

WVCSD EdTalk: May 4, 2022
Dr. David Leach, Superintendent of Schools

This week, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) hosted a webinar for educators on how to implement the Next Generation English Language Arts Learning Standards in New York State. The Next Generation Learning Standards are the educational goals for all New York State students in English Language Arts and mathematics from prekindergarten to grade 12. The NYSED revised the standards to ensure they are grade-level appropriate and reflect what students should know and be able to do in math and English language arts.

Educators throughout the state of New York are preparing to implement these new standards next year. This year will be the final year that the ELA 3-8 assessments will be administered using the 2010 NYSED standards. The Next Generation Learning Standards will be included in next year's ELA assessments. The ELA Regents will also transition to the new standards in June 2026.

The Warwick Valley Central School District has done a lot of work in literacy over the last several years to get ready for this implementation. One example is providing resources for our teachers so they may teach units that integrate ELA with social studies or science. Another example is providing professional development, delivered to foster a culture of advanced literacy, which New York defines as “skills and competencies that enable communication, spoken and written, in increasingly diverse ways and with increasingly diverse audiences. Advanced literacies also promote the understanding and use of text for a variety of purposes.”

Over the last several years, the district has refurbished all library media spaces to provide a welcoming area and reflects a literacy environment for the 21st century. There are spaces to present in small groups or to a large audience. There are spaces for meeting and collaborating. This change is on top of large areas for books and places to curl up with a good book, whether for pleasure or academic purposes.

The district will continue to provide our students with an education that offers a love of literacy!

Here are some highlights from our schools this week:

Pine Island Elementary School

Kindergartners in Aimee Urvater's Partners in Education (PIE) class celebrated Earth Day. In the week leading up to Earth Day, students were introduced to Earth Day and all the many different ways it is celebrated. Students brainstormed a few ways to “show our Earth some love” with such suggestions as not cutting down trees, picking up garbage, recycling, taking quick showers and baths and turning off the lights when not in use. There were four stations the students rotated through with each one addressing a different way to save the Earth. Students made litter bags and headbands from recycled cereal boxes. Students also went outside to enjoy the warm weather and pick up any litter around the school. One student summed up the day with, “Every day should be Earth Day!”

Park Avenue Elementary School

To celebrate Earth Day, the Green Cub Club invited the students of Park Avenue to participate in a week of setting and achieving health goals. Each grade had a plan for the week that focused on either protecting the Earth's natural resources and our community or trying to lead more healthy lives ourselves. For example, first-graders were challenged to engage in community clean-up efforts over the week. Green Cub Club members shared a PowerPoint presentation they created with their classes and some information they learned about our environment. Club members also updated other students and staff on things everyone can do in our community to promote environmentally friendly practices.

Students in Amanda Melican's second-grade STEM classes learn how to become packaging engineers. This work will involve students designing packages that can house plants. After they learn all about the needs of plants, students will work in groups as they collaborate to create and assemble a package that houses, protects, preserves, and displays a beautiful plant. Students will be tasked with considering the needs of plants and the constraints of packages. As a last step, students will learn about how money works in this project because they will have to "buy" their materials and stay within their budget.

Sanfordville Elementary School

To inspire their poems, teachers utilized the anchor text "*The Best Part of Me*" by Wendy Ewald during the fourth-grade poetry unit. In this book, Ewald, an award-winning photographer, asked several children, "What is the best part of you?" and presented their answers in this sometimes funny and moving book that includes striking black-and-white photographs. Our students were able to create their poems about what they believed to be the best part of themselves. Their teachers also took beautiful pictures to illustrate their poetry.

Sanfordville students are committed to making the world a better place by being green. Recognized as a Green Ribbon School, the Sanfordville Green Club always finds ways to reuse, recycle, and reduce materials. Students maintain our gardens and flower beds, spread the message of preservation and healthy habits for our land, and are working to create musical instruments with repurposed materials for the upcoming "Bash the Trash" assembly. During Earth Week, the week leading up to Earth Day, many students wrote poems about the earth, cleaned up the grounds, and made public service announcements and posters.

Warwick Valley Middle School

Our General Music students in Grade 5 are learning the difference between rhythm and beat. A beat is best described as the pace, tempo or timing that it takes to play a particular piece of music. Rhythm is how you inhabit the beat. It is what happens when you combine different notes of different durations. In essence, a piece of music's beat is its unchanging tempo, while the rhythm is a pattern in which the notes flow. After learning this, students worked to compose three measures of different note values using varying combinations of value notes that were supplied. Studies in neuroscience have shown that musical activities, such as composing music of varying rhythms and beats, stimulate the brain, leading to improved brain structure with formation of new neural connections. Participating in general music develops not only a love of music but aides in developing young minds.

Warwick Valley High School

Students Against Destructive Decisions hosted a mock crash to bring awareness to distracted and impaired driving among teens. Raymond Mark and Katie Johnson, co-advisors of the club, described the events that led up to the scene. Dominic Sirico had signed a Contract for Life with his parents, which outlined a plan for Dominic to reach out to his parents at anytime that he needed a ride to remove himself from an unsafe situation. Dominic reached out to his father, Athletic Director Greg Sirico, from a party requesting that he come pick him and his friends up because his ride was intoxicated.

After picking them up and on the drive home from the party, a car crossed the double yellow lines and hit Mr. Sirico's car head on. At that point, the mock crash scene began. Mr. Sirico got out of the car and tried to open the passenger doors. He cried out for his son and called for help. The front seat passenger in the oncoming car was partially ejected from the vehicle. Warwick Valley Police arrived on the scene first, followed by Warwick Valley EMS and the Warwick Valley Fire Department.

Emergency responders worked tirelessly to extract the children from each car. Using the Jaws of Life, the children were removed and transported to local hospitals. The Warwick Valley Police performed a breathalyzer test and determined that the driver of the oncoming car was, in fact, intoxicated. He was arrested at the scene. Mr. Mark narrated the entire event as it took place. Students wrote thoughtful reflections in classes later that day and cited the impacts that the mock crash had on them.