

**Weekly Column: EdTalk**  
**Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach**  
**July 31, 2024**

Last Friday afternoon, the Town of Warwick Police Department's Junior Police Academy (JPA) graduated its first of two cadet classes taking part in the popular summer program this year. This is the third year that the police department has collaborated with Warwick Valley Central School District as its host for the JPA, which is open to students, ages 10 to 15, who reside in the Warwick, Florida and Pine Island school districts. The session that wrapped up with Friday's graduation ceremony at Mountain Lake Park began on July 15. The second cadet class of the summer begins their JPA experience this coming Monday.

The JPA program is led each year by the Warwick PD officers who serve as our district's outstanding School Resource Officers, Dave Serviss, Katie Oresto, James Feragola, Bob Kenney and Kat Hulak. In the JPA program, students have a great time with their peers while learning about police training and service, civic responsibility and engagement, and local government. JPA emphasizes public service and leadership and focuses on personal qualities and skills such as teamwork, resilience, effective communication, and problem-solving, all of which align closely with the qualities outlined in our district's Portrait of a Graduate.

Each two-week session of the JPA involves classroom learning and field trips, with hands-on, real-world activities and experiences. There are lectures, demos and workshops led by police department members, the New York State Troopers, other first responder agencies, and local professionals. The cadets also enjoy many field trips during their 10-day sessions and get in plenty of physical activity each day.

The program also provides students an early glimpse into career pathways in law enforcement, the legal process and emergency services. For example, over the 10 days, each class of cadets engages in unique activities like processing a playground "crime scene" using actual investigative techniques, learning defensive tactics, and even handcuffing techniques. It's not all police work, though. To give you an idea of the scope of a typical JPA schedule, here is an overview of what this summer's first class of cadets just packed into 10 days.

The cadets were welcomed to Town Hall by Supervisor Jesse Dwyer and Warwick PD Lieutenant Alton Morley on Monday, July 15, to sign-in and tour the police station and the courtroom. On Tuesday morning, they dove right into some physical training, followed by a visit with the firefighters at Warwick Fire Department Station #2. There, they learned about what goes into being a firefighter and got some fire safety lessons. Wednesday morning it was marching drills with drill instructors and, afterward, K-9 police demonstrations with officers along with K-9s Rocky and Fritz. Officer Serviss also led an important discussion about social media.

Thursday's main activity was one of the highlights of each year, as the cadets spent the day at TreEscape in Vernon, an aerial ropes course where they did some great team and confidence building! On Friday, the cadets headed to Chosun Taekwondo for some lessons in the martial arts.

After what I'm sure was a restful weekend, the cadets met with representatives from Orange County STOP DWI & Traffic Safety Program on the next Monday. The program included presentations and demonstrations related to traffic safety, bike safety, and the importance of making smart, healthy choices. The day was a collaborative effort that also included Orange County 911, Orange County Emergency Management, and the Orange County Sheriff's Office. Tuesday, the cadets received invaluable CPR and First Aid training, then it was a trip to Pine Island Park on Wednesday. On Thursday, the cadets had a visit from the New York State Police and got to see officers operate a police drone. And on Friday, they graduated and were recognized for all the hard work, determination, and positive energy that they put into their JPA experience.

Thank you to our School Resource Officers for once again doing such a fantastic job planning and executing this important program for our district. The JPA engages and enriches Warwick students in unique and important ways and has become a highly anticipated addition to the district's calendar of summer programs. Thank you to Town of Warwick Police Chief John Rader for his continued support of his officers, the JPA, and the school district, and to the community leaders and business owners whose contributions have helped make the JPA such a success.

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

### **Park Avenue Elementary**

Park Avenue's teachers are continuing with their planning and preparation for September. In addition to the academic planning, select members of our School Culture Team (aka Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports or PBIS Team) are working to ensure an effective launch to the 2024-2025 school year's PBIS efforts. PBIS is an evidence-based tiered framework for supporting students' behavioral, academic, social, and emotional well-being. Some of the current work taking place includes:

- Reviewing the ROAR Matrix, which communicates expectations to all students and identifies for students the attributes of Respect, Outstanding Choices, Acceptance and Responsibility.
- Updating *Think About It Sheets* that are used when students fall short of the behavioral expectations. These *Think About It Sheets* are just one way we ask students to reflect on their choices. We are currently revising these to better accommodate the different age groups in our building.

- Planning for our PBIS assemblies including the annual launch when the entire student body gathers together to hear the same message about the year's expectations.

PBIS is just one tool in our toolkit for addressing student behaviors. As is the case with so many of our other efforts, we strive to ensure the best possible experience for our students. With the proper planning and preparation this systematic approach will go a long way in providing all students with the positive school environment that will help them succeed. Thank you to all of our staff and PTA for working together towards these ends!

### **Sanfordville Elementary Schools**

At Sanfordville, our Extended School Year Summer School middle school and high school students enjoyed a circus-themed week. Students integrated their learning with their creativity. They made apple crafts with Mrs. Colgan. They designed their own apple poster and centered it around a positive word or phrase. They also made bouquets, propagated baby spider plants and made their own circus faces on them. To end our week full of circus crafts, our students made pretzels. They worked hard on forming and shaping the dough into fun and tasty shapes. They also worked with Mr. Warren to create different circus tents out of spaghetti and marshmallows. The ESY middle and high school students participated in a contest submission for local agricultural organizations. Their dried apple poster creations will be entered into the regional events that Mrs. Colgan volunteers for each summer. Students have the opportunity to win prize ribbons if their creation is selected!

During our ESY first graders' program, phonics centers students are working on reading and writing consonant-vowel-consonant words, some students are still working on identifying letters and letter sounds, and another group is working on the digraph -ch. This week the students completed an interactive read-aloud called *Smart Cookie*, where students worked on identifying primary emotions. Students also discussed with the teacher where they noticed a change in emotion and why.

During outdoor recess the students have enjoyed reading under the trees from a selection of popular and new titles from the library cart. A blanket and pillows are available in the reading area to make it more cozy. Our third and fourth grade classes continued working on their comic books. Students finished crafting their front and back cover and began creating their final draft for their comics. The fifth through ninth graders practiced their research skills. They are completing a research topic on traveling to another country. Most students started adding all their facts from research into a presentation. During the open library period, students rotated amongst four Makerspace stations: Keva, Cleartouch TV, LEGO blocks, and Ozobot coding.

### **Warwick Valley Middle School**

Even though students are not present over the summer, a ton of activity is taking place behind the scenes to prepare for the 2024-2025 school year. Our guidance team has been busy scheduling students. This essential work ensures that when students return, they can seamlessly transition into their new classes with minimal disruption. Meanwhile, our main office staff is hard at work printing summer mailings and first-day-of-school information, making sure families are well-informed about important dates, school policies, and any new initiatives planned for the upcoming year.

Our administration has been equally busy, dedicating their summer to planning activities and themes that will shape the school year. These plans are designed to create an engaging and supportive environment that aligns with our educational goals and community values. From special events and assemblies to ongoing programs and projects, the administration's efforts continue to aim to foster a sense of belonging and excitement among students and staff alike. We are looking to ensure that the school year is not only productive but also memorable and enriching for everyone involved.

Teachers, too, are deeply immersed in preparation, working on summer curriculum development. They are modifying and enhancing lessons to best meet the needs of our students, ensuring alignment with the Portrait of a Graduate framework. This comprehensive approach guarantees that our educational programs are not only academically rigorous but also support the holistic development of our students. Finally, our custodial and maintenance staff are diligently cleaning the building from top to bottom, ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for everyone come September. Their combined efforts highlight the dedication of our entire school community to making the upcoming school year successful for all.

### **Warwick Valley High School**

As July draws to a close, Warwick Valley High School is bustling with activity, ensuring the campus is in pristine condition for the upcoming school year. With a focus on providing a clean, safe, and welcoming environment, several key projects are under way to prepare the building for the return of students.

Every classroom at Warwick Valley High School is undergoing a thorough deep clean. Custodial staff are working diligently to clean and sanitize all surfaces, from desks and chairs to floors and windows. The gymnasium, a hub of activity throughout the school year, is getting a significant upgrade. The gym floors are being refinished, restoring their shine and ensuring they are in top condition for physical education classes, sports practices and events. In addition to the gym, the school's pool is also receiving a comprehensive deep clean. This includes draining the pool, scrubbing all surfaces, and ensuring the filtration and water treatment systems are in optimal working order.

As these major projects are completed, the finishing touches are being applied throughout the school. Hallways are being polished, common areas are being tidied, and outdoor spaces are being manicured. The goal is to create a welcoming atmosphere that makes students and staff feel excited to return. We cannot wait to welcome our students back in September.