

Warwick district gets \$91K grant from EPA

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WARWICK - The Warwick Valley Central School District is enhancing and expanding its environmental education program with the help of a \$91,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Agency.

The district is working with Chappaqua-based Children's Environment Literacy Foundation to create new curriculum units that focus on the environment, said David Leach, district superintendent. The district hopes to raise awareness about environmental stewardship, civic responsibility and STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) education.

"We are 100 percent committed to becoming a greener school district," Leach said in a statement.

Warwick has a long history of environmental education. It currently has two teachers who teach agriculture science, and it offers a green architecture course in eighth grade. Elementary school students learn about sustainability.

In August, the school board approved a policy of promoting sustainability education and maintaining an aggressive program to govern the use and conservation of energy.

And in July, the district decided to invest in a \$4.7 million solar power project that will generate electricity from the sun and feed it to a local power grid. The district expects to save \$300,000 a year for the next 18 years. Its annual electricity bill is \$500,000. Warwick received the EPA grant following a competitive process. Only 30 such grants were awarded nationwide, the district said.

It will use the \$91,000 to integrate cross-curricular environmental instruction in kindergarten through 12th grade. As part of the program, it will form “green teams” to lead the effort.

The district will also address environmental concerns in the community through improving recycling district-wide, starting a composting program, organizing student trips to LEED-certified buildings, and offering environmental activities to students.

Though the EPA grant is for the school district, Warwick will partner with several local organizations and share the money with them, Leach said.

These include Sustainable Warwick, the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, Children’s Environment Literacy Foundation, the Albert Wisner Public Library and the Warwick Historical Society.

“We are trying to convey to the community that the Warwick school district wants to invite the community and to partner with the community,” said James Yapp, Warwick’s assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction who wrote the EPA grant application.

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