

WVCSD EdTalk: April 6, 2022
Dr. David Leach, Superintendent of Schools

For teachers in the Warwick Valley Central School District, differentiation of instruction is one of their most effective approaches. Not all students in a class will comprehend a particular subject in the same way or have the same level of interest in a specific subject area. Differentiation means adjusting the instruction to meet the students' individual needs. Teachers in Warwick deliver differentiated lessons to reach every student in their classes.

Our teachers differentiate instruction in various ways, one of which uses a "whole-small-whole" approach to lesson structure. A teacher starts by giving a mini-lesson to the whole class (whole). Then, the teacher lets students work independently or in small groups (small). And lastly, the instructor gathers the students together again to sum up the lesson and check for the students' understanding of the material that was taught (whole).

The small group instruction component of the lesson is where teachers meet with individual students or small groups of students to assist them in their understanding. When students are in smaller groups, they are more likely to open up and acknowledge when they have difficulty with a concept or skill in class. Additionally, this is the point in the lesson when teachers can engage students who may have a firmer grasp of the material. Teachers use this method to enhance students' comprehension and level of understanding. At the elementary level, many teachers take brief notes as they walk around to assist them in remembering where a student is in their learning of a particular subject or skill.

The District continuously delivers professional development to support our teachers and keep them up-to-date with the current research in the critical area of differentiated instruction. We are proud of them for providing this level of instruction to help our students be successful in the classroom.

This week's highlights from our schools are as follows:

Pine Island Elementary School

Pine Island celebrated our kindergartners' accomplishments by having a Glow Party. Our celebration focused on the phenomenal job our Wildcat Cubs have been doing with Positive Behaviors Interventions Supports (PBIS). Students collect gold tickets when they are observed promoting positive and safe behaviors. For example, as students arrive in the morning, we hear good morning, and have a good day. Safe choices are being made in the hallways, as students use their walking feet instead of running feet. And, in the classrooms, teachers are so proud of the students for showing that they have a "can do attitude" as they complete their classwork. The Glow Party was a huge success. We are so proud of our kindergartners and we cannot wait for our next big PBIS celebration.

Park Avenue Elementary School

In art class, third-graders have been working on creating coil pots. Students started by practicing making different coils and then sketching out some ideas for their final pieces. Students learn the importance of specific ceramic terms and skills, such as scoring and slipping. "Our third-graders got very creative with the different types of coils they could add to their pots and were able to paint them to make a beautiful finished product," Lisa Martimucci said. Most importantly, students could change designs, make even coils, and make sure they scored and slipped during each step.

Sanfordville Elementary School

Our fourth graders have launched into their poetry unit. During a recent lesson, students learned how the "sound" of a poem helps them better understand its meaning. Students listened to poems recited by the authors. One of their favorites was Shel Silverstein's "Sick." Students engaged in thoughtful discussions about the tone, tempo, and voice of each poem. Their deep understanding and higher-level discussions were quite impressive.

Students and staff recognized and celebrated World Down Syndrome Day with "Rock Your Socks" activities. The school chose socks because the karyotype of Down syndrome chromosomes looks like mismatched socks. Many classes decided to read the book "What's Inside You Is Inside Me, Too." Our students learned that every child, every person, and every living thing is unique, in large part, due to the chromosomes in their bodies.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Middle school students performed in our school musical, "Spongebob the Musical," last weekend, and it was such a great expression of all the hard work they have done this school year. Congratulations to everyone involved in this fantastic production! Auditions for the play occurred in October. Students who wanted a lead, prepared a solo and performed in our Cabaret performance—the students composed songs from their favorite artists and musicals. In November, our cast began rehearsals. After school, our cast members gathered in the music rooms to rehearse their songs. On many occasions, high school students would come down to the middle school to assist with these rehearsals. As the year progresses, the cast has created friendships that would not have occurred if they had not participated in our drama club. The evolution of these friendships has been a joy to watch.

Warwick Valley High School

The Warwick Valley High School academic teams have been on point! The WVHS Odyssey of the Mind team won first place in the Division III Odyssey reOMvention competition. Students Alanna Adee, Sophia Amato, Cavan Byrne, Mary Hoey, Olivia Holland, Sophia Samborski, and Arianna Weinberg were tasked with identifying an original threat to the environment that has the ability to self-replicate. The team-created technical reOMvention was able to remove the threat. The competition required the team's performance to include original music and two animal characters. The students proved to be the best, and they are moving on to the world competition in Iowa next month.

Sean Parkinson won the FFA Substate Employment Skills competition. He will be representing himself and the Warwick Valley High School FFA at the state-level competition in Employment Skills. This event includes participating in a job interview, a phone interview, a networking dinner, and submitting a written resume, cover letter, follow-up correspondence, and a job interview offer. Sean has applied for a job as a Farmers' Market Coordinator. Sean has been a volunteer at many farmers' markets in the area, and he knows a lot about the rules and procedures used at these community events.