

# 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

Dear Lumberjack Community,

As we eagerly anticipate the arrival of warmer spring weather, we are also diligently working on the 2025-2026 school year budget.

This year, the Governor's proposed budget includes a modest 2% increase in Foundation Aid for our district. However, overall State Aid to the district is projected to decrease by 3.85%. We expect to receive the final aid numbers from the state later in April. Additionally, we have had 40 teachers announce their retirements at the end of this school year. We extend our heartfelt congratulations to all of them for their dedicated service to North Tonawanda. Their retirements will significantly aid in balancing our budget for 2025-2026. As we move forward, we are carefully aligning our future staffing with our projected enrollment and anticipated revenue to ensure stable average classroom sizes and programming.

Spring is also a perfect time to reflect on the wonderful highlights from the winter season. We enjoyed exceptional band and chorus concerts and had the honor of hosting an All-County concert. The High School Musical, Hadestown, was a phenomenal success. Our Winter sports teams performed admirably, and the Unified Sports season kicked off with bowling. Our art department showcased student talent with the Student Spotlight Art Show. We also celebrated 20 of our High School students at the Quality Students of the Tonawanda's Awards.

Looking ahead, Phase 1A of our capital project will commence this summer with roof replacements and brickwork at Drake, Spruce, NTHS, and the transportation center. We are also excited to host the BOCES Regional Summer School at NT Middle School and our Extended School Year program at NT Intermediate.

Stay connected with us on Facebook and our redesigned website for updates on all the news and events happening in our district.

Sincerely,  
Dr. Jeffrey Jachlewski



## \*\* CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT UPDATE \*\*

The North Tonawanda City School District voters approved a \$39.9 million capital improvements referendum last year. Construction began this past summer; Superintendent Dr. Jeffrey Jachlewski and the Board of Education are pleased to report that they are a year ahead of scheduled improvements on exteriors and roof repairs.

The District is looking forward to begin Phase 1A at Drake Elementary, Spruce Elementary and the High School this summer; followed by Phase 1B next school year.

# Gingerbread Houses Help Put First Graders in Holiday Spirit

Carol Kiedrowski's first grade class, and HANCI volunteer, Olga Ciovacco, created festive gingerbread houses before winter break.

The students have been studying "How-To" books throughout the school year, gingerbread houses was the final unit for the CT (Consultant Teacher) classroom. "This is the first time we did the project at Ohio School," she explains. "The students did an awesome job and everyone was so happy with how their house turned out and could not wait to bring it home."



*HANCI volunteer Grandma: Olga Ciovacco. Along with students: Matthew Annunziato, Palmer Raffel, Mya Warmington and Mason Howard.*

# Art Alive Club

Congratulations to our NTI Art Alive Club! Under the direction of Art teacher Karen Knight, the club participated in the annual Art Alive Celebration at the Albright Knox Art Gallery (AKG) and won Best Craftsmanship for Schools K-8!

"Art Alive is a wonderful celebration of the arts; participants recreate living representations of famous works of art for prizes," says Knight. This year, NTI students chose to recreate Joan Miro's "The Garden".



## STRATEGIC PLANNING \*\* UPDATE \*\*

The North Tonawanda City School District is in the middle of their five year strategic plan (2022-2027). The District remains committed to their mission of empowering students to reach their fullest potential by cultivating a community of lifelong learners who think critically about the world around them. "All of our buildings are doing the work to reach their academic and social emotional goals through an inclusive learning environment," says Superintendent Dr. Jachlewski.

The District is staying committed to meeting student needs by investing in innovation, engaging learners and workforce preparedness. They are focused on students' outcomes and are hoping to see graduation rates improve. "It is an ongoing process," says Dr. Jachlewski. "We are thankful to New York State for the opportunities they have afforded us to have a clearer vision to focus on this summer so we can bring it to life for our students next school year."



# Drake Students Learn About “The Legend of the Christmas Pineapple”



It looks like North Tonawanda Middle School Art teacher John Szablewski's talents extend to literature as well! To kick off the holiday break, he recently shared his third book "The Legend of the Christmas Pineapple" with the Drake Elementary School students. "In 2020 I published "Hey! I'm Clay!" and in 2021, I published "Hey! I'm Sketch!" Each book talks about where their respective art material came from."

He was inspired to write by his mother, who established a lovely tradition when he and his sister were young. "Every year she would buy my sister and I a Christmas storybook to read throughout the holiday season. I have always cherished those memories and I wanted other families to be able to make those memories together. The greatest gift we can give is memories."

The story centers around a grandfather who explains to his grandson a family tradition centered on repurposed ornaments and a pineapple. "This story is actually based on my relationships with all my grandparents," says Szablewski. "They had a whole list of interesting traditions that they would celebrate each holiday season. I tried to bring all of their memories out in the grandfather character. I can see myself as both the boy and the grandfather one day!"

Not only did Mr. Szablewski spend a morning reading to several classes at Drake Elementary, thanks to the Friends of Drake he was able to gift each child with their own personalized copy of the book to share with their families. "I really wanted this book to be a new family tradition, like Elf on the Shelf," he explains. "There is a participation component to it where families can read and participate in bringing the legend to life!"

The best critique came from the reactions of his young audience. "Whenever you write, you never know how the audience will take to the work. I am honored that my story is being celebrated this year in the school district and within the local community. I loved hearing the students laughter and that they were excited to meet me, a real author! I appreciate that Dr. Jachlewski read my book during the Tree Lighting Celebration as well! I hope that this experience inspires the next generations of authors and illustrators!"

# School Superintendents Partner with Niagara County Sheriff's Department for Active Shooter Training



Recently at the Orleans/Niagara BOCES' Conference Center, school superintendents, including our own Dr. Jeffrey Jachlewski, chief school officers and school resource officers underwent training with the Niagara County Sheriff's Department.

Lieutenant Shawn Grapes and Lieutenant Chris Wesolowski, part of the Sheriff's Department's Emergency Response Team, presented the audience with various scenarios and discussed the different response tactics to protect their campuses in the case of an active shooter.

The school officials refreshed their training on how to prepare, be vigilant, and how to stall the threat until the police can arrive to the scene. They engaged in some interesting dialogue and were grateful to have the two officers there for this valuable training. Thanks to Sheriff Filicetti, Lieutenant Grapes and Lieutenant Wesolowski for their service, time and expertise!

## Drake Shows Some Love for Bishop Gibbons Residents

Drake Elementary students created heartwarming Valentine's Day cards for residents at Bishop Gibbons.

Thanks to our NTHS students who helped the elementary students deliver their messages. It just goes to show a little warmth goes a long way on a cold winter's day!





# My Little Ducks Land at Drake

Students at Drake Elementary returned after the Christmas break with a rather large surprise in the front office vestibule!

Through fundraising and the support of the “Friends of Drake” PTO, the school was able to purchase their very own “My Little Ducks” arcade game! This arcade machine will be used throughout the school year as an academic and behavioral incentive for students. Principal Scott Mueller says, “We want kids to be excited to come to school and have an opportunity to be recognized and rewarded for their positive behavior and academic achievements. We also want to use this game to support our DRAKEWAY character values, such as our student of the month awards.”

Starting in January Drake is also adding our “Riders of the Month” award, where kids will be recognized for their safe behavior on our school buses and have an opportunity to win a rubber duck. “Birthday celebrations, opening year orientations....there is a lot we have planned on how to use this arcade game to promote a positive school climate,” says Mr. Mueller. “And it’s very fitting that we are the Drake Ducks, which helps boost our school spirit”!



## Hark the Spruce Angels Sing

The Spruce auditorium was filled with the sounds of the holidays as our students put on an amazing show!







# Tree Lighting Casts Warm Glow at High School

Our students and staff made the annual tree lighting truly magical: visitors decorated cookies, listened to our amazing band, made crafts and loved hearing our Superintendent Dr. Jachlewski read a holiday book. A great time was had by all!





# Buddy Exchange

Right before the holidays there was a very special moment between two of our schools. NTI Self-Contained Life Skills teacher, Bridget Galus, coordinated with Spruce Elementary Life Skills teacher, Lindsay Swanson, to host a collaborative gift swapping.

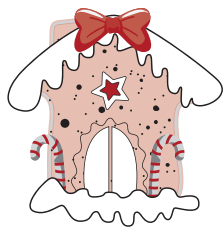
“With the generous help of classroom sponsors, we were able to pick a class to share the holiday joy with.” says Galus. “My students loved the idea of sharing with the 12:1:3:1 classroom at Spruce! Books and plushies were bought with the donations, each student had the chance to pick out a special gift and learn about giving rather than getting. Once everyone had a gift, we decorated wrapping paper and learned how to wrap the gifts. The students were excited to give their gifts!”

Each one of Galus’ students picked a name and received a buddy to work with. “We made our way to Spruce, introduced everyone, and split the students into groups. Some groups read the book right after, others played with the plushie, and other students went around meeting new peers. My students worked on being teacher helpers and assisting in any way needed.”

It was a great way for students to acquaint themselves with upcoming NTI students and celebrate the holiday spirit!



## Gingerbread Time at Spruce Elementary



Spruce Elementary students in Miss Kayley Trimboli’s class invited their families to join them for some holiday fun creating gingerbread houses.

The students had a great time designing and building their houses with their family members. There was even a photo booth to capture the memories!





# Mobile Museum of Tolerance Addresses Prejudice at School Districts Collaboration Event

Students representing the Niagara Falls, Niagara Wheatfield and North Tonawanda School Districts recently partook in a day of team building and learning at the Mobile Museum of Tolerance (MMOT). Niagara Falls City Schools Superintendent, Mark Laurrie says he was impressed by the museum. “It is the perfect vehicle to bridge our continued efforts to embrace tolerance and understanding among our students. It is a great centerpiece for today’s efforts.”

The event was held at Niagara Wheatfield High School as part of the Tri-District initiative to keep a conversation going about tolerance, multiculturalism and race. The MMOT vehicle is a world-class learning experience, utilizing innovative technology and interactive lessons to bring the message of tolerance directly to schools and communities nationwide. Their aim is to inspire people of all ages and backgrounds to promote human dignity by empowering them to raise their voices to combat anti-Semitism, bullying, racism and intolerance.

Wendy Weisbrot, Manager of Holocaust Education Resource Organization, says their educators empower participants with knowledge of the dangers of the past in order to create a better future and the museum has been very well received. Niagara Wheatfield CSD’s Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Technology, Jennifer Golias said, “I think it went great. A teacher told me how students were talking about it in class the day after and how powerful and important the presentation was. It made them think and left an impact enough for them to be talking about it with others outside the event.”

Each of the districts has also hosted the MMOT at their schools and it has been well received by staff and students alike. The Superintendents, Mark Laurrie (Niagara Falls CSD), Daniel Ljiljanich (Niagara Wheatfield CSD) and Dr. Jeffrey Jachlewski (North Tonawanda CSD) say they have been pleased with their collaborative efforts and look forward to continuing them for years to come. Mr. Laurrie says, “The stamina of effort these three years passed and what brought us together has been nothing short of phenomenal. Our students and communities are better for these efforts. The Museum of Tolerance was an outstanding vehicle to promote understanding and harmony among three schools that have much more in common than what divides us. The interaction, familiarity and friendships that are developing will last a lifetime.” Mr. Ljiljanich added, “The Tri-District Student Leadership group has given all of the students a chance to learn more about their neighboring districts. The interpersonal interaction through icebreakers, activities and shadowing has increased understanding and empathy for one another.” Dr. Jachlewski says none of this would be possible without the efforts of their staff and students. “Our districts are also committed to doing this work, and we are proud of our teachers and staff for providing unique opportunities and experiences for our kids. These opportunities and experiences will be what they remember when they leave our schools.”









# Hats Off to Teacher Aide Chelsea!

Alexandra Bertini's homeroom class at NTI is so appreciative of classroom aide Chelsea Sieczkarek. Chelsea, who hand-knitted all 24 of the students a hat for winter. What an incredibly thoughtful thing to do!



## It's Santa!

Santa and his elf visited Drake Elementary School on Friday, December 20th during the school's "Polar Express" day!

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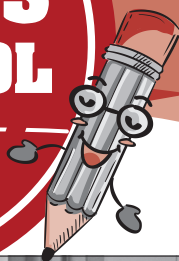
# 100 Days of Learning and Fun

Ohio Elementary first grade students had a fun and colorful fashion show through the halls to celebrate the first 100 days of school.

Many of the students showed off their artistic talents with home-made shirts and paper crowns. It was a great way to kick off the mid-winter break!



**100 DAYS  
OF SCHOOL**



## Rush Delivery from North Tonawanda to the North Pole Please!

Kelly Billman's first grade class had a magical visit to the historic North Tonawanda Post Office! The students mailed their letters to Santa Claus and learned how the post office operates.

It was a festive start to the holiday season!



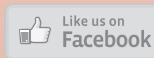


NORTH TONAWANDA  
CITY SCHOOLS  
176 Walck Road  
North Tonawanda, NY 14120

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## Lady Jack Champs

Congratulations to the Lady Lumberjacks Basketball team, the Niagara Frontier League Champions!

The Lady Jacks defeated Lewiston Porter 63 to 38 to earn the championship title. The team's hard work and dedication led to this victory. During the game Lilly Day scored her 1,000th career point. Jakayla Brown, Ella Cashion, Addison D'Andrea, and Maddie Caron all played exceptionally well to help secure the victory.

