

North Tonawanda City Schools



Mission

Empower students to reach their fullest potential by cultivating a community of lifelong learners who think critically about the world around them.

Vision

Students reach their academic and social emotional goals through an inclusive learning environment.

Our Values

- Perseverance
- Confidence
- Community
- Empathy
- Knowledge
- Inclusion

Superintendent's Message

Welcome Spring!

As we get set to enjoy longer days of sunlight and warmer weather, we are also building the 2024-25 school year budget.

This year, the Governor's proposed budget for education shows a \$2 million dollar cut to North Tonawanda City School District's Foundation Aid. For years we have budgeted under the Tax Cap and consolidated. We have made difficult choices and closed buildings to right-size the district and keep the budget in check. If the first run of the budget stands, it will be devastating to North Tonawanda.

We need to do more than ever as schools today to address the needs and well-being of our students, staff and community, we happily do so. We all have unfunded state mandates to increase mental health, safety, and new learning standards. To think any district could take such a cut and maintain vital support programs is unrealistic. We need you to let your elected officials know that funding public education equally is important. It is critical for creating equitable learning environments to ensure all students have the opportunity to achieve their greatest potential. Please take the time to follow our budget development process this year by going to www.ntschoools.org.

As we focus on the here and now, we also are concentrating on the future of our district. We are looking forward to welcoming the new kindergarten class this summer, who will be the Class of 2037! While it is hard to imagine our little ones being grown up, it happens in the blink of an eye. We are excited to see the future doctors, lawyers, teachers, trade and whatever career paths the future holds for them. Today more than ever, we are "building the future today" with creative programs and curriculum to help our children develop their curiosity, imagination, resilience and problem solving. We thank you for your support and working with us to create opportunities for our students to thrive.

Be sure to follow us on Facebook and on the new website coming this summer for updates on all the news and events happening in our district.

Sincerely,

Gregory J. Woytila
Superintendent of North Tonawanda City Schools



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Lions Club Spreads Warmth and Cheer

Spruce Elementary would like to extend a huge thank you to the Tonawanda's Erie Canal Gateway Lions Club! They spread holiday cheer to our families with free winter apparel. "We are very appreciative," says Principal Lindsey Turner. "Our Spruce families greatly appreciate their support!"



Learning About Careers

On Tuesday, January 9th, the High School Career Center hosted Kathleen Buckler, a Biologist, Ecologist and Professional Wetland Scientist from the US Army Corps of Engineers, who presented to our Biology classes on Invasive Species and Ecology.



Drake Says Perfect Attendance is Just Duckie!

To recognize excellent attendance, Drake Elementary is awarding "Drake Duckies" to students that show improvements in their attendance or have perfect attendance.

Here are first graders Briana Richards, Cody Lesika and Caleb Engel who earned Drake Duckies for perfect attendance in the first month of school.



North Tonawanda Fine Arts Announces Annual Student Spotlight At The Carnegie Art Center!

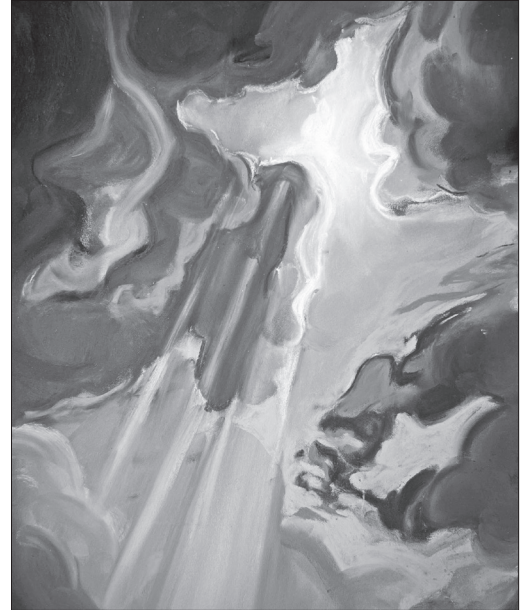
By Dean Vallas – Director of Fine Arts

On Tuesday, March 12th, the Carnegie Art Center on Goundry Street will open its doors for the Opening Gala of the NT Student Spotlight.

Presented as part of "Arts in Our Schools" month, the annual honors showcase is a partnership between North Tonawanda School District and the Carnegie Art Center.

The show will feature works by selected students from all grade levels and also pieces created by our amazing Visual Arts Faculty. As part of the celebration, The Carnegie will also host the district's Family Fun Night on Wednesday, March 20th, where families will be able to create art with our teachers. The showcase will be featured for the month of March.

Please check ntschoools.org/finearts and the Cargnie Art Center's website for more details. *Student Art by Archer Carrasquillo.*



A Caroling We Will Go!

To continue the theme of community service, Drake Elementary second graders went caroling up and down Drake Drive during the holiday season.

They were very excited to share their music with the neighborhood.



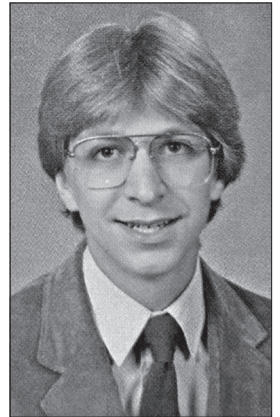
Superintendent Sign Off

Superintendent Greg Woytila will be retiring this June after teaching 14 years in North Tonawanda and being an administrator in the Lumber City for 17 years. No doubt an appropriate caption under a photo of him would read, “Hometown Boy Makes Good”. “I feel blessed that I was born in North Tonawanda, went to school in North Tonawanda, graduated from North Tonawanda, taught in North Tonawanda and will retire from North Tonawanda,” he says. “It’s been a nice ride to go all the way through the educational system here. It has been nice that both my sons, Adam and Joel attended school here as well as programs at O/N BOCES.”

When graduating from high school, he wasn’t sure what direction his career path would take him. “I had always wanted to go into education, but when I graduated in the eighties, there was a boom in educators. I was guided away from it, so I dabbled in the business world and the travel industry.” He knew that his heart wasn’t in it and after two years told his parents he was going back to school to pursue teaching. “My parents almost pulled their hair out,” he laughs. “But I knew I was making the right decision and the class work came easy to me.”

He student taught at Gilmore Elementary School and was offered a position there the following summer. “I was in the classroom for 14 years and taught third, fourth and fifth grade. I went and got my Masters in Reading so I could teach birth to 12th grade as well. I loved being a teacher.” He also acted as the teacher union rep for many years.

Woytila says he reluctantly went into administration. The administrators at NT convinced him to go back to school for his administration certificate and he became the Principal of Gilmore. He was then promoted to Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and four years later was made the Superintendent. “I guess the leadership bug was there and even as a Superintendent I got to teach and plan. I enjoy problem solving and everything just sort of happened naturally. Ironically, my current office is right across the hall from my classroom at Gilmore, so it seems that I have come full circle as I wrap up my career.”



turf field and the fact that they are state of the art and always available. It has really allowed the programs to grow. I think the things I had to deal with that frustrated me as a teacher, helped me to identify things that needed to be fixed as Superintendent.”

He says one of the hardest things for him as a Superintendent and a parent was the COVID year. “My son Joel didn’t get his graduation, completion ceremony or prom like the rest of the cohort and that probably bothered me more than it did him. As a Superintendent it is not part of your training on how to deal with a global pandemic. I had to become an expert on health and safety measures. We also had to figure out how to get each student a device, internet and how to get online curriculum to them. I and my team always pitch in wherever we are needed whether it is shoveling a sidewalk or working in the cafeteria. Never ask a staff member to do something you wouldn’t. As Superintendent, I had to become a Jack of all Trades.”

Asked about leaving NTCSD behind at the end of the school year, he admits he is a little worried about the transition. “I have been available for 24/7 for so long. My phone is never off or on silent mode. I am pretty sure for three to six months I won’t be doing much, but I will honestly say I would not cry if I never see snow again,” he laughs. “But in all seriousness I would love to teach at the college level. I would like to inspire teachers at the elementary level or help school districts with projects where they have to consolidate. Luckily I have a lot of interests, so I know I will be keeping busy with home renovations, spending time with my sons and traveling. I have been so lucky to be part of this community for my whole life and it will always hold a special place in my heart.”

He says being the Superintendent was definitely exciting as he faced new challenges and helped to guide the administrators under him. “Every capital project allowed me to use my business knowledge to spearhead projects and knowing North Tonawanda as the small city it is, helped me to make choices that were in the best interest of the community.” He says he is very proud that they have never gone over the tax cap and kept the capital projects tax neutral. “We were able to look at the big pictures and see what the district might be facing down the road. I always tell my administrators it is hard to get back something once it is completely gone so we scaled back where we could and were careful not to eliminate programs where possible.”

Under his tenure he had to make the tough decision to close Gilmore and Meadow Elementary Schools but along with his team, he was also able to remediate the middle school to an intermediate school and move the middle school closer to the high school. “It allowed those students more advantages and to partake in more programs as they prepared for the next step in their education,” he explains. “I am also so proud of the Fine Arts Center and the



Buffalo Bandits Visit NTI



National Lacrosse League Champions, the Buffalo Bandits, came in on December 7th and participated in physical education classes. Physical Education teacher, Nick Casillo, said “The students were very excited to meet some of the players and work with them on fundamental lacrosse skills.”



(LtoR) Malena Nalbene, Harper Cowell, Noah Plewniak, Ben Clark with PE teacher Nick Casillo and the Buffalo Bandit players.

College Signings

Congratulations to student-athletes Bridget Cake, Brenna McCarley and Hannah McCarley who signed their letters of intent to play sports for college.

Bridget will be attending Muskingum University where she will be bowling and studying nursing. Brenna will be attending Buffalo State College to wrestle and major in Business and Hannah will be attending Buffalo State College to wrestle and has not declared a major.



(LtoR) Brenna McCarley, Hannah McCarley, Athletic Director Matthew Cook and Bridget Cake.

Fire Department Talks Careers



On December 1st, NTHS hosted career speakers from the NT Fire Department.

Students had the hands-on experience of extinguishing a fire outdoors using a fire extinguisher; they were also able to sit in the cab of the fire truck and flash the lights and sound the siren.

Thank you to our NT Fire Department for all that you do!

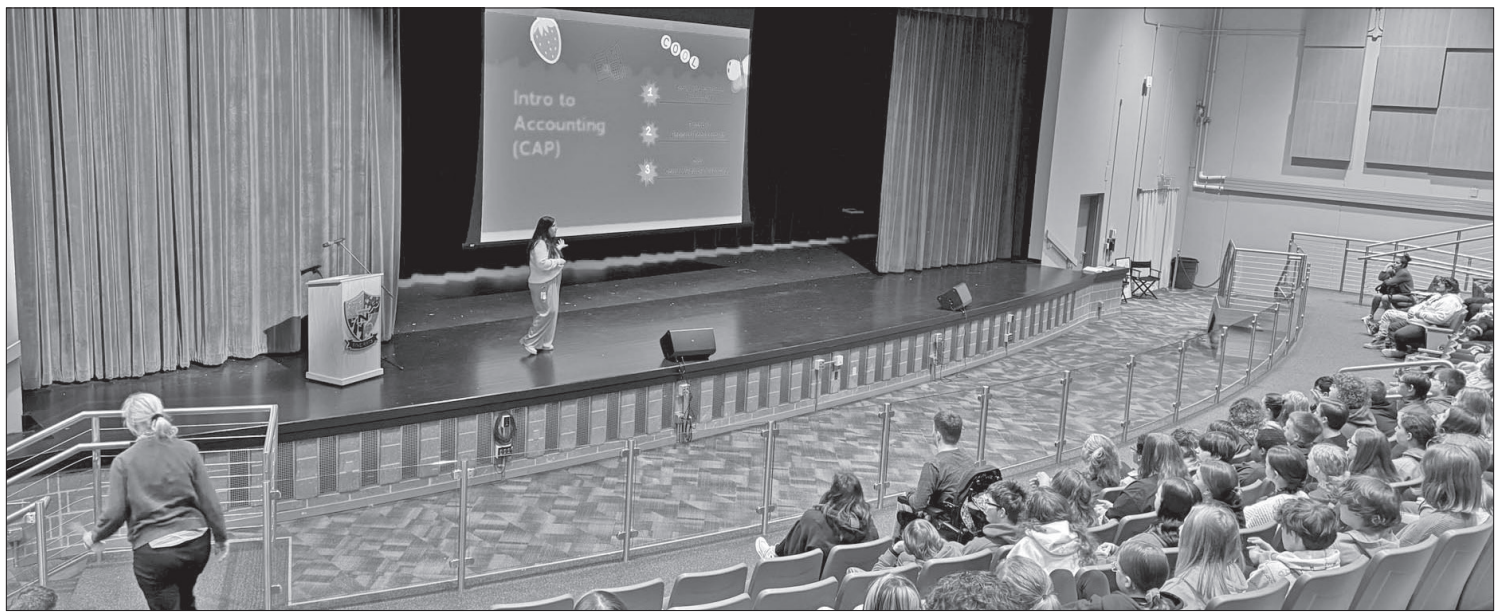


Middle School Explores CTE and Electives at High School

During the week of January 22nd, Sue Evarts (8th Grade Cohort Counselor), organized a tremendous week for students at NTMS.

Throughout the week, Team Draco and Team Phoenix visited the Orleans/Niagara BOCES' Niagara Career and Technical Education Center.

On Friday January 26th, students from both teams learned about high school electives and the Honors program from NTHS staff in our Fine Arts Center; additionally they learned about student life from the Lumberjack Mentor group.



Harvard Attendee Discusses College with High School Students

On Monday, January 8th, the High School Counselors and Career Center hosted the Harvard Hometown Recruiter Presentation in the Library.

A local WNY Newfane Class of 2022 graduate, currently attending Harvard, spoke about the Admissions process, financial aid, student life, and numerous opportunities offered at Harvard.



Two North Tonawanda Educators Named Master Teachers

Congratulations go to two of our educators, Todd Bush and Melissa Elliott, who were selected as New York State Master Teachers.

The New York State Master Teacher Program fosters a collaboration among the selected outstanding K-12 STEM educators, whereby they develop expertise in the areas of content, pedagogy and students' families and communities. Educators were selected from more than 1,700 public school teachers with a passion for inspiring the next generation of education leaders. Twenty-five of those 147 are from Western New York. Todd Bush is a Math teacher at the Middle School and Melissa Elliott is a Biology teacher at the High School.



Governor Kathy Hochul says, "Our teachers and counselors have the vital responsibility of educating and supporting New York's future leaders. I am proud to celebrate the New York State Master Teacher Program and the hardworking educational leaders who are helping us build a world-class education system here in New York. We are incredibly grateful for our educators and counselors for their dedication to inspiring and shaping the minds of children."

Mr. Bush and Ms. Elliott were formally welcomed into the Master Teacher Program of WNY at Buffalo State College on January 10th. They both are looking forward to working with like-minded K-12 STEM educators who exhibit similar levels of talent and passion and continue to push the boundaries for their practice to create more powerful learning opportunities in our STEM classrooms.

Spruce Winter Spirit Week

Our Spruce students had a great time during Winter Spirit Week! There were lots of holiday crafts all around the building. Many of our classrooms focused on holidays around the world and winter fun!



Jayden Burns Leads Country in Racewalking

It has always been a goal of Jayden Burns to be able to compete in racewalking. While the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) allowed girls to compete, it wasn't until the 2023-2024 school year that it was opened to boys. Jayden enthusiastically joined when North Tonawanda CSD Coach Brenda Perrella was looking for participants for the Section VI A/C Inter-Divisional meet at Houghton College in December.

Little did he know in his first outing, he would set the record for the U.S. Boys Indoor Track and Field season in the 1,500-meter racewalking event with an 8:20:90 time. "I was surprised. I didn't expect it. I had no clue. I was really totally shocked," he said. "I was not expecting it since I was just doing this for fun." Coach Parrella says, "It was amazing to see and a shock to everybody that he is the first seed in the nation! I never thought I would have a nationally ranked athlete my first season coaching."

Burns credits his mother, Jennifer Delaverne, as his inspiration. Jennifer participated in indoor track. "She would tease and push me and that made me fall in love with running. She would say, 'come on Jayden, come run with me.' I was slow at first, but then I picked up speed and I started racing kids in the middle school, then started track at High School and I loved it. It was amazing."

To increase his health, he started working on his eating habits. He even signed up to take the Culinary Arts class at the Niagara Career and Technical Education Center to learn how to prepare food. Jayden says his passion is cooking and he hopes to open his own restaurant in the future. "It's one of my goals. I like to feed people. I don't like to see people starve. And I like feeding my family and friends. Also it helps me to eat healthier for running track too."

Teammate Aiden Raymond also received news that he has placed in second place behind Jayden nationally. "It's very exciting," he says. As for Coach Perrella, she is looking forward to seeing how much her team will grow and plans to help each of her athletes reach their full potential. "As a coach, it's nice being around dedicated athletes like Jayden. If I have athletes like Jayden and Aiden, I have nothing to worry about."



Jayden Burns, Brenda Parrella and Aidan Raymond.



Spruce Students Learn About Holidays All Over the World

Second-grade students at Spruce Elementary "traveled" around the world this past December to learn about how other cultures celebrate the holidays.

Students studied the holiday traditions in Italy, Sweden, Holland, and Mexico. They also learned about Diwali, Hanukah, and Kwanza.

What an interesting and fun learning experience!



Sophie Watson and Laylani Laracuento retelling the *Legend of La Befana* from Italy.

Tradition of Tree Lighting & Auction Bring Holiday Spirit

The tree-lighting ceremony and silent tree auction on December 7th at North Tonawanda High School was a wonderful way to celebrate the holiday spirit with all of our staff, students and families. Attendees had a great time enjoying the festivities, including story time in the library courtesy of our own Superintendent Greg Woytila, and a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Claus!



MS STEM Exploratory Lab Gets Lesson in Robotics

The 8th grade Drones & Robotics class is using the STEM(a) lab as a collaborative space to utilize our new Vex IQ Robotics system. They are working collaboratively to complete activities where they will construct and code robots to solve problems and compete against their peers.

Some of the activities will include: Robot Soccer, Maze Completion and Castle Defense.



Spruce Boys Achieve Goal

Congratulations to the Spruce Elementary students on our Boys on The Run Team! They completed their 5K and we are so proud of them.

Third grade girls will have the opportunity to join the Girls on the Run Team in spring.



Spruce Students Inspired By Recent Reading

Second grade students at Spruce Elementary have spent the winter months celebrating their hard work spent writing small moment stories and their “big kid” reading of several books. The students enjoyed studying story elements and characters, while working on their fluency and knowledge of words and word patterns.

They enjoyed many books and activities learning about Native Americans and settlers and how they used natural resources to provide for their needs. The students experienced hands-on activities such as making butter and stone soup, which transitioned nicely into sharing the things they are grateful for such as their family and friends.

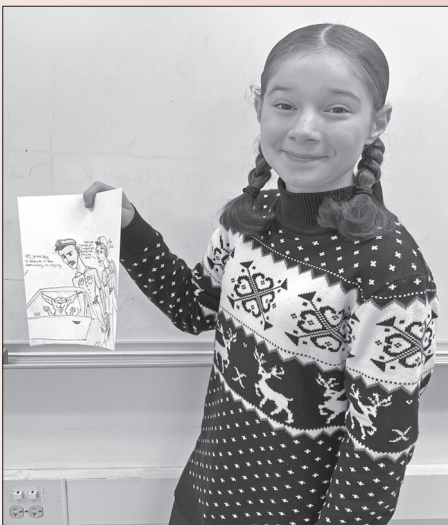
Recently, they began studying the world of non-fiction. Students shared their knowledge on various topics and have begun to write their own non-fiction books.



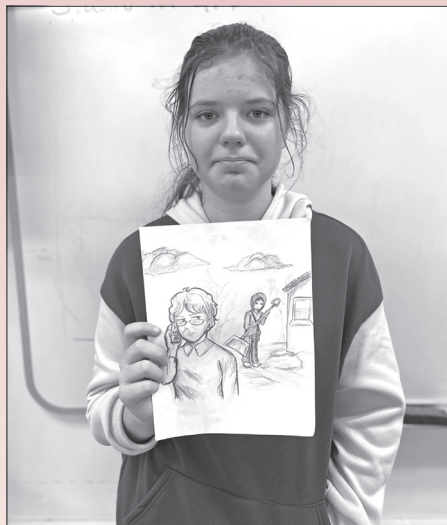
North Tonawanda Middle School Celebrates Young Artists’ Spotlight in *Bee Newspaper’s* “Best Of The Police Blotter 2023”

Three talented students from North Tonawanda Middle School, Grace Gabel (7th Grade), Kiley Tomsic (8th Grade), and Aryna Liashkevich (8th Grade), have achieved a remarkable feat by having their artwork featured in the December 27th and 28th editions of the *Bee Newspaper’s* “Best Of The Police Blotter 2023.” “This recognition not only highlights the students’ artistic prowess, but also their unique perspective on local events,” says their Art teacher John Szablewski.

Students were asked to choose one of five ‘Blotter’ candidates and illustrate the story. The young artists will each receive an artistic prize package in honor of their accomplishment, collectively valued at \$100. This is another opportunity where our students become integral members of the art community. Join me in congratulating these students!



Grace Gabel - 7th Grade



Aryna Liashkevich -8th Grade



Kiley Tomsic -8th Grade

Volley Power



Some 5th and 6th grade girls, at North Tonawanda Intermediate School, participated in the Volley Power program through The Champion Project (TCP).

TCP hosts camps/clinics, teams, school and community programs to make sports accessible to all kids in Western New York. The girls were coached by student-athletes who play on the Buffalo State College volleyball team, and had the chance to show off all their skills at a tournament. They learned how to set, serve, and bump!



Students Get Sweet Lesson in CTE



By Madison Duchnik

February is CTE month. What is CTE? This stands for “Career and Technical Education”, classes include FACS (Family and Consumer Science), Technology, Business and so much more! This month is a celebration of the role that CTE has in readying students for college and career success. These classes help teach skills you will use throughout life, whether that means while attending college, trade school, or working directly after high school.

On Friday, February 2nd our two FACS teachers, Miss Duchnik and Ms. Platt, took our new full-year FACS class, “FACS for Life” to Platter’s Chocolate. Students learned about the production lines, food science, employability skills needed for a career at Platter’s and the history of how it originated right here in North Tonawanda! Now due to shipping, Platter’s is considered to be a worldwide business.

On top of the many wonderful units taught, this full year FACS class gives students the ability to enter high school with a CTE credit. Throughout the year students rotate between teachers to thoroughly learn different modules within the FACS field, as well as skills needed in their everyday life. Modules taught include College & Career Readiness, Financial Literacy/ Money Management, Families, Introductory Culinary and Advanced Sewing Skills.

Our two teachers, Miss Duchnik and Ms. Platt, are very passionate about preparing students for their life outside of school. It is wonderful that students have the opportunity and interest to take a class like this!



NORTH TONAWANDA
CITY SCHOOLS
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Middle School's "Finding Nemo" Goes Swimmingly!

Our Middle School students crushed it with their adaptation of Disney's Finding Nemo JR.

Our cast and crew did a great job with this beloved musical based on Pixar's movie. The story of Marlin, an anxious and over-protective clownfish, lives in the Great Barrier Reef with his kid Nemo, who longs to explore the world beyond their anemone home. But when Nemo is captured and taken to Sydney, Marlin faces his fears and sets off on an epic adventure across the ocean with the help of Dory and a laid-back sea turtle, Crush. The whole gang overcomes challenges on their journey to find each other and themselves.

