

**Weekly Column: EdTalk**  
**Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach**  
**October 16, 2024**

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Last week at the Warwick Valley Board of Education meeting, we welcomed a presentation from our Assistant Superintendent for Business, district engineer and district head of facilities to discuss the \$19.5 million capital project proposal for the Warwick Valley Central School District. The proposal will be tax neutral, meaning the district would not need to raise additional tax revenue to support the large-scale improvement project.

Our district has taken a strategic approach over the years, consistently improving our facilities and grounds without increasing the tax burden on residents. This effort focuses on updating outdated electrical, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, as well as replacing windows and roofs that have reached the end of their lifespan. The timing is crucial, as we are retiring debt and leveraging state building aid and our reserves to fund these improvements.

The 2024 Capital Project would allow us to replace roofing at five of our buildings – Warwick Valley High School, Warwick Valley Middle School/District Office, Park Avenue Elementary School, the Kings building and the Pine Island building. The installation of 186,600 square feet of new roofing alone is expected to cost an estimated \$8,130,159, or nearly 42% of the capital project. New roofing would save money on mounting repair costs and resolve leaks, some of which have been difficult to repair.

The largest of the roofing projects is at Warwick Valley High School. It will receive 110,600 square feet of new roof, covering the old junior high wing, science wing, media center, agriculture classrooms, New Gym, Old Gym, pool and weight room. The project replaces leaking roofing that was last installed in 2000 and 2001, and completes the high school roof work that began over the summer under the 2021 Capital Project.

Beyond roofing, other specific projects include a new electrical panel at the high school (\$1 million), a new HVAC system in the High School gym (\$2.1 million), new bleachers in the middle school and high school (\$1.25 million), interior piping at Sanfordville Elementary School and Park Avenue Elementary School (\$2.1 million), new windows at Park Avenue to complete that installation that started under that last capital project and the high school (\$2.1 million), and upgrades to security measures – the hardening of 100 exterior doors – at both the middle school and the high school (\$550,000).

The needs addressed in the proposal have been, in part, prioritized and planned based on a New York State Building Condition Survey (BCS) conducted by a team of licensed engineers or registered architects, as well as the observations and documentation of WVCS management and staff, who work in the schools every day.

The Board of Education will vote on October 24 to put the 2024 Capital Project before voters. If approved, a public hearing will be scheduled for December 2 and voting will occur on Tuesday, December 10, at the Pine Island building, the Middle School and the Kings building.

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

### **Park Avenue Elementary School**

Kindergarten students and their third grade Book Buddies continue to meet this year. The third graders are helping the “little ones” navigate their chromebooks and are supporting them with writing and reading. Ms. White's and Ms. Zayas' Buddies recently read and retold *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*. They were put into mixed groups of five and given the task of creating a retell of the story after reading it. Everyone rose to the occasion and performed the story to roaring giggles and applause. Each group put their own twist on their performance. Ms. White shared, “We look forward to meeting up again.”

All students had the opportunity to participate in a presentation by the Warwick Fire Department to learn about fire safety. The guest firefighters talked about the differences between toys and tools, how firefighters are our friends, what to do in the event of a fire and the importance of each piece of fire gear. The students loved getting a chance to spray the hose and see how high the fire ladder could go. Thank you WFD.

### **Sanfordville Elementary School**

The Sanfordville teachers and staff conducted review lessons and drills with their students during the school’s “School Safety Week.” Staff reassured the students that our goal is to always keep them safe while here at school. Each day the teachers discussed and practiced a different emergency drill with students.

The Warwick Fire Department visited Sanfordville Elementary School to provide a Fire Prevention presentation to our Kindergarten, first grade and second grade students. Not only was it Sanfordville’s School Safety Week, it was also National Fire Prevention Week. Students learned how to safely get out of a fire and how to perform the “Stop, Drop, and Roll” technique. Students toured the fire engines, asked great questions and even got to spray the fire hose. The department gifted students plastic fire hats and Fire Prevention booklets. Thank you to Fire Chief Hughes and all of the Warwick firefighters that spent the day with our students!

The Sanfordville PTA was proud to host the school’s “Touch A Truck” event. During this event students and their families from all across the Warwick school district were able to have hands-on-experiences with the various types of trucks that participated. Some of the trucks that our students and their families were able to explore included trucks and more from the following groups: Warwick EMT, Warwick Volunteer Fire Department, New York State Police, Orange County Sheriff Department, Warwick Police Department, Warwick DPW, Orange & Rockland

Bucket Truck and more. Guests were able to grab a treat from Groovy Scoops. A huge thank you to the PTA for organizing this event, and thank you to everyone that attended.

To wrap-up Sanfordville's School Safety Week, the PTA sponsored a hero's luncheon for local and SES family first responders and essential workers. Police officers, firefighters, EMTs, doctors, nurses, and others joined our students during their lunch periods to sit and talk with them. Students were very welcoming and asked thoughtful questions. We thank all first responders for visiting Sanfordville and for their dedication to keeping us all safe.

### **Warwick Valley Middle School**

All fifth-grade classes embarked on an exciting field trip to the Albert Wisner Library, where students explored the library's extensive offerings beyond simply checking out books. In preparation, a library card application was sent home as a homework assignment. The visits took place over five days, with each fifth-grade team visiting the library for a one-hour time slot. Teams were split into two groups – one group toured the library and participated in a scavenger hunt to familiarize themselves with the library's many collections and the process for checking out books, while the other group enjoyed a read-aloud. Afterward, the groups switched activities. Students also experienced a story walk along the outdoor path, viewing engaging stories, and taking part in solving context clues during interactive read-alouds inside the library. Additionally, they worked collaboratively on a scavenger hunt, earning puzzle pieces that will eventually come together as a class project.

To entice students to revisit the library, raffles were held during their visits, with one lucky winner from each team receiving a book and a special grade-level prize that includes a bundle of books or a Nintendo Switch game. The excitement from the students who visited the library has already inspired many students to explore the library more in the future.

### **Warwick Valley High School**

This year, 28 seniors at Warwick Valley High School have embarked on their Senior Project journey, a program offered in high schools nationwide. Senior Project is an immersive, credit-bearing class designed for seniors to explore a subject of particular interest to them – think of it as an independent study.

The afternoon kicked off with team-building activities, allowing students to get to know one another and build camaraderie before diving into the course's requirements. These exercises fostered a sense of community and collaboration as students prepared for the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Throughout this largely student-designed and student-driven course, participants must choose a topic that interests them and produce college-level work to fulfill the program's Four P's:

- the Project (their chosen topic),
- the Paper,
- the Portfolio, and
- the Presentation

The combination of these elements ensures students engage deeply in a subject they are passionate about while developing valuable research, writing, and presentation skills that will serve them well in college and beyond. With 28 students ready to dive in, this year's Senior Project promises to be an exciting and transformative experience for all involved.