

N.A Walbran Newsletter

February 2026

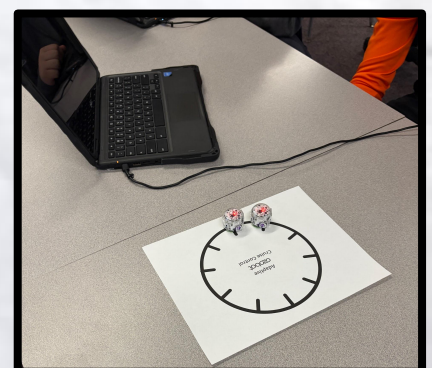
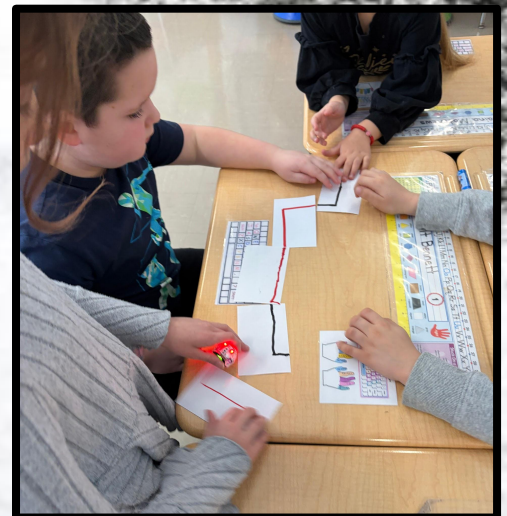
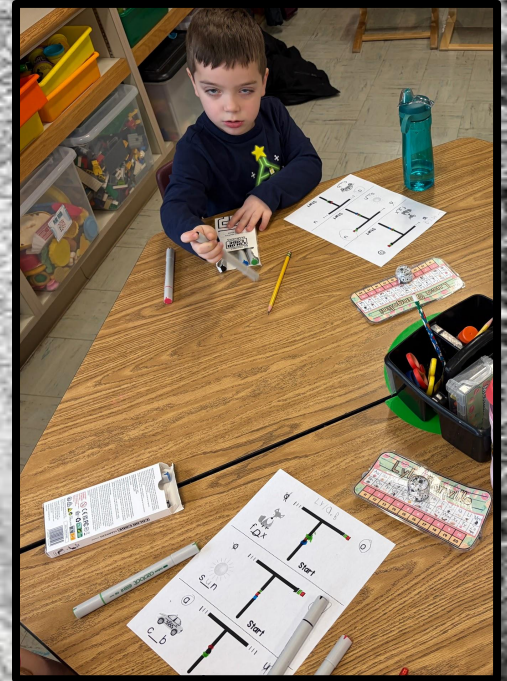
From the desk of Mrs. Allison Blackwell, Technology Support

I recently emailed the staff offering a few open slots for Ozobot lessons, and the response was overwhelming. It is wonderful to see our teachers so eager to integrate new technology into their classrooms.

I wanted to share a brief overview of the concepts we covered:

- **Kindergarten, Ms. Closinski & Mrs. Kraegar:** As part of our monthly series, students integrated coding with literacy. They programmed the bots to identify missing vowels in CVC words.
- **Island:** Students tackled an engineering challenge. They created "mystery mazes" using a specific number of index cards, focusing on how the hardware interprets lines and color codes.
- **Daskiewich:** The class focused on variables in speed, creating tracks that utilized the full range of color codes (fast, slow, turbo).

I had a great time with the students and look forward to facilitating more activities with the staff soon.



January Mentoring Program

By Ava Wittman and Isabella Mortise

The last mentoring program was January 22, 2026. There were multiple activities. For example, there were board games, card games, coloring sheets and other activities. Before these activities, there were snacks or candy, or some students chose both. There is water, pretzels, goldfish, and certain types of candy. The mentoring program isn't just an activity program, it is a program where everyone there is happy. During the mentoring program, the teacher who is in charge of the group will take you in for lunch or do an activity with you because they are the adult group leader. At the end of the mentoring program kids probably still want to stay and have fun.





PREK OLYMPICS

BY JOHN DUNHAM AND DMITRI BOYKO

MRS. DEFABIO'S PRE KINDERGARTEN CLASS PARTICIPATED IN A WINTER OLYMPIC ACTIVITY IN EARLY FEBRUARY. THEY FIRST STARTED BY DECORATING MEDALS THAT THEY WORE. THEY ALSO CREATED TORCHES AND WERE ABLE TO PLAY IN A FUN TORCH RELAY RACE IN THE GYM TO BUILD UP TO THE OPENING CEREMONIES IN ITALY. THEY MADE THESE PROJECTS OUT OF PAPER AND CRAYONS. DURING ALL THIS, THEY LEARNED ABOUT HOW THE WINTER OLYMPICS ARE HELD EVERY FOUR YEARS. ALSO THEY LEARNED ABOUT SOME OF THE SPORTS IN THE WINTER OLYMPICS, INCLUDING BOBSLED, SKIING, AND SNOWBOARDING. THEY ALSO DESIGNED AND COLORED BOOKS AS WELL. THEY LEARNED ABOUT ALL THIS WHILE HAVING FUN.



Third Grade's Trip to UCFC By Chloe Buehner



On February 10th, the third grade went on a wellness day field trip to a Utica City Football Club Soccer Clinic. The UCFC players helped and taught student soccer skills like dribbling, shooting, and being the goalie! The kids split up into 4 groups with the players and practiced skills.

They played a game on a small field, and then played 4 games on the big field. The kids played on teams against each other using the skills they learned! When they were finished playing, they sat in a circle and talked about what they did and how well they did. Each student was able to get players' autographs.



*Photos: Utica
City FC
Social Media*

4th Grade Snowshoeing at Utica Zoo

By: Dmitri Boyko

Mrs. Servadio and Miss Rieben brought their fourth grade students snowshoeing at the Utica Zoo for a Wellness Day field trip. They were expecting to just be snowshoeing then leaving, but they experienced more.

The zoo workers sorted things out to three stations. For the first station, they went snowshoeing and got to see the animals on the North Trek Trail that are able to adapt to these cold conditions. At the second station, they watched a video on how the animals adapt to this cold weather. Also at this station, they had hot cocoa and were coloring. At the last station, they presented live animals and after the students got to pet/touch the ones that were safe, such as banded armadillos, Madagascar hissing cockroaches, and all kinds of lizards.





This was designed for them to learn about the scientific side of animal adaptation. It was also for them to see the structures and functions of animal life. They also got to have fun while doing it. They ended up enjoying doing this for a school field trip, and having friends and teachers coming along with them made it better.



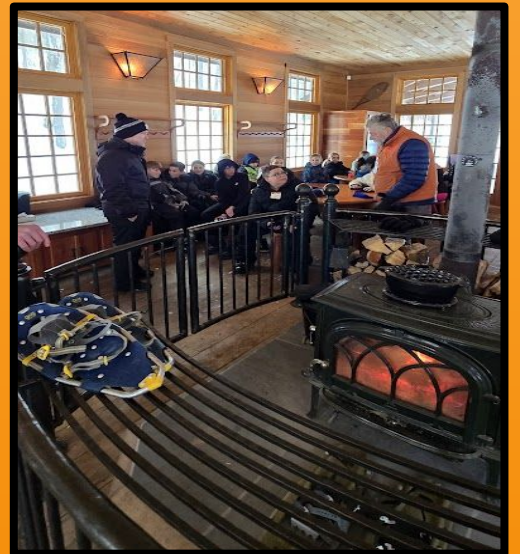
Fifth & Sixth Grade Snowshoeing Trips

By Kiley Dousharm

For a wellness day, fifth and sixth grade students went snowshoeing. Fifth grade went to Alder Creek, and sixth went to Jackson Hill. The two sixth grade classes all got on the bus, and when they got to Jackson Hill, put on a pair of snowshoes. They went on two separate trails throughout the woods, both classes taking different trails.

For fifth grade, they all got on a bus to Alder Creek to go snowshoeing. The classes split up but were on the same trail. They went in different directions and met in the middle. The fifth graders hiked either up or down (depending upon which class they were in) some steep switchback trails. It was tough, but worth the views! There was a creek next to the trail and the woods were very quiet. Students had a nice time, as most had gone snowshoeing before when they went on a trip together last year as fourth graders!

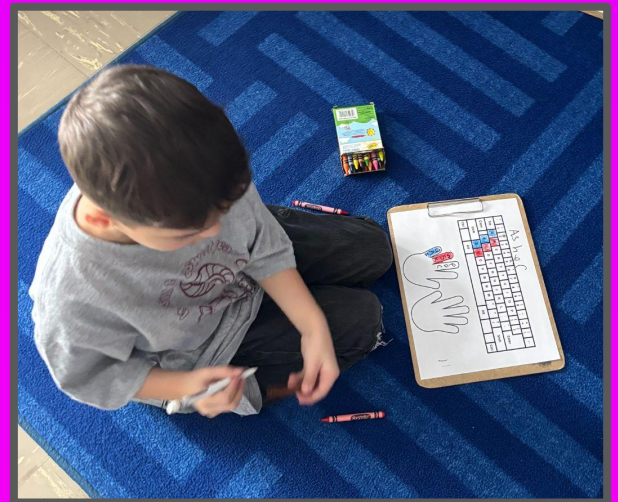




First and Second Graders Learn Keyboarding Basics

By Zachary Jones & Dmitri Boyko

During Ms. Zarnoch-Riley's digital literacy classes, the students in grades 1 and 2 learned different keys on their keyboard. By using a black and white outline of a keyboard, they labeled each key and finger with different colors to match their fingers with the keys. This is going to help them in the future with their accuracy when typing. Now, they have better typing skills than they did before. They should be ready for the higher grades when they need these skills.





Student of the Month: Salvatore Smaldon By Asteria Gotham

This February, Salvatore Smaldon, a 5th grade student has been nominated for Student of the Month! Salvatore is an amazing, helpful, smart and kind student, making him a great role model for all students. During his interview, he said that he felt great to be the student of the month, and he was really surprised when he found out that he was chosen! He says that his favorite subject in school is science, and his favorite special is gym. His favorite animal is any kind of dog, and his favorite season of the year is autumn. Lastly, his favorite color is orange.

Skyhawk of the Month: Ms. Ricci By Mason Powers

This month's Skyhawk of the Month for February is Miss Ricci, a first grade teacher. Miss Ricci's favorite activity to do with her students is to start the day with a positive attitude and say what they are happy about right now. Miss Ricci became a teacher because she wanted to be a teacher in her youth and she found a passion for making learning fun and engaging for all students. Her favorite memory from N.A Wallbran is when the kindergarten class had a glow day last year. If she could take her class anywhere it would be Universal Studios. Her secret talent is crocheting. In her free time she likes to play volleyball, go on walks, line dance, and spend time with her family and friends. Miss Ricci has one dog, a pitbull, named Champ. Congratulations to Miss Ricci being the Skyhawk of the Month!

Spirit Days By Chloe Buehner

On the week of February 12, the students and staff of N.A. Walbran had the opportunity to participate in three spirit days: Show Your Love for Your Favorite Team (jerseys, sweatshirts, hats, etc.), Show Your Love for Comfort (comfy clothes) and Spread the Love (hearts, red, pink, or white).



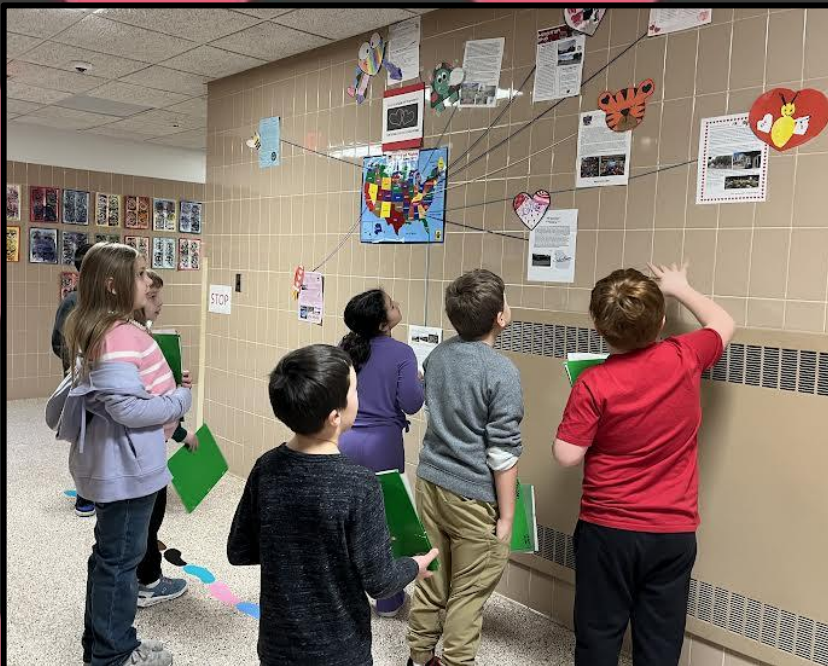
February Fitness Challenge By Mason Powers

Mr. Enos's and Mrs. Brown's February Fitness Challenge, "For The Love of Fitness," is sure to get you exercising this month. There are three different workouts that have five individual exercises. To find the days to each of the workouts, you must find the day on the calendar and it is different if you do the same one again. Then you check off the day that you have done. Make sure you do them all twice and good job to all that participated in Enos's and Mrs. Brown's February Fitness Challenge!

Country Wide Valentine's Day Exchange

By John Dunham

The second graders exchanged Valentines with dozens of other classrooms in the United States! In total, over 935 classrooms across the country signed up to participate. They had a lot of schools share their historic information with them for the Valentine exchange. Our students created and sent out 75 letters and hearts. In exchange, they are receiving 75 different letters and hearts for all kinds of different states. We got to learn all about their school, their state's culture and fun facts.



6th Grade Applebee's Fundraiser

By Caidan Schneider



At the 6th grade Applebee's breakfast fundraiser, students from all grades brought their families and came to eat at the North Utica Applebee's to help fundraise for the Niagara Falls field trip. The meal consisted of pancakes, bacon, butter, and syrup. Many sixth graders contributed their time into coming and serving all of the people who came. Parents of the sixth graders also helped out in the kitchen. Mrs. Commisso, the fifth and sixth grade math teacher, came to help out with directing students to different tables to take people's orders. Overall, everyone who came to either help or eat had a great time! Thank you to everyone who supported the sixth grade class for their fundraiser!



Upcoming Dates

By Caiden Schneider



Mar. 17: Pre-K/Kindergarten registration begins

Mar. 20: Superintendent's Conference Day (No School)

Mar. 20-21: Jr./Sr. High School Musical

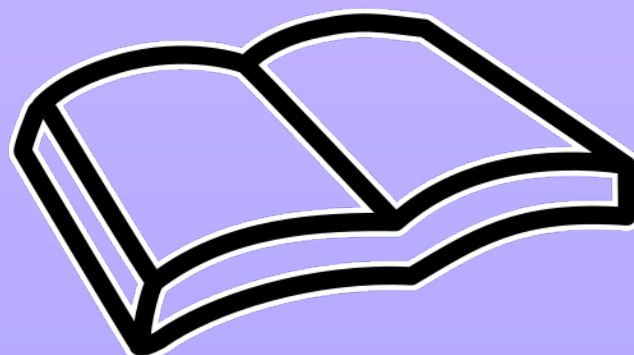
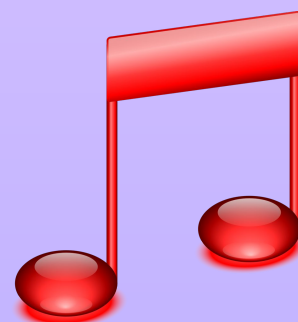
Mar. 22: Jr./Sr. High School Musical (Snow Date)

Mar. 27: Elementary Parent-Teacher Conference Day (11:30 Dismissal)

Upcoming PARP Dates:

Mar. 1-21: 3 Weeks of Reading

Mar. 18: Read-In, Grades 1-6 (after school)



N.A. Walbran Building Newsletter: Meet the Team



Editors (below):
Chloe Buehner,
Kiley Dousharm,
Asteria Gotham,
Teghan Schneider,
Olivia Tuttle

Writers (above):
Dmitri Boyko, John
Dunham, Zachary Jones,
Isabella Mortise, Mason
Powers, Caidan
Schneider, Ava Wittman

