

# North Tonawanda City Schools



## Mission



To provide an excellent education to all that encompasses developing confident, creative, competitive and caring students.

## Vision

To develop a nationally recognized school system focused on: A collaborative environment that fosters the academic, emotional and social growth of each student through quality and purposeful educational experiences. Students becoming independent, productive and globally competitive citizens. Instilling the belief that each student is invaluable.

## Core Beliefs

North Tonawanda Lumberjacks are:

- Lifelong learners
- Understanding
- Motivated
- Brave
- Empowered
- Respectful
- Just
- Academically sound
- Caring
- Knowledgeable
- Strong

## Superintendent's Message



As we welcome 2021, we are in a changing world. We have become pros at testing for COVID-19 and now we are looking to master the vaccine. The rules and regulations around the process to safely acquire and administer a vaccine are still being developed as I write this. North Tonawanda has been and will remain committed to safety, as well as being a district that offers its facilities and knowledge to the Department of Health to ensure that the community is offered all it can.

Remote and hybrid learning is well underway, but that does not mean we have not been adjusting as needed. The K-3 program has seen more school time learning and reinforcement of teacher lessons. The Intermediate building continues to do more live streaming as the days progress. Our secondary students (7-12) were best equipped to adjust to this new style of learning, but we are seeing some attendance issues. At the time of this letter, the New York Regents exams have not been cancelled and every effort to be prepared for them is needed. Please let your school know if you need help going forward and please work with your children to stress the importance of giving 100%.

We hope to be back to normal sooner rather than later as there is great optimism with the vaccine. In the meantime, we are planning for what the end of the year may look like if we still have restriction. We have lost much due to COVID: Field trips, assemblies, dances, parties, celebrations, but we have also benefited from smaller class sizes, more family time, a better understanding of how technology can help, and most of all, a sense of caring and compassion for those around us.

The Board of Education is developing a budget for the 2021-2022 school year that will focus on safety, educational opportunities, and a solid foundation to move NT into the future. Let's focus on what we can do in the future and leave the past behind us.

Stay Lumberjack strong and stay safe as we hopefully start the path to returning to a safe and healthy normal.

Sincerely,  
Gregory J. Woytila  
Superintendent of North Tonawanda City Schools

## Celebrating Our Veterans

The Intermediate School really knocked it out of the park honoring our country's veterans who have served and are currently serving.

The students spent two weeks leading up to November 11th creating pictures, cards and writing letters to area veterans. They were then delivered to the North Tonawanda Recreation Department with a hot breakfast.

Students and staff also submitted pictures for the NTI "Wall of Fame". "This wall will stay up as long as possible to serve as a reminder of all who have sacrificed so much for our country," says school Principal Katie Smith.



# Grad Serves Country

Congrats to Shawn Schaefer, Class of 2020, for graduating U.S. Army Basic Training recently! Shawn attended Drake Elementary, NT Middle School and NTHS.

We are so proud of him!



# Wishing Our Troops Happy Holidays

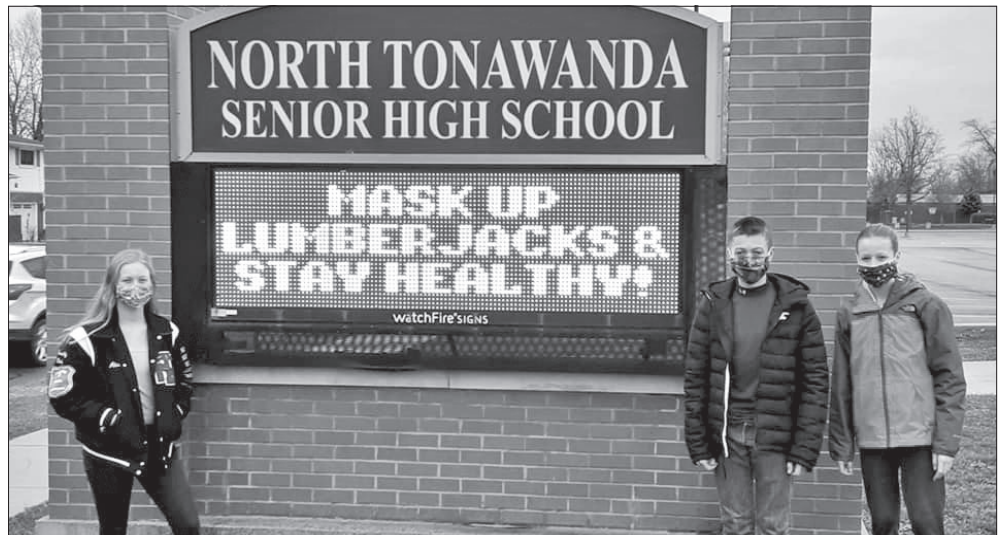
As part of Girl Scout Troop 70268, North Tonawanda student Alaina Roberts recently collected holiday cards from local groups to help spread Christmas cheer.

The high school junior then delivered them to the Niagara Falls Air Force Base to thank them for their service and wish them happy holidays.



# Covid Testing

North Tonawanda held another successful Covid 19 testing at the North Tonawanda Alumni center. We are doing our part to keep everyone safe!



(LtoR) Alaina, Harrison and Meredith Roberts.

# Signs of Joy

Students and staff at Drake Elementary were greeted two days during the month of December with a big sign that read "Joy" in the front of the school.

The school secretary, Mrs. Craft, saw a Facebook contest to nominate someone or someplace that has been working hard during the COVID crisis. She nominated the elementary school and they got the good news that they were chosen! The sign was donated by SignGypsies of WNY and was supposed to be up for one day. When Mrs. Craft called them to explain only half of their students would see it because of the rotation, they generously agreed to bring it back later in the week so everyone could see it on their way into school. It definitely helps to get everyone in the holiday spirit!



Dexter Carrasquillo and Aubrie Cannon.



# Virtual Dance Party Gets Intermediate Students in Holiday Mood

DJ Keidel brought the spirit once again! NTI students participated in a Dancing in December themed virtual dance party the evening right before winter break. "It was a great way to all come together, see familiar faces, and have fun before taking time to relax and rejuvenate," says Principal Katie Smith.

Mrs. Keidel set the scene by hosting the party from her self-made sleigh. Special guests included the Grinch and Frosty the Snowman. Students were asked to come dressed in their holiday gear and dance the night away.

Four winners were chosen, 4th place, Max Glurich, 3rd place Haley Geartz, 2nd place Isabella Rose and 1st place went to Rylea Szymczak. DJ Keidel gave a special award to Penelope Gebhardt for her dancing skills and non-stop enthusiasm.



## Spruce Staff Receives Some Self Care

This school year has not been one of the easiest for anyone in education. The pandemic has shut down a lot of normal activities for staff and students. Many students and staff are struggling with not only making up for lost ground from COVID-19 related learning loss, but prolonged anxiety and stress.

Spruce Elementary counselors Chris Zon and School Social Worker Amy Gorman have been conferring with their Principal Patricia Adler on how to lift the spirits of the staff at their school. They came up with the concept of Wellness Wednesdays. "Since Wednesdays are our virtual days, it is a good time to focus on the teachers and their needs," says Mr. Zon. "We are trying to uplift the heavy load we are all carrying and empathize self-care."

So far the staff has been treated with activities like yoga, a Family Feud style game with prizes and even some fun snacks and refreshments to bring a smile to their faces. "It is up to the individuals if they want to participate," says Mrs. Gorman. "But everyone who has walks away feeling a little bit better and a little less alone in this crazy time we are living in."



*Chris Zon and Amy Gorman with their cart of holiday cheer.*

## Middle School Participates in PB&J Drive

The Middle School Junior Honor Society participated in a community service project during the month of November.

Students collected donations for the Peanut Butter and Jelly Drive which benefits local food pantries. This year, JHS collected 248 jars of peanut butter, jelly, and fluff!

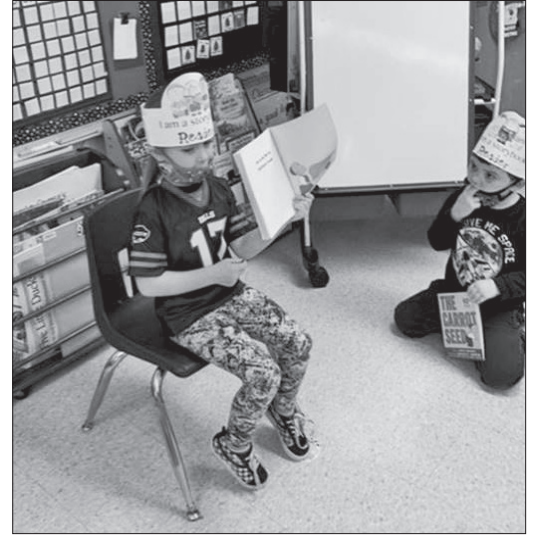




# Kindergarten Students Proclaim “We Are Readers!”

Kindergarten students at Spruce Elementary have become beginning readers. “We began this school year with our Reading Workshop unit: *We Are Readers*,” says teacher Suzanne Nyitrai. “In this unit, students learned the differences between non-fiction and storybook reading. The children used their new reading skills as they read independently, with their stuffed animal reading partners and when in reading conferences with their teachers.”

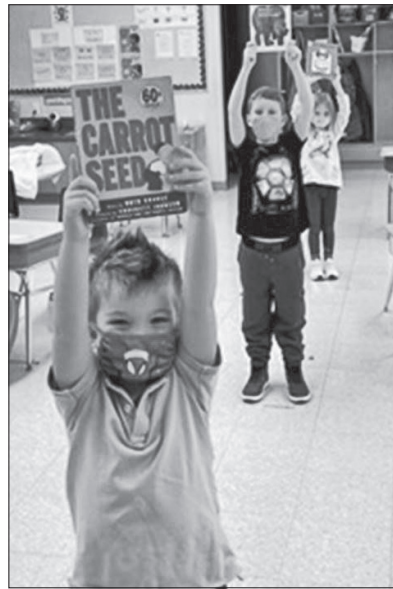
To celebrate the end of this important unit, the students chose their favorite storybook and could read it to their classmates. A parade was then held where each of the students held up their book and declared themselves readers. There was certainly a lot of excitement at Spruce School and each class celebrated the tremendous growth each student has made. Well done everyone!



Adrianna Fellenz in Mrs. Lesmeister and Mrs. Valentine’s class reading to classmates.



Mrs. Nyitrai’s class lining up for the parade.



Mrs. Himes’ class shows off their favorite books.



In Mrs. Olewnick’s class, Major teaches the ABC’s to his reading partner, his stuffed animal.

## Let’s Go Bills!

Drake students celebrated their favorite NFL team’s playoff appearance the Friday before the Bills took on the Colts. It turned out to be a pretty exciting game and everyone was thrilled that they won!



LaZareia Reid, Chloe Taughrin, and Lawson O’Connell



Autumn and Ava Krantz



Abigail Vogel, Lily Woodhouse, teacher Mrs. Godwin and Emma Morreale.



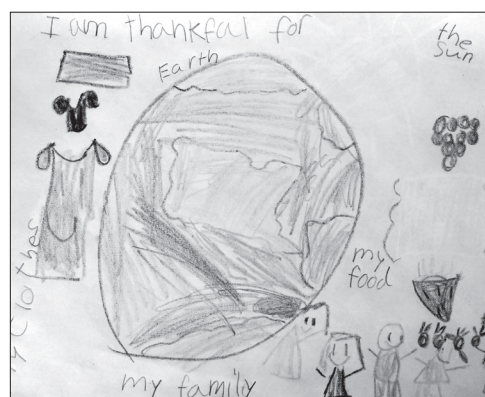
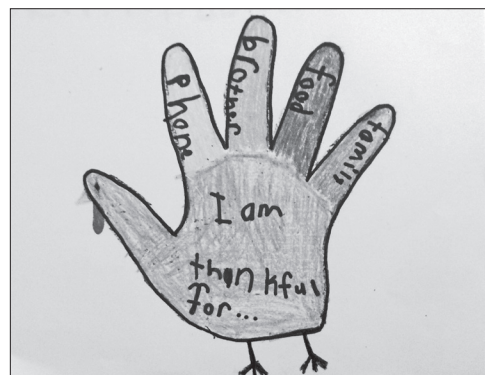
# Drake Elementary Students Participate in Senate's Thanksgiving Day Celebration

North Tonawanda Art teacher John Szablewski asked his virtual students, at Drake Elementary School, to participate in the New York Senate's "What Are You Thankful For?" celebration.

Students from kindergarten to third grade submitted entries that ended up on Senator Robert Ort's website. "The submissions received are remarkable in what they represent – showing gratitude and respect for family, friends, our community, and many other important subjects and activities," says Senator Ort. "I am humbled and honored to see such inspiring contributions to what is a deceptively difficult question: "What are you thankful for?" On behalf of the New York State Senate, I would like to offer my wholehearted congratulations to all of the participants in this year's Thanksgiving Day Creative Celebration."

Mr. Szablewski congratulated his students on their creativity and the Senate's recognition. "Now more than ever, participation in the arts within the community is very important. As my coffee mug says, "The Earth without art, is just eh." North Tonawanda CSD Director of Fine Arts, Dean Vallas, added, "This is a wonderful opportunity that Mr. Szablewski has provided to his students and honor for our district."

Congratulations to our students! To check out their amazing artwork you can view it on Senator Ort's page at <https://www.nysenate.gov/senators/robert-g-ortt/thankful>.



## Theme Days Help To Brighten Holiday Spirit at Spruce

Spruce Elementary staff have been having a lot of fun, before the Winter break, to get everyone in the holiday spirit.

Before the holidays they have held dress up days with themes like Reindeer, Elf and Ugly Sweater to keep the students entertained. Spruce's Support Team organized fun dress up days for their in-person and remote students to join in on! The hope was to build a sense of community, add some school spirit and overall fun for everyone involved. The halls, classrooms and computer monitors were filled with Santas, Reindeer, Snowman and Elves as everyone joined in the festivities."



School Social Worker Amy Gorman, Principal Patti Adler and School Counselor Christopher Zon.



Layla from Mrs. Moore's Second Grade Class, shows off her homemade snowman costume!

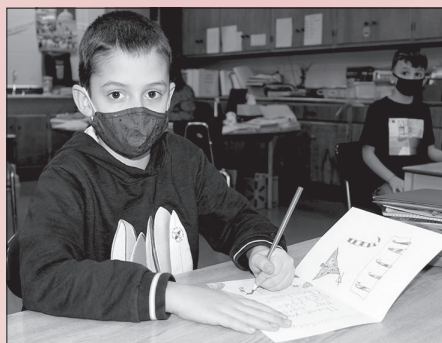


Suzzane Nyitrai's Class Participating in Elf Day!

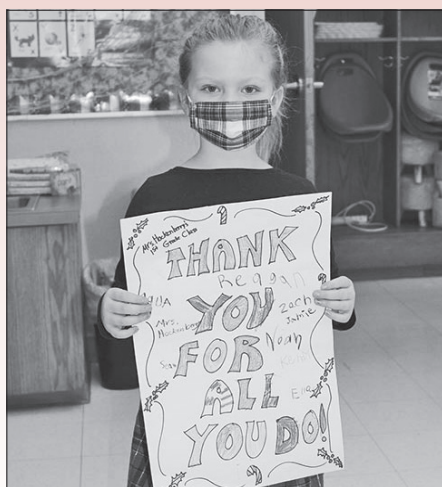
# Drake Celebrates Supermarket and Pharmacy Workers

While many people don't think of supermarket and pharmacy employees as essential workers, they are responsible for helping to keep families fed and able to get their medicine during this pandemic.

Students at Drake Elementary were encouraged by third grade teacher, Miss Moore, to show their gratitude for their efforts. Students made cards and posters to say thanks at Tops, Aldi's and CVS. Principal Janet Matyevich says she thought it was a great project for the students. "We are really hoping it brings a smile to their faces and lets them know we appreciate them."



Jacob Moeller



Reagan McCarthy

# Spruce Staff and Students Embrace Lessons on Empathy



Before the holiday break, Spruce School Counselor, Chris Zon and School Social Worker Amy Gorman, choose a lesson on empathy to share with the students. "December is Empathy month at the school," explains Mrs. Gorman. Empathy is defined as the understanding of or the ability to identify with another person's feelings and experiences. One of the lessons was conveyed by Mrs. Gorman's daughter who works as a nurse in a nursing home. She recorded a video message for the students about the struggles that some of the residents were having with not being able to share the holidays with their families. "We thought it would be nice if the students made ornaments and cards for all the residents to make their holidays brighter," says Mrs. Gorman. "We made over 100. It gives them a valuable lesson in being conscious of other people's feelings and helps us all embrace the true meaning of the season."

# Drake Celebrates Thanksgiving

Mrs. Diprima and Mrs. Conjerti's kindergarten class at Drake Elementary worked on a multi-disciplinary project for Thanksgiving. They learned some facts about the holiday and then they used fine motor skills to make a turkey costume. To top it off, they utilized their gross motor skills to dance the "Turkey Pokey." Set to the tune of the *Hokey Pokey*!



Savannah Riexinger



# Boxes of Hope Initiative Has Another Successful Year

Over 200 families in North Tonawanda got help from the Box of Hope campaign. Thanks to the generosity of the community and our district's teachers and students, each child received a gift and each household got a box filled with non-perishable food.

Lumber City Pastor Chad Rieselman said, "This season has hit everybody hard, not just the people that live in poverty. It's everybody who's struggling right now." High School counselor Jennifer Kupiec says the school district's committee was concerned they would not be able to help out as much as they had in previous years because of the pandemic. "We used to ask for 12 items for the 12 days of Christmas, but decided it would be easier if each of our schools just brought in one item. For example the High School would focus on pasta and sauce, another school would focus on macaroni and cheese, another just cans of vegetables, etc."

The District started their drive in November since they were not sure if school would stay in session. Students and staff rose to the occasion and were able to collect a substantial amount of food to contribute. "Everyone was very generous and we were so happy to help out again," says Ms. Kupiec. Many students volunteered their time to help with packaging the food on December 15th either for their service learning hours or just to help make the holidays brighter for those who are having a tough go of it.

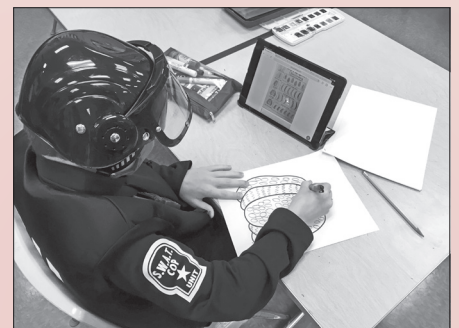


(LtoR) Daniel Riley III (9th grade), Alaina Roberts (11th grade), Avery Geartz (9th grade) and Shelby Walter (9th grade).

# Japanese Artist Inspires Fifth Graders

Art teacher Melinda Wright used Japanese artist, Yayoi Kusama, as a starting off point for her fifth graders.

The contemporary artist is known for her pumpkin painting and sculptures. Students used her artwork and portrait to inspire their own works of art and uploaded their assignment to Schoology, a virtual learning environment and social networking service for schools.



# NTI Students Participate in Virtual Paint Night

On December 11th, North Tonawanda Intermediate students showed off their creativity online. Friends of NTI held a Virtual Paint Night for their students. Each Junior Jack was given paint, two types of brushes and a canvas to paint the night away.

Mrs. Rose, one of our Junior Jack parents, led the kids step-by-step through the process of creating a snowy winter masterpiece. Mrs. Rose is a Buffalo Public School Art teacher and the mother of Isabelle Rose, a fifth grader. She graciously volunteered to teach eighty-five artists on the process of creating a work of art. Many families made it a Friday Family Fun Night by getting parents and siblings involved in painting. Everyone's painting came out so great!





NORTH TONAWANDA  
CITY SCHOOLS  
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## Intermediate Students Inspired by Picasso and Matisse for Art Projects

Intermediate School students were inspired to create animal pictures based on artwork by Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso.

Art teacher Melinda Wright challenged the students to create “Piggasso” and “Mootisse” as art parody.

