

## Students Advocate for Others at WCS

Willsboro Central School wants students to have a voice.

The new Student Advisory Committee gives students a platform for open and honest conversations with administration.

Senior Lacey Nolette and sophmores Laney Nolette and Peyton Leerkes represent the WCS student body and meet periodically with Superintendent of Schools Justin Gardner and Principal Sarah Paquette.

“The addition of a Student Advisory Committee has proven to be an invaluable addition to our district,” Paquette said.

“Giving students a formal platform to provide feedback, share ideas and engage in solutions-oriented dialogue allows their voices to be genuinely heard. Our goal is to allow the students to feel empowered to create meaningful changes in their school environment.”

Willsboro utilizes this committee to tap into the potential of student perspectives to continuously improve the high school experience for all its students.

Students in high school are not only thinking for themselves but for fellow students at all grade levels.

“This helps bring us together and fits the theme of One Building-One School that we are using this year,” Peyton said. “Year after year, this will form a community. If we continue to advocate for students now, it will only make the school experience for the younger kids even better.”

Community and togetherness combined with school spirit are some of the top priorities for the trio of



From left to right, Peyton Leerkes, Lacey Nolette and Laney Nolette pause for a picture during a Student Advisory Committee meeting.

student representatives.

They have advocated for more school events, pep rallies, and participation in athletics and after-school clubs.

“In the future, having these mindsets and ideas will help our school out,” Laney said. “We need it because people at times just get stuck in the cycle of just coming to school and not truly looking at all the things and different opportunities we can create for ourselves.”

These conversations are helpful for all involved. Significant strides have been made by the leaders of the Student Council as they meet with district administrators.

“This committee gives students a greater voice and allows us to tap into their unique perspectives to help shape the direction of our school,” Gardner

said. “This idea emerged from the district’s recent strategic planning process as a way to increase student engagement and responsiveness.”

Student leaders are prioritizing mental health. Students have felt comfortable voicing their concerns to administration, and the group is excited to build from the positives that exist throughout the building.

“There are always going to be struggles as a teenager because we definitely go through a lot,” Lacey said with a laugh.

“But we can learn from our mistakes and make school an even better experience for the younger students. You want to see what you do well, but you always want to be better. That’s why I think this committee is great for us.”



By now you likely have seen our weekly Family Letters regarding Positivity Project traits. Within each letter it shares with you the character trait we are working on learning that week as well as a link to the P2 Family page that gives you information and questions that you can use to engage your child at home on the P2 trait of the week. Please scan the QR code to answer a quick Google Survey to let us know how you are enjoying P2 Family and what your usage has been thus far.



**Don't forget to complete the free lunch form here! We rely on this information to assure we receive proper grant funding and can continue to provide free, healthy and nutritious meals for our students every day. Scan the QR code here to complete this form.**

**SAC, Continued from Page 1**

Willsboro administration has voiced to its students that it's OK to have difficult conversations. Open and honest communication have proven to be vital during Student Advisory Council meetings.

The WCS students know teachers have the chance to meet with administration on a consistent basis, and they are thankful for the time given to them.

“This is a great chance to give them our perspective,” Peyton said. “I think it’s helpful to make our

high school experience as great as it can be and set things up for the younger students. Both Mr. Gardner and Ms. Paquette listen to us, and we feel comfortable talking to them. We always look forward to these meetings because we can count on honesty and their respect.”

# Personal Finance Course Offers Seniors Chance to Prepare for Real World Scenarios

When students leave Willsboro and head off to the real world with their sights set on continuing education in college or joining the workforce, it's helpful to know how to handle their finances.

For the second year, WCS is offering a Personal Finance Course to all its seniors.

Taught by veteran Willsboro teacher Keith Stone, the course helps students feel confident as they prepare to handle their future financial endeavors.

"At the end of the day, we are making sure our students are ready for whatever their futures hold," Stone said.

"Personal finances can be a complex topic, but we all know it's part of the real world, and it's important that our students are taught about these things."

Learning how to balance a checkbook, handle loans, develop savings accounts, coordinate automatic debit and credit payments, and complete taxes are the highlights of the class.

Students have been drawn specifically to the loans portion of the class, as the potential for college loans and car payments await.

"That's one part of the class that they are very engaged in because it applies to them in the present or near future," Stone said. "Even later in



Willsboro teacher Keith Stone teaches to his students and discusses student loan rates during a lesson in his Personal Finance Course.

life when they look into buying a house, there's plenty to teach about that."

Admittedly, there are some Old School vs. New School battles in the class, such as learning to balance a checkbook.

Nowadays it's easy to look at balances through online banking.

"There's always that battle, but it's important that the students learn the principles of finances, and that's what we are here to do," Stone said.

The class design stemmed directly from specific needs identified during the WCS Strategic Planning process.

"This process highlighted

the desire to better equip our students for their work here at WCS and their lives beyond graduation," Superintendent of Schools Justin Gardner said.

"Our 12th grade students will also now be better prepared for their futures through a new personal finance course designed to provide them with essential knowledge and skills to adeptly manage their finances beyond high school."

As the class continues this year and the heart of tax season approaches, a taxes lesson will be up next soon for Stone and his students.

Stone remembers when

he sat at the kitchen table with his father and learned to complete his taxes, and while there is no kitchen table in his classroom, he's looking to do the same with his students.

"This class is certainly headed in the right direction, and we are always looking to streamline it to offer the best opportunities possible for our students," Stone said. "After the first year, I was happy to have students say this class was beneficial for them. We want to make sure our students are truly confident and know they can definitely handle their personal finances."

# Study Skills Course Develops at WCS

If there's one thing to know well when you're in school, it's how to study.

Just knowing it's important to study, however, is not enough.

Willsboro wants students to truly know their learning tendencies and set themselves up for academic success.

Thanks to the WCS Strategic Plan, which prioritized academic support, a Study Skills Course taught by Marie Blatchley is now being offered to 7th graders.

The course aims to build a foundation of continued success and prosperity in the classroom and help students set realistic academic and non-academic goals.

"With this class, our middle school students will now be better equipped for academic challenges by providing them with explicit instruction on study skills and strategies necessary for academic excellence," Superintendent of Schools Justin Gardner said.

At the beginning of the year, students took a handful of tests to help determine what type of learners they were — visual, auditory, kinesthetic, verbal, logical, social, solitary.

"It's sometimes assumed that students know their best practices for studying, but they need direction," Blatchley said. "So we have to learn how they learn so they can identify their own tendencies and grow."

Once students have a better understanding of their learning tendencies, they can apply their knowledge to their classroom studies.

The Study Skills Course helps students be accountable for their work as well.

The 7th graders are encouraged to set goals for themselves each quarter, such as wanting to raise their math average



Marie Blatchley works with one of her students and discusses goals set for the third quarter.

from an 88 in the second quarter to a 92 by the start of the third.

This goal fits the SMART (Smart, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Timely) method Blatchley instructs to her students.

"We want students to be self-motivated, but they also have to be realistic with their goals," Blatchley said. "They can't be setting goals that are unrealistic. They have to think, 'What can I do in this span of time, and what am I

capable of doing?' When they think through this scope, they will have the best success."

In addition to study techniques and goal setting, the class also offers an opportunity for Social-Emotional Learning.

Students have a chance to talk to one another in a judgement-free setting where there's an emphasis on listening and truly hearing the words of their classmates.

"We will do what is known as circle time," Blatchley said. "It's kind of a way for students to share if they want in a safe space and make connections about what everyone is going through. The goal is to connect them and build empathy."

As the second half of the school year continues, students in the class also have the chance to learn some simple life skills such as how to address an envelope, fill out a job application, and properly write an email.

"These courses provide students with practical, real-world skills that will benefit them both in and out of the classroom," Principal Sarah Paquette said. "The study skills course teaches students organization, time management and other abilities that equip students to thrive academically. I believe this course will prove tremendously valuable to our students' futures."