!

### **Warwick Valley Middle School**

Eighth-grade students embark on an exciting journey as they present their capstone projects to their classmates. This project marks a collaborative effort between English Language Arts (ELA) and Social Studies classes, emphasizing a cross-curricular approach to learning. Encouraged to dive into local topics relevant to both our school and their daily lives, students have passionately researched subjects ranging from the feasibility of four-day school weeks to advocating for later start times. Some have explored innovative ideas like doing away with homework or examining the practicality of bookbag usage. Others have conducted research into the potential benefits of sensory rooms. Beyond academic exploration, this project offers students a tangible reward. Successful completion will earn them half a credit toward the prestigious New York State Seal of Civic Readiness. This initiative fosters critical thinking and research skills and instills civic responsibility. This project empowers students as they transition into high school and beyond.

Seventh-grade science students embarked on an engaging journey into the world of genetics through the use of Punnett squares. Immersing themselves in this fundamental tool of genetic analysis, students explored the inheritance patterns of various traits, from simple Mendelian traits to more complex genetic phenomena. Through hands-on activities and interactive discussions, students gained a deeper understanding of how inherited information is passed from one generation to the next, as well as the probabilities associated with different outcomes. By mastering Punnett squares, students explored their analytical skills and developed a strong understanding of heredity and variation in living organisms.

### **Warwick Valley High School**

As we approach the culmination of the academic year, our specialized elective courses crescendo with standardized assessments slated for May. For Advanced Placement (AP) students, these national exams present a gateway to college credits, providing a significant advantage at the outset of their higher education journey. Deliberately crafted to immerse students in collegiate rigor, AP courses forge academic resilience and readiness for challenges beyond high school. Starting in 10th grade, our curriculum includes 11 AP courses. This attracts an enthusiastic enrollment exceeding 600 students, many of whom eagerly embrace the opportunity to enroll in multiple AP classes. Our academic panorama spans English literature and composition, history, and diverse scientific disciplines, including environmental science, mathematics, and computer science. In addition, the eagerly anticipated addition of AP Art History is poised for introduction in the upcoming year.

Meanwhile, students progressing through the second year of our Cosmetology, Criminal Justice, and Video Production programs recently underwent the rigorous evaluation of the National Occupational Competency Testing Institute (NOCTI) exams. These meticulously curated assessments, tailored to industry benchmarks and requisites, serve as an indispensable barometer of students' proficiency, skill, and adaptability. This is indispensable for thriving beyond the classroom. NOCTI exams underscore our steadfast commitment to equipping students with practical expertise aligned with real-world demands.