

Weekly Column: EdTalk
Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach
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Choosing a college or university is understandably a difficult task for families and senior students. There are many factors for them to consider. Most notably, the quality of the school and program is often weighed against the cost of tuition, room and board and other fees to determine the value of the education at the selected schools.

There's an easy way to get the help you need, all in one place. The annual Warwick Valley High School College Fair and financial aid presentation is on Wednesday, October 30. This event is very supportive for those seeking information and networking with school representatives. The financial aid presentation starts at 6 p.m. in the WVHS Auditorium and the college fair starts at 6:30 in the Main Gym.

When going through the search process, be mindful that public institutions offer high quality educational programs with lower tuition costs. That combination creates excellent value. The tuition at State University of New York (SUNY) schools is a fraction of the average cost of a private college, with a higher average graduation rate and a lower overall debt load.

New this year is the SUNY Top 10% Promise Program, which creates a direct pathway for the highest-achieving New York high school seniors to gain admission and enroll at select SUNY colleges and universities. The program is intended to help more New York students benefit from SUNY's combination of accessibility, affordability and academic excellence.

Top 10% Promise is a direct-admissions program that automatically grants acceptance to graduating high school students whose GPAs are in the top 10% of their class and meet specific academic readiness criteria. The program takes effect for seniors preparing to enroll for fall 2025. The nine initial participating campuses are: University at Albany, University at Buffalo, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, SUNY Geneseo, SUNY New Paltz, SUNY Oneonta, SUNY Polytechnic Institute, Purchase College, and Stony Brook University.

Polls indicate a significant shift in higher education trends. In 2023, only 62% of high school graduates nationwide opted for college, likely due, in part, to the cost. This increase in college costs hinders wealth-building opportunities. More than half of those who borrowed between 2010 and 2019 still carry debts significantly higher than their initial loans. However, the U.S. job market appears to need more college graduates than educational institutions will supply. This trend is expected to result in a deficit of 6.5 million graduates by 2030, which in turn may drive up the wage premiums associated with a college degree.

Anyone interested in a SUNY education should consider SUNY's admission fee waiver period. It's a perfect time to benefit but you need to hurry. The free application offer lasts until Sunday, November 3. SUNY allows students to apply for admission to up to five SUNY campuses with no application fee. Students will not need a special code to access the application promotion, as long as they submit their applications during the free application period. Students may use either the ApplySUNY application or the Common App to submit up to five free SUNY college applications.

Students can apply through the SUNY website, at www.suny.edu/attend/apply-to-suny. The landing page also includes one-click access to detailed application instructions, information to determine which SUNY school is best for you, Frequently Asked Questions about the program, and a list of SUNY Admissions offices.

There are two ways to apply. ApplySUNY users can apply to multiple SUNY schools at once and will see the first five campus application fees waived on the payment page. These are the applications paid for by SUNY. Common App users must apply online, campus by campus, and during the process, each SUNY page will ask if you would like SUNY to pay the application fee for your first five SUNY applications.

SUNY schools in attendance include:

- Binghamton University
- Stony Brook University
- SUNY Brockport
- SUNY Canton
- SUNY Cobleskill
- SUNY Corning Community College
- SUNY Cortland SUNY Delhi
- SUNY Fashion Institute of Technology
- SUNY Geneseo
- SUNY Herkimer College
- SUNY New Paltz
- SUNY Oneonta
- SUNY Orange
- SUNY Oswego
- SUNY Plattsburgh
- SUNY Polytechnic Institute
- SUNY Potsdam
- SUNY Rockland Community College
- SUNY Sullivan
- University at Albany

University at Buffalo

SUNY also offers ongoing fee waivers that apply to 60 percent of all New York high school seniors. I encourage students and parents to take advantage of these waivers.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Park Avenue Elementary School

Park Avenue participated in Red Ribbon Week last week. Red Ribbon Week is an effort established by the National Family Partnership that aims to “support families and communities in nurturing the full potential of healthy and drug free youth.” At the elementary school level we message in a way that is age appropriate for our K-4 students. The following represent some of the Park Avenue activities that have been taking place:

- Students made red ribbons using materials provided by the PTA to make a long chain being displayed in our main lobby.
- Students traced outlines of their hands and wrote pledges on them that are associated with living a healthy lifestyle. Teachers displayed these pledges in their classrooms.
- Teachers engaged students in lessons focused on reducing anxiety and about making better choices related to screen time.
- Students and staff wore red throughout the week. On Friday, everyone sported pink for our annual participation in Pink Out Day, which is a breast cancer awareness event.

The school held a ROAR poster contest that was a huge hit. The event, which was supported by the PTA, was meant to help students take ownership of the ROAR (Respect, Outstanding Choices, Acceptance, Responsibility) culture in the building while also giving them an opportunity to express themselves creatively. After receiving approximately 175 posters, faculty and staff helped pick the following winners. Their posters will be displayed throughout the building for the duration of this school year:

- Kindergarten: Allison Calisi, Charlotte Zikoyanis, Roman Rodriguez
- First grade: Brynley LaPenna, Maysen Pulliam, Penelope Guevara
- Second grade: Mia Smith, Everly Gomez, Chloe Theologis, Haley Colon
- Third grade: Charlotte Brazier, Jacob Silverman, Kate Ellsworth
- Fourth grade: Maggie Calisi, Audrianna Parisi, Ellie Conklin

Park Avenue artists from Kindergarten to fourth grade participated in Inspiration Stations (Reflections Art Program) in the art room as they created art pieces that will be submitted to the National PTA Reflections initiative. Reflections is a National PTA Arts Recognition program that engages over 300,000 students and their families in arts education activities each year. This year, students are responding to the theme, “Accepting Imperfections,” by highlighting the

concept that mistakes and accidents are part of the learning and creating process. Students had the opportunity to explore this theme with paint, sculpture and all different mixed media.

Sanfordville Elementary School

Our PIE 1-2 students embarked on their unit field trip in search of answering the question, “What does good citizenship look like in our own Village of Warwick?” In their first major unit the children learned about citizenship and they were hoping to take this learning on the road and visit some places within our community. Our classes are partnered with different places within our community that the kids were able to visit once they embarked on their “citizenship scavenger hunt.” They were able to meet with Mayor Newhard, a fireman from the Church Street Fire House, EMTs, local business owners, the Postmaster, bankers at TD bank, eye doctors at Riehle Optical, real estate agents and many other people who work in our community. As the students traveled from place to place around the village they conducted interviews to ask these citizens how they contribute to our community as well as demonstrate good citizenship. We thank everyone who took time out of their day to share with our students.

The Sanfordville Leadership Club met with some representatives from the Orange County Chapter of the Nam Knights and Taylor Sterling from WTBQ, who came to speak with our students about helping to promote awareness for this year’s Toys for Military Tots collection in partnership with WTBQ. Our students were very eager to be willing to help promote this worthwhile cause throughout our school community. All donations for local Orange County military and veterans will be sent to the children of disabled Orange County veterans and children of the New York Air National Guard deployed or stationed at Stewart Air Force Base.

The Warwick Lions Club visited Sanfordville in order to provide a free vision screening for the school’s newest students. This screening is intended to assist in identifying significant ocular conditions. We are so grateful to all the members of the Lions Club that assisted with this screening.

For Red Ribbon Week, we centered age-appropriate instruction around respecting our bodies and brains, making healthy choices and making positive contributions to our community. All of our Sanfordville students were invited to sign a pledge to make healthy and wise choices, which will be displayed near the cafeteria. Throughout the week the students had the opportunity to participate in the following ways: Wear something red to show your pledge for a healthy lifestyle. Your choices are the key to your dreams so wear your favorite pajamas. Wear bright socks to focus on positive choices for a positive future. Don’t sweat the small stuff, let’s wear your favorite sweatshirt! Wear your favorite shade of pink to raise awareness and promote cancer screenings.

Warwick Valley Middle School

At the middle school, with this year's Red Ribbon Week theme, "Life is a Movie: Film Drug Free," students were encouraged to embrace a healthy, drug-free lifestyle. Ms. Fox and her SADD club leaders joined fellow advocates from across the region at the Orange County Red Ribbon Week kickoff event in Chester on the same day. The event set the tone for a week filled with educational and spirited activities aimed at promoting drug awareness.

Throughout the week, Ms. Fox and SADD club members have been reading daily "Red Ribbon Week Facts" during morning announcements, providing students and staff with valuable information about the importance of making healthy choices. On Tuesday, members of the Warwick Valley Prevention Coalition visited during lunchtime, encouraging students to reflect on their own commitments to healthy living. Students created pledges, which were written on red ribbons and proudly displayed on a bulletin board in the cafeteria, symbolizing their dedication to a drug-free lifestyle.

Students have been participating in a themed spirit week. Monday marked "Wear Red Day," while Tuesday was "Pajama Day." Wednesday brought out the school spirit with "Wildcat Wednesday," followed by "Team Up to Live Drug Free" day on Thursday, where students donned their favorite sports shirts or jerseys. The week culminates on Friday with a district-wide "Pink Out Day" in support of Breast Cancer Awareness. These activities not only promote a drug-free message but also foster a sense of community and support among students at Warwick Valley Middle School. As Red Ribbon Week continues, students are reminded that living a healthy, drug-free life is always in style.

Warwick Valley High School

Warwick Valley High School is excited to announce the creation of a new initiative: the Executive Student Leadership Council. This dynamic group, comprised of club presidents and sports team captains, aims to foster leadership skills among its members while serving as a catalyst for positive change within the school community.

The council's mission is to develop confident and effective student leaders who are equipped to navigate challenges and inspire their peers. Through regular meetings, members will engage in workshops and discussions that focus on leadership development, communication, and problem-solving. This collaborative approach seeks to empower students to take active roles in shaping the school culture, with a particular emphasis on promoting kindness and inclusivity.

By offering a platform for healthy discourse, the Executive Student Leadership Council hopes to bring together diverse perspectives from various clubs and sports teams. This will help ensure that all voices are heard, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. Ultimately, the goal is to create a more inclusive learning environment where every student feels valued and supported.

Warwick Valley High School is proud to support this next generation of leaders as they work to make a positive impact both within the school and beyond.