

**WVCSD EdTalk: June 15, 2022**

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

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As we get closer to graduation, I'm thinking about how schools can better prepare students so that everyone succeeds and feels fulfilled. Many people embraced uniformity during the last century of industrialization, assuming that individuality or learning styles didn't matter whether in school, the workplace, or even how we define success. Clearly, this approach will not benefit our students in the future.

We must value each student's uniqueness and talents. A one-dimensional view of success – our pursuit of the "average" – has severely undervalued human potential. Our profiles, strengths, and interests are all as distinct as our fingerprints. Everyone has a unique contribution to make. If we recognize this and work to strengthen it in each of us, we will arrive at a truly positive sum. For every student to succeed, no one has to lose or come up short. This approach will enable everyone – and I mean everyone – to reach their full potential.

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

**Pine Island Elementary School**

Kindergartners had a great time participating in two science experiments with Jackie LaFleur and Franshon Heyward from Ingredient. Ingredient is a global ingredients solutions company that makes ingredients that make crackers crunchy, candy sweeter and yogurt creamier. Students learned about chemical reactions and states of matter. They tasted Pop Rocks and learned how the solid candy releases a gas on their tongue to create the "popping" feeling. As the candy popped, a few eyes and mouths popped open wide as well. The second experiment involved dancing gummy worms using vinegar and baking soda. As students brought the vinegar and the baking soda together, the gummies began to wiggle and looked like they were dancing.

**Park Avenue Elementary School**

Our fourth-grade students have been participating in historical fiction book clubs during their English Language Arts class time. They chose to read different historical fiction books such as The Orphan of Ellis Island (topic of immigration) and Fighting Ground (set during the American Revolution) as they focused on reading, analyzing, and learning about history in an alternative way. Students read independently and came together in small groups to share what they read and learned each day. Through this approach, all fourth-grade classes learned all about different character traits, settings, themes, and historical content, among other elements. Lastly, students benefited by honing their collaboration and communication skills while continuing to learn about this specific historical time period and this unique and fun genre.

Fourth-grade students also enjoyed a beautiful day visiting various historic sites in the village of Warwick. Warwick Historical Society docents greeted the students at the Shingle House, Caboose, Dig Site, Baird's Tavern, the Hasbrouck Barn, and the Old School Baptist Meeting House. Students learned so many amazing and interesting facts at the various historical sites. From visiting the doctor's office and learning how he was paid to sitting in the same attic where a lookout kept watch for redcoat soldiers, students, chaperones, and teachers alike learned about Warwick's rich history. Students especially enjoyed the up-close, hands-on learning experiences related to different artifacts and tools. The trip ended with 18th-century games children would play at Lewis Park. Thank you to Warwick Police who assisted with traffic control. Also, we would like to extend our deep gratitude to the Warwick Historical Society.

### **Sanfordville Elementary School**

Our fourth-grade orchestra students were fortunate to join musicians across the district for the 24th Annual String Fling Concert at the high school. Orchestra students in grades 4-12 played to a packed house. Under the direction of Keely Blaikner, our fourth-grade students performed Impulse by Brian Balmages and The Salamander Samba by Lauren Bernofsky. For the finale, the musicians all played together, The Eye of the Tiger, arranged by Elissa Maynard. Congratulations to all for such a great night.

Melissa Rogers' second-grade class held a poetry tea. They have worked so hard writing their poems. They have learned to add literary devices like onomatopoeia, alliteration, metaphors, similes, and personification to their writing. Students have also added elements like repetition, music, rhythm, line breaks, open space, and making visuals for our readers. They learned about all different types of poems, like list poems, conversation poems, free verse, and haiku, to name a few! Students were excited to welcome their families to the outdoor pavilion to hear them recite their poems. Well done!

### **Warwick Valley Middle School**

In social studies, our students have been examining enduring issues in history and how they relate to past and current historical events. An enduring issue is a problem or challenge that has existed and continues to impact modern society. An enduring issue is one that many societies have attempted to address with varying degrees of success. Our seventh-graders have begun the process of studying enduring issues such as conflict, power, or the impact of industrialization. Recently, William Zwart's seventh-grade social studies students studied specific enduring issues and shared past and recent historical events that have impacted history. This work lays the foundation for what they will be learning in high school.

## **Warwick Valley High School**

The last full week of classes at Warwick Valley High School is traditionally reserved for our students that engage in long-term research and project-based learning to demonstrate their work and present their findings and experiences to the school and local community members.

Tuesday evening began with 14 seniors presenting their senior projects. "Explore your passion; discover yourself" is the slogan for this senior English program, Senior Project. A nationally recognized program, Senior Project is a rigorous course that consists of four components: a project-based upon a student-generated idea, a 2,100-2,700 word collegiate-level research paper, a portfolio that visually chronicles the experience, and the Senior Boards, an elaborate presentation to a panel of judges. This course is designed for the industrious student who wishes to work extensively and independently on a project of his/her choosing. This year's projects included learning the art of forging, organizing sports clinics for younger members of the community, combining photography and dance to illustrate characteristics of life, as well as many other personal passions that students were able to incorporate into their projects.

Later in the evening, two seniors presented their three-year science research projects to an audience in the auditorium. Amelia Brown and Molly Berman worked with medical experts in their respective fields over the last three years and conducted a tremendous amount of research through articles and documents that aligned with their hypotheses. Amelia researched and spoke to the effects of a keto diet on patients with Alzheimer's Disease. Molly investigated and compared the effects of concussions among high school male athletes that are involved in contact sports (football) against those that participate in non-contact sports (golf, swimming). Overall, their findings, conclusions, recommendations, and presentations were extremely impressive. They demonstrated that they truly understand the language of the diagnoses and were able to speak to it with prepared evidence and by fielding questions from the audience. We are very proud of the students who took these tough classes, and we respect how hard they worked on their projects.