

Weekly column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
May 8, 2024

The members of the Warwick Valley Board of Education volunteer their time and efforts to develop a shared vision for the Warwick Valley Central School District. Our school board members ensure that strategies, resources, policies and programs align with school district goals. We are so thankful for their efforts and commitment to our school district!

The annual school board election is approaching. On Tuesday, May 21st, voters will choose three candidates to fill three seats on the board. This will be for three years. The candidates are listed in the order they will appear on the ballot: Tara Cruz, William Fanos (i) and Mandy M. Blanton. One of these individuals, William Fanos, is an incumbent who is seeking another term, while the other two will join the school board for the first time.

Over the past four budget cycles, our school district has had the highest voter turnout for its annual budget and board elections in the county. Last year, Warwick voters totaled 3,570. The next highest school district had 1,512 fewer votes.

The Board of Education is composed of nine elected citizens who serve staggered three-year terms. Its main responsibilities include setting broad objectives and policies, delegating authority to the Superintendent of Schools to accomplish these objectives, and evaluating progress. Boards of education act only as a whole and during public meetings. A school board is a corporate body, so it has power only when acting as a board.

The Board of Education typically holds meetings twice a month on the first and third Thursday of the month. Meetings begin at 7 p.m. in the Dorothy Wilson Education Center Board/Community Room. Please check the Board of Education webpage on our website as meeting dates, times, and locations are subject to change. Individuals have two chances at each regular meeting to express their opinions on issues of interest.

In addition to its regular meetings, the board sometimes holds executive sessions. These sessions may precede or follow regular meetings and are for the discussion of sensitive subjects such as personnel matters and employee contract negotiations. However, all official actions take place at public meetings. If you are interested in learning more about the candidates, please read their bios on the district website. Moreover, the local radio station, WTBQ, will broadcast live a “Meet the Candidate Forum” on Monday, May 13th at noon. This broadcast will be replayed the evening before the vote, Monday, May 20th.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

Third graders celebrated Arbor Day at the Albert Wisner Public Library. In preparation, the students created poems related to trees. At the event, students heard from various community members about trees' importance. In addition, the Warwick Valley Gardeners Club shared 40 facts about trees to celebrate Warwick's 40th anniversary as a tree city. To conclude the ceremony, students took home their own tree to care for and watch grow. During this presentation and celebration, students saw ethical and global citizenship in action. They witnessed Warwick community members be lifelong learners, care for their environment, and collaborate with each other to create a better community. Students left with a mindset focused on: "I can make a difference!" and "My actions matter!"

Park Avenue ENL teachers Nicole Bernard and Gabrielle Derario hosted a "Meet the Authors" book publishing party for their students and parents. The *Bagels and Books* event celebrated our talented bilingual students. The students, in grades K through 4, collaborated to produce a hard-cover book showcasing their art and writing. The book is about traveling the world and is entitled *Up Up and Away We Go!* They presented their work during the library celebration. Their families each received a copy of the book.

The third grade completed a poetry unit by participating in a Poetry Slam event. Parents and guardians were invited to watch their children present their poems. This event, which took place in one of our outdoor classrooms, was the culmination of third grade Reader's Workshop study. Students learned how to read, write, and interpret many types of poetry and published a book of their own poems.

Sanfordville Elementary School

Sanfordville students were lucky to be visited by the Warwick Historical Society. During their visit, students experienced what daily life was like prior to electricity access. During the visit our students used some of the typical household items necessary to prepare meals and clean household items and clothing. We are thankful that our students can have these valuable experiences.

Fourth graders continue their Stemsopes unit on communicating with waves. Students used a jump rope with a partner to demonstrate long and short wavelengths and high and low amplitudes. They also participated in an investigation where they pushed a cup into a tub of water slowly and then quickly. This was to observe the waves and record their observations.

The Sanfordville PTA and the Sanfordville Drama Club hosted three performances of *Finding Nemo Kids*. Opening night was a sold out performance and the other two shows were near

sellouts. Congratulations to the very talented performers, our directors Hayley Mistler and Allison Moren, and producer Taylyn Carter. Thank you to the PTA, our Drama Club, our parent volunteers, custodial staff, and all of our faculty and staff volunteers. This helped to make this production such a success.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Music teachers Christy Brown and Peter Van de Water led their Honors Symphony on a special trip to Lincoln Center for an open rehearsal with the New York Philharmonic. Our young musicians had the rare opportunity to watch one of the world's most acclaimed orchestras in action. This was as they prepared for their upcoming concert series featuring Shostakovich's Cello Concerto No. 1 and Berlioz's Symphony Fantastique. The visit not only exposed the students to professional-level artistry but also provided an invaluable glimpse into the dedication and precision required to perform at such a high level

The students returned to school buzzing with excitement and inspiration from the experience. They were eager to apply what they had observed to their own rehearsals and began practicing with newfound enthusiasm and commitment. Ms. Brown and Mr. Van de Water noted that the visit had a significant impact on the students' attitudes toward music. This reinforced the values of Portrait of a Graduate and the joy of making music together. This unique opportunity at Lincoln Center will resonate with our student musicians for years to come.

In eighth grade science, Richard Ronzoni captivated his students with an electrifying exploration of the Van de Graaff generator. As he activated the machine, students watched in awe as his hair stood on end, a clear demonstration of static electricity in action. The excitement grew as a fluorescent light bulb lit up by touching the generator. Metal tins soared through the air, propelled by electric charge. These dynamic experiments were not only engaging but also served as a practical demonstration of how molecules behave under different electrical conditions.

Throughout the lesson, Mr. Ronzoni explained the science behind the spectacle. He discussed how the generator creates a high-voltage static charge that influences nearby objects, attracting or repelling them. By illustrating these principles in such a visually striking manner, he helped his students better understand concepts like electrical charge, static electricity, and conduction. Some of his students even referred to him as the science teacher "magician." These are some of the memorable lessons that continue to motivate, engage, and drive our students forward.

Warwick Valley High School

Warwick Valley High School celebrated a remarkable milestone as it proudly inducted 101 exceptional students into the esteemed ranks of the National Honor Society. The ceremony, held amidst an atmosphere of pride and achievement, honored these students for their outstanding scholarship, leadership, service and character. Each inductee stood as a shining example of dedication and excellence, embodying the core values of the National Honor Society.

The event was not just a recognition of academic prowess but also a testament to holistic development at Warwick Valley High School. With a commitment to nurturing well-rounded individuals, the school community rejoiced in the accomplishments of these students, acknowledging their contributions both inside and outside the classroom. As these bright minds took their place among the National Honor Society ranks, they embarked on an exciting chapter. They were filled with opportunities to continue making a positive impact on their school, community, and beyond.

As the evening ended, the service message echoed through the halls. Mary Fox, the faculty advisor, passionately challenged the newly inducted students to continue their commitment to serving others. With heartfelt words, she reminded them that true success is not just measured by individual accomplishments but by the positive influence they have on the world around them. Encouraging them to embrace opportunities for leadership and community engagement, Ms. Fox instilled in them a sense of responsibility to use their talents and privileges for the betterment of society. Her inspiring call to action left an indelible mark on the hearts and minds of the students. It ignited a collective determination to make meaningful contributions to their communities and beyond.