

**EdTalk: February 4, 2022**

**Dr. David Leach, Superintendent of Schools**

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Warwick Valley Central School District's administrators and teachers are excitedly preparing for an external peer review of its literacy program in all grades - from kindergarten through 12th grade.

The Tri-State Consortium will review in the spring as part of the District's overall appraisal of its instructional program. Warwick Valley was the first school district from Orange County to join the consortium, a prestigious network of some of the highest-achieving public school districts in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut, in 2018.

As a member, the District benefits from the consortium's expertise, its rigorous review process, and the resulting feedback, and its acclaimed training and personnel-development opportunities for principals, administrators, and other district leaders. The Tri-State Consortium identifies itself as "an alliance of public school districts committed to systems thinking and collaborative inquiry as pathways toward continuous improvement. Working together as colleagues and critical friends, we apply the standards of the Tri-State model to benchmark member districts' progress in advancing teaching and learning."

The consortium will visit the District in-person and review artifacts in the following areas: student performance (performance-based assessment, student metacognition in the learning process, and metrics of student performance), internal support (curriculum and instruction, professional learning, supervision and evaluation, equitable support for student needs, and shared vision and environment for change, and external support (parent and community support).

The results of the review will be reported at the Board of Education work session after the visit.

The teachers at each school are spending time reviewing the Tri-State Performance Indicators.

They are currently focusing on performance-based assessment, student metacognition in the learning process, and metrics of student performance data.

Each building had its teachers analyze evidence that had previously been collected and review that evidence compared to the description of the indicator. Grade-level teams have been meeting to explore, collaborate, and plan to gather evidence to support our students' success in each of these indicators. For example, the Sanfordville faculty grade-level teams met separately to explore, collaborate, and plan to gather evidence to support our success in each of these indicators. Each group was facilitated by one of the District's Tri-State-trained team members.

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

### **Pine Island Elementary School**

Students in Rebekah Jackson’s class were sitting straight, with a pencil in hand, and taking dictation on specially lined paper. They listened carefully as Ms. Jackson read the sentence, *I can see a ship*. She read it a second time, and then the students began to write the sentence. There was a lot to remember. They not only had to remember the sentence, but they also needed to remember how to spell the words and how to form each letter. Students had to remember to use a finger space between each word, and of course, they needed to write an uppercase *I* to begin the sentence and end the sentence with a period. Students used their snap word cards taped to their desks for “support” to spell words such as *can* and *a*. Snap words are like sight words; you have to know how to spell them. After students completed their writing, they worked with their partners to proofread each other’s work, including looking for the uppercase *I* and the period at the end of the sentence. Kindergartners are pretty advanced, don’t you think?

### **Park Avenue Elementary School**

The Park Avenue Green Cub Club hosted a special guest. Ryan Muehlbauer, the fourth-grade band teacher and a resident beekeeper, stopped by to teach students all about honey bees. Mr. Muehlbauer discussed the hierarchy of bees, how each bee has a specific purpose, and the importance of bees in our environment. The students viewed pictures of his apiary during two different seasons and discussed the similarities and differences they observed. They also visually compared early season honey and late-season honey and discussed the reasons for the differences. Mr. Muehlbauer then explained the process he uses to extract honey and make other products from the hive. The students were able to see and touch honeycombs and beeswax. They were also able to watch a mock ‘hive inspection’ where Mr. Muehlbauer donned his protective bee suit, opened a hive, and showed and explained the various parts. They also learned about the smoker tool beekeepers used and were surprised that the smoke did not harm the bees.

### **Sanfordville Elementary School**

Sanfordville Elementary participated in the annual, nationwide No Name-Calling Week initiative on January 18-21. This year, the theme at the elementary schools was “Plant Seeds of Kindness!” To highlight kindness as an alternative to name-calling and teasing, students had the opportunity to write a statement on flowers, thanking someone for their good deed, or sharing ideas on how to spread kindness. These positive “flowers” are now displayed in the hallway outside our cafeteria. In addition, SES celebrated No-Name Calling Week by wearing the following: Wednesday, January 19th - Favorite Team Colors and/or Jersey! Students wore their

favorite team colors and/or jersey to team up against teasing Thursday, January 20th – Sweat Shirt and/or Pants Day. Students wore appropriate sweatshirts and/or sweatpants to show that It's No Sweat to be a Friend to Someone. Friday, January 21st- Purple and Gold Day - Everyone at Sanfordville wore purple and gold, our District colors, to reinforce the idea that We Are All on the Same Team.

### **Warwick Valley Middle School**

Our fifth and sixth-grade teachers have incorporated and used *collaboration corners* in their classrooms. Our *collaboration corners* provide teachers and students with various instructional and reading strategies to increase discussion. The goal of these corners is to further develop our students into collaborators as focused in our Portrait of a Graduate. Teachers and students have multiple discussion starters for literature circles within these corners. In addition, roles for literature circles are clearly defined for students and staff. Some of the roles the students have recently engaged in are discussion director, super summarizer, passage picker, word wizard, incredible illustrator, and clever connector. Literature circles provide a way for our students to engage in critical thinking and reflection as they read, discuss, and respond to books or passages. Collaboration is at the heart of this approach. Students reshape and add to their understanding as they construct meaning with other readers. Developing into clear collaborators and communicators early on in their middle school careers allows our students to grow into well-rounded analytical thinkers throughout their middle years.

### **Warwick Valley High School**

As the senior class begins its last semester of high school, the opportunity for our soon-to-be graduates to apply for scholarships is upon them. Last week, Mary Fox, Serena Sze, and Colleen Amideneau gave a virtual presentation to over 50 senior families, which outlined the scholarship application process for local community awards as well as monetary awards from the county and state organizations. Close to 200 scholarships and awards are offered to our graduating seniors each year. The qualifications for the scholarships vary and will often focus on overall academic excellence, outstanding performance in core academic areas and the arts, community service and involvement, outstanding achievement in athletics, and commitments to pursue careers in specific fields. All seniors are strongly encouraged to investigate the scholarships and apply for any awards. If you were unable to attend last week's event, seniors and their families should sign into the Class of 2022 Google Classroom, where they will be able to view the Senior Scholarships presentation, download application forms and follow instructions on how to access the available scholarships on Naviance.