

Weekly Column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
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Warwick Valley Central School District offers many summertime opportunities for Warwick students to stay physically active, engage in learning, and explore their interests with friends. In just the first few weeks of the summer, students have come back to attend multiple sports camps, the Warwick Police Department Junior Academy, and take advantage of our extended school year program. For the past two weeks, students from kindergarten through sixth grade have been enjoying one of our district's annual summer highlights, the Summer Enrichment Program.

Summer Enrichment at Warwick Valley offers children unique opportunities to learn and have fun simultaneously. They build upon skills they've learned in school, while exploring new interests. The classes offered in the Summer Enrichment Program provide channels for students to engage with their peers, friends, and adults, which promotes positive social-emotional growth and may even help mitigate what some people in the education field call the "summer slump." There is certainly plenty of evidence that engaging in a well-designed summer program can lead to more positive academic and behavioral outcomes and boost student achievement.

This year, we had some very creative and dedicated teachers put together a catalog of classes that catered to different interests and learning styles. Here is a look at some of the classes offered during this year's Summer Enrichment Program. You'll enjoy seeing how each class approaches a specific special interest with hands-on learning and skill-building in a collaborative learning environment.

The popular world of STEM was once again well represented this summer, with three classes to challenge science-minded students. Thank you to Jamie Barchi and Andrew Warren, for teaching these classes. In *Robotics & Programming*, students learned robotics and engineering fundamentals, and definitely put their math skills to the test learning to code real and virtual bots! In *Biology & Scientific Method*, students were invited to explore life science through fun, hands-on projects. They did just that by learning about and then creating models of cells, DNA, and molecules. The third STEM class was *Building & Design*, which focused on applying the engineering design process. Students faced a variety of design challenges, including erecting spaghetti and marshmallows towers, designing bridges that could support toy car traffic, and more. They created, analyzed and improved each prototype along the way!

Some Warwick students got their summer off to a delicious start with Nadine Whight-Webb, who led the *Cupcake Decorating: Cookies & Chocolate Covered Treats* class. Students learned the art of cupcake and cookie decorating, including difficult techniques like creating rosettes and flower decorations. They balanced flavors, creating sweet and savory chocolate-covered pretzels, and the best part of it all – they got to take home everything that they made.

Krystie Gilmore welcomed students who have an interest in writing and illustration to her class. *Create a Graphic Novel*. This class was for fans of graphic novels who had thought about

creating their own. While they let their creativity run wild with characters, plots, and illustration styles, students also carefully considered fundamentals like planning their narratives. Meanwhile, Michelle Howard put out a call to all the Warwick “Swifties,” with her class, *In Our Summer Camp Era*. This creative and energetic class focused on summer camp crafts and activities, with a unique camp activity planned for each day, along with related games and, of course, plenty of jamming to Taylor Swift.

Our most popular class this year was *Speed & Strength Development* for student athletes entering grades six through eight. Phys ed teacher and coach Gregory Sirico, Jr. guided students through instruction and workouts designed to develop speed and strength. Coach Sirico helped the students learn and apply good technique and form during age-appropriate weightlifting, plyometrics, and resistance band exercises. The young athletes who joined Coach Sirico’s class really enjoyed getting out on the Wildcat playing fields!

Enrichment opportunities like these abound at Warwick Valley. Our goal is to nurture students’ overall wellness, their intellectual growth, foster creativity and curiosity, and provide an environment where every child feels safe, supported, and able to thrive – even during their summer vacation!