

**Weekly Column: EdTalk**  
**Superintendent of Schools: Dr. David Leach**  
**November 6, 2024**

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At Warwick Valley Central School District, our commitment goes beyond academic success; we aim to shape students into adaptable, thoughtful, and proactive members of society. Through our Portrait of a Graduate, we focus on developing core competencies that prepare each student to navigate the diverse paths they may choose after high school. This vision comes to life in a variety of programs and activities that blend practical skills with opportunities for personal growth—from career and technical education to community engagement and college preparation events. Join me as I highlight the recent initiatives, accomplishments, and celebrations across our district that support our students in building bright and fulfilling futures.

Part of the mission of the Warwick Valley Central School District is to prepare all students for their futures by instilling in them the core competencies and skills outlined in the Portrait of a Graduate. Our district's Portrait of a Graduate reflects our priority goals for teaching and learning: to create graduates who are collaborators, communicators, creators, and innovators, ethical and global citizens, resilient individuals, problem-solvers, and lifelong learners. Above all, we want every graduate to find fulfillment and positive community engagement in their post-high school lives.

We recognize that every Warwick student has a unique combination of passions, interests, and talents, and it is our responsibility to provide each individual with a broad and rich educational experience that places them in the best position to take advantage of the myriad career and college pathways available to them after graduation.

Our Career & Technical Education (CTE) program is a prime example of how we integrate the Portrait of a Graduate competencies throughout our curricula. Here in Warwick, we have a unique in-house CTE program, offering three pathways: Criminal Justice, Cosmetology, and Video Production. Warwick students may also take advantage of the outstanding CTE programs at OU-BOCES in Goshen, which include Carpentry, Culinary Trades, Dental Careers, Nurse Assistant, Engineering Design and Architecture, Computer Networking, Hospitality, Automotive Technology, and Aviation, among others. The popularity of these programs continues to grow; today, they draw more than 150 enrollees each year from our junior and senior classes.

CTE courses are similar to any other high school courses in that they are grounded in a set of standards guiding teaching and learning in the classroom. However, CTE courses tend to be more application-based and offer more experiential, hands-on learning in real-world environments. Students typically sign up for a two-year program, which often includes support for obtaining any required certifications needed to enter their chosen field after graduation.

This year, the Superintendent's Spotlight featured Warwick Valley High School senior Violet Ross. Violet is in her final year of the OU-BOCES Dental Careers program and has already started working in the field. She is a dental assistant at the General and Cosmetic Dentistry office of Leonard Episcopio, DDS, PLLC in Warwick. She began working there during her first year in the CTE program and was employed full-time this past summer. Violet aspires to be a dentist and plans to attend Orange County Community College for two years, then complete a four-year degree before continuing to dental school.

We also profiled WVHS senior Naomi Valentino in our Artist of the Week column. Naomi has mapped out a fulfilling future for herself after finding inspiration in our Cosmetology program. After feeling stressed about impending college decisions, Naomi decided instead to embrace her true passion. She knew a traditional college experience wasn't for her, and she transformed her enrollment in the Cosmetology program into a solid foundation for her dream career as a professional stylist. She is part of the Wildcuts Salon crew and enjoys the hands-on customer service opportunities. Naomi will graduate with the necessary New York State certifications either in place or in process, thanks to the program.

Both Naomi and Violet encourage underclassmen to explore CTE pathways as a way to engage with their interests in a future-focused way, or even discover a new passion. With so many areas of study available, students have numerous opportunities to learn what they love. Both Naomi and Violet exemplify the saying, "If you do something you love, you'll never work a day in your life!"

We want every Warwick graduate to be college- and career-ready, equipped to recognize and embrace a life that brings them comfort, joy, and a sense of purpose. Our CTE pathway programs provide engaging educational opportunities that help every student become the best collaborators, communicators, creators and innovators, ethical and global citizens, resilient individuals, problem-solvers, and lifelong learners they can be.

We encourage you to explore our CTE program by visiting our webpage, where you can access our Curriculum Guide.

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

### **Park Avenue Elementary School**

Second-grade students enjoyed a fun twist on musical chairs in the library this week. Each chair held a book, and when the music stopped, instead of being eliminated, students read a passage from the book on their chair. After the musical chairs rounds, students expanded their exposure to different books by sharing what they'd read with each other. Discovering new book series and

sharing exciting details fosters students' communication and collaboration skills while nurturing a love for lifelong learning.

The Student Council visited WTBQ radio for a behind-the-scenes look at radio station operations and to learn about radio production. They even recorded a commercial to kick off the station's annual Toys for Military Tots campaign. Over the next month, the Student Council will help collect toys for children of local veterans, from infants to age 12. All donations collected by the Park Avenue Student Council will be included in WTBQ Radio's overall contribution, benefiting Disabled American Veterans in Orange County and service members at Stewart Air Force Base. To encourage participation, the Student Council is hosting a toy collection contest at Park Avenue.

Kindergarten and third-grade students teamed up with the Warwick Valley Gardeners Association to beautify the planter around our school sign. Students, teachers, and volunteers rolled up their sleeves to introduce native plants that will attract various pollinators. Thank you to everyone who participated and continues to support this work at Park Avenue!

### **Sanfordville Elementary School**

If anyone heard some canine sounds coming from Sanfordville on October 26, don't be alarmed! Sanfordville students and many family volunteers gathered for the first full cast rehearsal and set build for 101 Dalmatians Kids! A big thank you to all the volunteers who helped with the set build, costume design, and all other preparations! We're excited to see our students' singing and acting talents shine when the curtain rises on Saturday, November 16.

This week, Sanfordville "kicked off" its recess program with Fox Soccer. Trainers from Fox Soccer visited the school to set up soccer games for students during each lunch/recess period. We're happy to report that all the students had a blast, and we're looking forward to even more fun in the weeks to come.

The PIE program hosted its Fall Fest at Sanfordville. Students and their families gathered around the Peace Wall at 5 p.m., where students performed a series of fall-themed musical numbers for everyone in attendance. Afterward, families and friends enjoyed apple cider and sweet treats together. Thank you to all our PIE teachers, students, and parent volunteers who helped make this event a success.

On Halloween, Sanfordville transformed into a giant pumpkin patch for the PTA's annual Spooktacular event, themed \*It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown.\* Each student picked a pumpkin from the patch and decorated it at a station before taking it home. Students also enjoyed a photo station, navigated a "not-so-scary" maze, participated in "eyeball races," explored a sensory table with "creepy crawlers" and "brains," played at the parachute and water stations,

and visited the “Trick or Treat” booth. Thank you to the numerous parent volunteers who assisted with setup, running stations, and cleanup! All of our students had an amazing time!

### **Warwick Valley Middle School**

Warwick Valley Middle School was awash in pink last Friday as students and staff united for our annual Pink Out Day, a lively event focused on raising both awareness and funds for breast cancer research. Local DJ Solace generously volunteered his time to enhance the midday atmosphere, keeping students entertained with an upbeat mix of music during lunch periods.

Kristi Greco from the American Cancer Society was instrumental in organizing the event alongside the WVMS Student Senate. Together, they set up vibrant pink inflatables and backdrops for memorable photo opportunities and brought in DJ Solace. Numerous staff members also joined in, creating and selling cotton candy, applying face paint, and providing temporary tattoos. The Student Senate designed and sold Pink Out Day shirts for all schools in the district, fostering a sense of unity and purpose. They also sold various pink accessories, including socks, necklaces, and sunglasses, allowing everyone to show their support for the cause.

All in all, this year’s Pink Out Day was another tremendous success, with more than \$6,000 raised district-wide for the American Cancer Society. It’s an impressive achievement that showcases the dedication and teamwork of students, staff, and the entire community in supporting breast cancer research and awareness. Go Wildcats!

### **Warwick Valley High School**

Warwick Valley High School hosted its annual College Fair and Financial Aid Night last week, offering students a valuable opportunity to explore a wide range of post-secondary options. Representatives from various colleges and universities were available, enabling students and their families to engage directly with admissions professionals and gain important insights into diverse educational paths.

The benefits of attending a college fair are significant; it provides a crucial platform for students to broaden their perspectives, learn about different institutions, and assess the many options available to them after high school. With choices spanning from community colleges to prestigious universities, students gain information that aligns with their personal goals, interests, and strengths.

Events like the College Fair enable students to discover programs or institutions that might have otherwise gone unnoticed. Through conversations with representatives, they can ask questions and participate in discussions that illuminate potential paths forward. It’s a time to clarify

aspirations, understand admissions requirements, and assess financial considerations – all vital components in making informed decisions about their futures.

Engaging with representatives from a variety of institutions provides students with multiple perspectives on higher education, emphasizing that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to college. Each student's unique aspirations can lead to different, fulfilling paths.

The College Fair at Warwick Valley High School highlights the importance of exploring all options in the pursuit of higher education. By attending events like this, students equip themselves with the knowledge and resources needed to make informed decisions, laying a strong foundation for future success. Embracing this journey of exploration can ultimately lead to rewarding and meaningful educational experiences.

At Warwick Valley Central School District, we are proud of the diverse and enriching experiences we offer to prepare our students for bright and fulfilling futures. From exploring career pathways in our CTE programs to gaining insights at college fairs, our students are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and support to pursue their unique aspirations confidently. Through these programs and events, we not only meet academic goals but foster resilience, curiosity, and a lifelong love of learning. We are excited to continue this journey alongside our students, families, and community, building a foundation for success in every endeavor they choose. Go Wildcats!