

Weekly Column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
July 10, 2024

Following, is the text of Dr. Leach's address during the Middle School Moving Up Ceremony to the Class of 2028 on June 26:

Good morning, everyone,

As we gather to celebrate your achievements and look forward to the next chapter, I am filled with pride and excitement for what lies ahead. Graduates, this day is about you, and we are here to honor your hard work and dedication. Before we dive into our celebration, I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the families, faculty, and staff who have supported our students every step of the way. Your dedication has been instrumental in their success. Thank you.

Now, let's talk about a recent event that perfectly illustrates the spirit of our school community. For the second year in a row, our 8th graders have triumphed over the teachers in the annual kickball game. Students, is this true? I'm starting to worry about this trend! Teachers once dominated this event, but now I see footage of our faculty struggling around the bases, out of breath, relying heavily on Mark Botta and Brad Garcia for home runs. It's amusing, yet it reminds us of a valuable lesson: sometimes, youthful energy can outshine age and wisdom.

This kickball saga reminds me of a childhood memory—watching the Yankees lose the World Series to the Dodgers in 1981. I was at Yankee Stadium, feeling each loss deeply. Just as the Yankees had to rethink their strategy, so do we. We will be back stronger in 2025!

Switching to something more uplifting—today, we celebrate our 8th graders' moving-up ceremony. This is a time to applaud your achievements and look forward to the exciting journey ahead in high school. High school is truly an incredible chapter.

Just last week, I attended a concert with my oldest son, watching Stevie Nicks captivate the audience—much like Taylor Swift does today. While you might not be rock stars yet, we want to give you a taste of that overwhelming support and adoration today. You are our rock stars!

Last week, I had the privilege of visiting William Zwart's seventh-grade social studies class. They presented their 'Portrait of a History Graduate Project,' linking historical figures with the traits we value in our graduates. This project not only deepened their understanding of history but also honed their research and presentation skills. It reminded me of my own school days, under leaders like Ronald Reagan and Tip O'Neill. Though fierce political rivals, they respected each other's right to hold different views and didn't assume the worst of each other. This attitude allowed them to achieve much together.

As you step into high school, remember these lessons: learn from history, respect diverse viewpoints, and find common ground to build strong and respectful relationships.

Congratulations to all of you moving up today. We are all cheering wildly for your continued success! Keep shining and make us proud.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

If one quickly glances at the section of our district's website dealing with the Portrait of a Graduate they would read, "We understand that great learning is much more than the ability of teachers to deliver information and the ability of students to regurgitate that information on an exam. Great learning that prepares each student to succeed in their future allows students to experience learning, and curiously engage with their minds and hands." During the final days of the 2023-2024 school year, Park Avenue students were engaged with learning that exemplified the aforementioned statement. For example, our budding fourth grade electrical engineers finished their task of creating a communication device for a ship. The device needed to use electrical energy, sound energy and light energy. The purpose of the device is to signal for help in the event of an emergency. Students combined their knowledge from their previously acquired knowledge of electric circuits, communicating using wave energy, and how the brain processes information using sense receptors.

In addition to all of the academic learning, students ended the year reflecting on their own learning and growth. One example involved our first graders spending time discussing and sharing their own learning throughout this year. They looked back at their writing from the very beginning of first grade and compared it to their most recent writing. They also spoke about what helped them grow, recalled different genres they learned about and how developing into a strong writer will help them in second grade and beyond! First graders also spent some time over the last few days of school immersed in various theme days such as *Safari Day*, *Under the Stars*, *Camping Day*, and *Major Bubble Fun*. During these days, students worked to complete different challenges using various skills acquired throughout the year. First grade teachers shared, "We are so proud of all of our students' hard work this year and cannot wait to hear about their future successes."

Sanfordville Elementary School

Our final day of school came with mixed emotions, as everyone was sad to see the school year come to an end, but full of excitement for the upcoming summer break. Students signed one another's yearbooks, shared vacation plans with friends, and said their last minute goodbyes. The last day of school was also a time many were reflecting upon their academic, personal, and professional milestones from the 2023-24 school year. When it was finally time to dismiss the

students for the day, everyone was excited to see what summer had in store for them. Sanfordville staff lined the bus lot for their Summer Send Off, waving good-bye as the bus drivers beeped their horns. We wish our fourth graders much success in middle school, and we are excited to welcome back our returning students in September!

The official last day for staff was the next day, but many of our committed Sanfordville staff began their preparation for the 2024-25 school year on Thursday and Friday! Our students may not be in the school building, but many staff members have been gathering in grade level teams each day since the end of the school year, preparing for 2024-25. Some of our staff have been gathering together to work on UFLI Word study programs, IMSE professional development, Social Studies units or study, and working on upcoming writing units just to name a few. We are so lucky to have such a dedicated staff!

On July 1, our Extended School Year teachers came to Sanfordville to meet with their colleagues from all across the district, and get an opportunity to check out where they will be teaching for six weeks this summer. Our teachers, psychologists, and other support staff met in the library to receive their schedules, class lists, and review our summer procedures and protocols. After the meeting concluded, everyone was able to have an opportunity to go to their classrooms/offices in order to prepare for the arrival of our students on Monday July 8. We can't wait to welcome our students back into the building, and are excited to see what amazing things they will accomplish during our Extended School Year program.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Even though the 2023-2024 school year just came to a close, behind-the-scenes preparation is already in full swing for 2024-2025. The dedicated 6th grade Social Studies and English Language Arts teams have been hard at work this week, focusing on summer curriculum development. They are aligning assessments, projects and units of study to ensure that all students have common, enriching experiences. This strategic planning aims to provide a cohesive and engaging educational journey for every student in the 6th grade.

In addition, 8th grade Social Studies teachers are diligently preparing for the new school year, and have been busy updating the Capstone project – a cornerstone of the 8th grade experience – to ensure it includes a robust historical context component. This enhancement is designed to deepen students' understanding of history and its relevance to contemporary issues, providing them with a comprehensive and meaningful academic challenge enroute to the New York State Seal of Civic Readiness.

Guidance counselors are undertaking the monumental task of scheduling nearly 1,100 students for the next school year. This complex process involves balancing student needs, teacher availability and course requirements. Despite the challenges, the middle school counselors manage to execute this task with remarkable efficiency and precision, ensuring that every student

is set up for success in the new academic year. Their efforts highlight the seamless operation and dedication behind the scenes over the summer that contribute to the smooth running of the school.

Warwick Valley High School

Warwick Valley High School is celebrating a 2023-2024 school year marked by academic achievement, innovation and a vibrant school community. The efforts of dedicated educators and motivated students have culminated in a year of significant accomplishments and memorable experiences. Now, as summer break begins, teachers are already hard at work preparing for the year ahead, ensuring that they are fully equipped to provide the best possible education for their students.

During the first week of July, our Earth Science teachers have been actively engaged in collaborative efforts to unpack and implement the new science standards and laboratory requirements mandated by New York State. These new standards are designed to enhance the quality and rigor of science education, ensuring that students are well-prepared for future academic and professional endeavors.

With enthusiasm and determination, teachers are laying the groundwork for a future where every student can thrive academically and reach their full potential. As they continue to refine their instructional practices and embrace new challenges, they remain steadfast in their mission to provide a high-quality education that prepares students for the opportunities and demands of the 21st century.