

Weekly Column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
September 18, 2024

We are in the middle of a week like no other in the Warwick Valley Central School District school calendar. Spirit Week, which culminates with a Homecoming Parade, game and dance on Saturday, has reached a feverish pitch for students, families and the entire Warwick community. You feel the energy wherever you go in Warwick.

Our town supports our Wildcats on and off the field during this special week and throughout the school year. We are so grateful that our students get to enjoy this hometown spirit! Warwick is a special place.

This week, alumni are visiting and reconnecting with friends. Teachers are engaging with students and their families. Seniors and underclassmen at the high school, as well as middle school and elementary school students, are showing off their school pride.

To understand everything about Homecoming and all that it means to the students of Warwick and the community, please take a look at this production by our high school's Warwick Valley Television crew from last year's parade at <https://youtu.be/F6kCgX3fqzk?si=TvSeTrsYlp96lc4e>. Even though the parade needed to be postponed for a couple days because of rain, people still came out to show their spirit!

We appreciate our community who support our students through donations of everything from cars and trucks, to flowers, to flatbeds, to funding. The parade would not be possible – and be so successful every year – without you.

At noon on Saturday, the Homecoming parade will make its way down Main Street, complete with student-made floats. The floats – including those representing different classes and sports teams – have been planned since school started and built this week in the Transportation Garage. The students are excited to share their creations with you.

After Saturday's parade, the big football game against Goshen will begin at 1:30 p.m. at C. Ashley Morgan Field. It's also the annual Spirit Trophy game between the schools. It will include pregame and half-time ceremonies.

A princess and prince will be chosen from the freshman, sophomore and junior classes along with a senior class queen and king. A coronation of the Homecoming Court will take place at the annual pep rally on Friday. Concluding Homecoming, is the traditional Homecoming Dance, which will be held in the high school gymnasium Saturday night from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m.

Homecoming festivities take place all five days of Spirit Week. This year's Spirit Week theme is Board Games, with students dressing to match the theme:

Monday, Sept. 16: Game of Life

Tuesday, Sept. 17: Guess Who?

Wednesday, Sept. 18: Uno Reverse

Thursday, Sept. 19: Game Night

Friday, Sept. 20: Purple and Gold

Lastly, I would like to share how research continually shows how a student's school spirit reflects in their academic achievements. More often than not, those with high levels of school spirit are also high achievers in school. It's another great reason to have school spirit!

Go Wildcats!

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

The instrumental music department had some excitement this week. Our orchestra and band teachers, Mrs. Blaikner and Mrs. Mulzet, welcomed their new fourth-grade students to their respective classes.

"It was so exciting for students to open their cases for the first time and 'meet' their instruments," Mrs. Blaikner said. "The students are beginning their lifelong journey with creating music on their own instrument. It is such a special time and rite of passage for Warwick's elementary schools."

Additionally, in Ms. Head's general music class, Students are using xylophones to demonstrate steady beat, as a layer within the music. Ms. Head shared that her third grade classes practiced their collaboration skills as they learned how to use different sized xylophones, which project different sounds.

The entire student body gathered in our auditorium to learn about Park Avenue's Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support system (PBIS). Students heard from teachers Aimee Urvater, Shannon Kennedy and Principal Bill Biniaris. The assembly focused on communicating our school's ROAR expectations: Respect, Outstanding Choices, Acceptance, and Responsibility. K-4 students exhibited wonderful and mature behaviors but were also super excited when the Warwick Wildcat made its appearance. Their knowledge base was quizzed by a friendly game of Jeopardy. The winning grade, third grade, earned its first batch of Golden Tickets for the year!

Sanfordville Elementary School

The students in Mrs. Guido's first grade class hit the ground running when they returned to school. Students worked on their letter formations by using playdough. They also worked on their number formation by using their ribbon wands.

The third grade students in Ms. Agro's class were hard at work learning all about their classmates and sharing a little bit about themselves. Students were asked to share with their new friends some of their favorite books, movies, colors, animals, and foods. They were also asked to provide three words that described them, and to share what they wanted to be when they grew up. All of the students' hard work was proudly displayed in the hallway.

The fourth grade launched their new writing unit called "Spinning Stories into Gold." The students wrote about a memory from a special place in their lives, as well as a memory of something they will never forget. In addition, for their reading launch, the students worked on asking questions and wonderings and making connections while reading their just right books. In math, the fourth graders worked with base ten blocks to explore numbers to the hundred thousands place. No doubt that students returned eager to learn.

Students were encouraged to not only honor those lost on 9/11 but to use the day as "a day of service" as they tried to find ways to help others in their school, home and community. The students and staff did a variety of age appropriate activities to commemorate this day.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Students have been busy diving right into instruction. This positive start sets the tone for a productive and exciting year ahead! To honor and remember the events of September 11, 2001, Mr. Patafio's seventh grade social studies classes participated in a powerful lesson on the *Man in the Red Bandana*. Students learned about Welles Crowther, a young man from Nyack who heroically saved numerous lives during the tragic events of that day. Crowther, known for wearing a red bandana, became a symbol of courage and selflessness. Through this lesson, students reflected on the significance of his actions and the broader impact of heroism during moments of crisis.

Mr. Patafio and his students discussed the importance of remembering not only the events of September 11 but also the individuals who demonstrated extraordinary bravery. By learning about Crowther's legacy, students were able to connect history with themes of sacrifice, empathy, and resilience, fostering a meaningful conversation about how ordinary people can make a lasting difference in the world. The lesson wrapped up with students making a small difference in our middle school community by writing positive sayings on post-it notes and randomly placing them on student lockers.

In Ms. Motter's eighth grade science classes, students engaged in a hands-on lesson focused on measuring mass, volume, and temperature of various objects using scientific tools. Students used scales, graduated cylinders, and thermometers, and students explored how to accurately gather data on different materials. The lesson emphasized the importance of precision, with success criteria focused on students' ability to calculate quantities within one unit of measure. Students were able to apply their skills in real-time, reinforcing foundational measurement techniques critical to scientific inquiry. By the end of the lesson, students not only demonstrated their ability to measure accurately but also gained a deeper understanding of how small errors in calculation can impact experimental results. This lesson provided an excellent foundation for future lab activities and scientific investigations.

Warwick Valley High School

In support of students pursuing higher education, Warwick Valley High School is also offering personalized College Essay Writing Workshops. These workshops provide an excellent opportunity for students to refine and strengthen their personal essays – a critical component of the college admissions process.

Students can schedule appointments with the Media Center specialist, who will guide them through brainstorming, drafting, and revising their essays. Whether they're just starting or seeking feedback on a final draft, students will receive personalized support to enhance their essays.

This valuable resource is designed to help students present their best selves to college admissions committees. We encourage all seniors to take advantage of this opportunity as they prepare their applications!