

FALL 2025

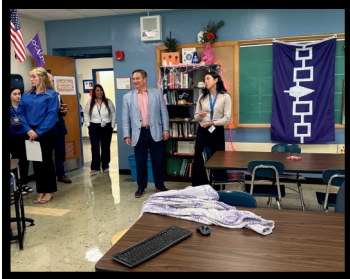
# THE PANTHER PRESS

A NEWSLETTER OF THE GOWANDA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

www.gowcsd.org

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## Uplifting Indigenous Education



Gowanda Central School District proudly welcomed state Senator George Borrello, who has represented District 57 in Western New York since 2019, for a day of cultural education, creativity, and connection this fall. The visit kicked off in the Gowanda High School library with a panel of students sharing about the opportunities there are via the Title VI Ögwe'ö:weh (Indigenous) Education Program. Afterward, the senator learned more about the My Brother's Keeper program, caught a performance by The Modern Band Project, and explored the Art Department's mural collaboration focusing on Native American heritage. Sen. Borrello also spoke with Johnson O'Malley program staff and got an up-close look at its services. Seniors Isabelle Graham and Makayla Kraft, student members of the Board of Education, were on hand to escort the senator during his visit.

Superintendent Dr. Robert B. Anderson shared his excitement over the senator's visit with staff. "There is a great deal to showcase and take pride in regarding our work with all our students," said Anderson.

"It's clear these programs are enriching both minds and hearts," said Borrello. "These hands-on experiences give students the chance to connect with their culture while also learning skills in science, engineering, and the arts."

The day also featured some time in a Seneca language class, admiring the award-winning raised bed garden at the middle school, plus a Native dancing exhibition at the elementary school.

"I came away from the visit inspired and proud to represent a district that values heritage, honors tradition, and invests in the success of every student," said Sen. Borrello in thanking staff and students for providing a warm welcome and a meaningful look into what makes Gowanda CSD so unique.



# Superintendent Message

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**Dr. Robert B. Anderson**

Dear Gowanda Community,

At the core of the district's mission is a simple, fundamental purpose: ALL students learning at high levels. Every celebration and event illustrated in this newsletter reflects our collective commitment to rigorous learning, meaningful support, and opportunities that help every student achieve.

As late fall gives way to winter, I want to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our students, staff, families, and community members for the continued support of our schools. November's theme is gratitude. As Melody Beattie reminds us, "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more."

This edition celebrates a fantastic fall season across our district, where gratitude was evident in all we accomplished together. Here are just a few highlights:

- Congratulations to our fall student-athletes for their dedication, teamwork, and sportsmanship—your achievements on and off the field are a source of pride for our school and community.
- Bravo to the Gowanda Thespians for their spirited, high-energy production of *High School Musical*. Your creativity and collaboration lit up the stage, with support from cast, crew, pit, directors, and volunteers.
- Our 7th and 8th grade Chorus traveled to Shea's Buffalo Theatre to experience the touring production of *Wicked*, connecting classroom learning with the performing arts and broadening students' horizons.
- The Fall Spirit Parade brought joy and school pride to campus, showcasing the energy and unity of our community, students, and staff.
- Throughout November, we participated in Native American Heritage Month activities, honoring local traditions and celebrating the rich diversity that strengthens our school community.
- Student of the Month recognitions highlighted the accomplishments and character of our young scholars, who continue to inspire us with their leadership and growth.
- Our schools reflected the community's spirit of giving through food drives benefiting local food pantries and a heartfelt Veterans' Day Celebration at the Elementary School that honored those who have served.
- The Career Connection program welcomed alumni who shared their career pathways and insights with our high school students, helping them imagine and plan for their futures.

These moments, featured throughout November on our website and social media, illustrate how the spirit of gratitude and giving flourishes in Gowanda—whether through service, celebration, or learning together. I encourage you to visit our social media to see more of what is happening in the district than can fit in a newsletter.

As we move into winter, there is much to look forward to—concerts, competitions, service projects, and events that bring us all together. Again, please stay connected by following us on Facebook, Twitter/X, and by visiting our district website for news, photos, and important dates.

Wishing you a peaceful season and a bright start to the new year.

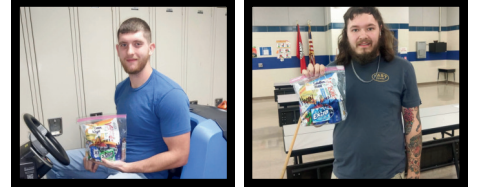
Warm regards,

Robert B. Anderson, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools

# District News

## Staff Appreciation

Goodie bags were thoughtfully provided to Buildings & Grounds staff at Gowanda Central School District to honor our custodians on Thursday, October 2nd, for School Custodian Appreciation Day, pictured here. (Goodie bags from the GCSPSS Union.)



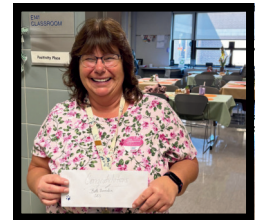
The District's nine cleaners were each presented with a goodie bag on Cleaner Appreciation Day on October 15th, in recognition of all they do. We are grateful to them for taking such good care of our schools.



## World Smile Day

***"We never know what is going on in someone else's day, but we can be a smiling face that offers kindness."*** World Smile Day (October 6th) is a heartwarming celebration dedicated to spreading happiness and encouraging acts of kindness. This day is intended to be a reminder of the simple yet powerful impact of a smile and the joy it can bring to ourselves and others. In observance of World Smile Day, Gowanda Central School Professional Support Staff union members recently nominated fellow members that show kindness and present regularly with a smile to others.

Staff were entered into a drawing for a gift certificate to a local business by submitting an email detailing how they fostered a positive attitude. The winners from the drawing were Beth Beverlin, a teaching assistant from Gowanda Elementary, and Mandy Pickering, a keyboard specialist from Gowanda High School.



## Generosity Grows at Gowanda High

The Thrifty Panther — a free clothing and supplies store at Gowanda High School — wanted to spread joy to families in need this fall and received an overwhelming show of support from district staff. More than 20 local families received pantry staples and snacks donated by GHS employees. Thanks to the power of collaboration and compassion, bags of groceries were sent home with students Friday, November 7th, ahead of a four-day weekend.

Employees and students in the model office program at GHS stuffed 38 bags with four breakfasts, lunches, dinners, and snacks for the four-day-long Veterans Day holiday weekend. "November is the season for giving, and our staff truly stepped up to make sure that our families had extra food," says Principal Rebekah Newell, noting any family in need should reach out to their school to get connected to resources.

"We are fortunate to have so many caring and generous people in Gowanda. "A food security form is available via Schoology for students to complete to request help if they have not already been identified. Organizations such as the Gowanda Boosters have pledged their support in this endeavor and have helped to facilitate other outreach for Gowanda families facing food insecurity.



# District News

## Giving Back and Growing Connections



Some community-minded students from Gowanda Middle and High School collaborated to make a difference in area residents' lives this holiday season.

Students from Sherry Enders and Corinne Hallin's classrooms facilitated a food drive this fall. Ms. Enders' class designed flyers, and collection points were set up in both the middle and high school. Students sorted and packed the donations and they opted to hand-deliver the groceries to the Dayton Food Pantry and the Master's Plan Cafe the morning of Wednesday, November 12th. While there, they also helped stock and organize ingredients and treats for Thanksgiving dinners.

Mrs. Angie Miller and pantry/cafe staff worked alongside the students as they volunteered, then gave them a tour of the facilities, an overview of the outreach efforts, and a little background history. "The excitement and enthusiasm of these children truly touched the hearts of our volunteers," said Angie Miller on behalf of the leadership team at The Master's Plan and Dayton Food Pantry. "We want to extend our deepest and heartfelt thanks for your time, hard work, generosity, and the support from the Gowanda students."

Both classes are longtime volunteers at the Gowanda Food Pantry, but this was the group's first time assisting the Dayton Food Pantry. The field trip was an opportunity to make some connections, hone their life skills, and gain real-world, hands-on work experience.

## Panthers Celebrate Native American Heritage Month

The Title VI Ögwe'ö:weh (Indigenous) Education Program at Gowanda Central School District provided a morning of cultural crafts, activities, and a dance assembly Friday, November 14th, in celebration of Rock Your Mocs, Crocs and Silly Socks Day during Native American Heritage Month.

Students and staff united to pay respect to the rich cultures, traditions, and contributions of Indigenous people. In addition to festive footwear, turquoise ribbons were also worn by our Panther family in a show of pride. The day featured games of longball, weaving baskets, collaborating on a poetry project, participating in dance workshops, reflecting on a land acknowledgment map, making medallions, attending traditional storytelling, and Seneca language workshops.

A highlight of the morning was watching their peers take the spotlight in a Native dance performance in the auditorium.



# High School News

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## Staying Warm This Winter



Overseen by the Thrifty Panther, an array of knit hats, gloves/mittens, scarves, jackets and more are spread out on a long table near the main office at Gowanda High. All students are welcome to take what they need to stay warm this winter. In addition, students are welcome to shop for other needed items at the Thrifty Panther during open hours on school days.

Donations of new and gently used winter gear are welcome. Please contact Mrs. Draegert in the Counseling Center at 716-532-3325, ext. 6014 or email [msdraegert@gcslearn.org](mailto:msdraegert@gcslearn.org). Thank you to our Model Office students for helping keep the Thrifty Panther and its warming table stocked and tidy! We appreciate your attention to detail and commitment to helping others!

## Peer to Peer Animal Education

At Gowanda Central School District, it is common knowledge that student Savayah Long is devoted to helping animals and wants to make a difference in the lives of all creatures, great and small. Savayah, a senior at Gowanda High School, was warmly welcomed as a very special guest speaker for Mrs. Holly Klink's Pets and Wildlife for Students class on Monday, October 27th.

She presented a "Rodentia" lesson on rodents — specifically gerbils — and also discussed the Small Animal Science program, in which she is in her second year as a Career & Technical Education student at the Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES' LoGuidice Educational Center in Fredonia.



"I have loved animals and taking care of them for as long as I can remember," said Savayah, who brought with her a furry friend – a gerbil named Atlas – to assist her during the presentation.

Savayah provided her peers with an overview of guinea pigs, mice, rats, gerbils, and hamsters while also discussing their eating habits, character traits, habitats, and more.

It was a full-circle moment for Mrs. Klink who, in 2019, helped a trio of fifth-graders (Patricia Griffith, Leah Taylor and Savayah) to convince the Board of Education to approve the PAWS Club formation. The club was dedicated to animal education with members advocating for animals and promoting responsible decision-making when it comes to their welfare. Following the pandemic, the club evolved into an elective option at the high school.

"She did a wonderful job!" says Mrs. Klink, noting Savayah's longtime passion for animals as an "OG" member of the PAWS Club. "After she was done, Savayah talked about the BOCES program and answered all the students' questions about it. It was amazing to see."

# High School News

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## Immersive Indigenous Experience



A group from Gowanda High School attended the Honoring Our Roots Conference recently facilitated by the Western New York Indigenous Education Advocacy Network. Dozens of Indigenous students from Niagara Wheatfield, Akron, Buffalo, Gowanda, Lake Shore, Silver Creek, and Salamanca school districts were in attendance at the event held October 23rd.



Students participated in hands-on cultural experiences and post-graduation planning. They picked activities such as fishing, beading, traditional games, indoor cooking, outdoor cooking, beading, language, basketmaking, STEAM, archery, and cordage. Experts throughout Haudenosaunee territories traveled to the Seneca Nation's Cattaraugus territory to facilitate the activities.



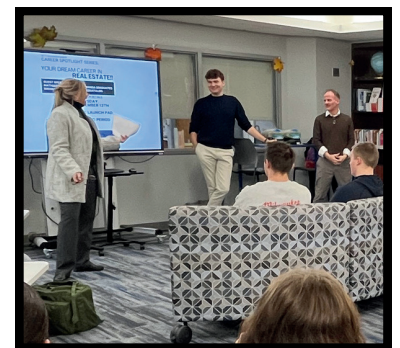
The students enjoyed lunch catered by chefs provided by the Dream Catcher Foundation and listened to keynote speaker Dr. Darryl Tonemah Ph.D. A table fair featuring local colleges, trade schools, and employment opportunities was set up for students to walk through. Attendees also participated in a "game of life" to learn more about financial literacy. The day ended with a social.

The WNY Indigenous Student Conference was a mini-precursor to the National Indian Education Association Convention and Trade Show, which will be held in Buffalo in October 2026.

## GHS Career Series Continues with Local Real Estate Agents

Real estate agents and Gowanda Central School District graduates Brenda Gernatt, Brian Szkatulski, and Mathias Arbeiter, presented on the career opportunities within the real estate industry on Thursday, November 13, at Gowanda High School.

Students learned about the soft skills needed for the job as well as the New York State licensing process. "Understanding your client's needs and wants is a top priority in this field" was the main message, as well as strong negotiation and writing skills, problem solving, and navigating complicated financial aspects. They also learned about the laws, regulations, and continuing education requirements associated with a NYS Real Estate License.



Thank you to Danahy Real Estate and our presenters for an informative session on the opportunities available along this exciting career path!

# Middle School News

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## Temporary Tattoos, Permanent Panther Pride

A unique fundraiser at Gowanda Middle School recently resulted in a raucous display of Panther pride. Students in fifth grade through eighth grade gathered in the gymnasium on Friday, October 31, 2025, to watch staff members get temporary tattoos. Dozens of students purchased the \$1 tattoos and chose which staff member to receive the semipermanent body art during the Boo Bash and Halloween incentive celebration at GMS. Between staff and students, \$145 was raised to be used toward future incentives! All proceeds support the Student Council's efforts at the middle school.



Thank you to Mrs. Austin-Jones, Mrs. Beback, Mr. Bett, Mr. Bugenhagen, Mrs. Browning, Ms. Browning, Ms. Clark, Mrs. Degenfelder, Mrs. Fullone, Mrs. Geist, Mrs. Hallin, Mrs. Hausler, Mrs. Hageman, Mrs. Lutz, Mr. Maginnis, Mrs. Maracco, Mr. McDonough, Ms. McMullen, Ms. Nellist, Mrs. Pomeroy, Mrs. Lauer, Ms. Novoa, Mrs. Perry, Mr. O'Rourke, Ms. Sanchez, Mrs. Luce, Ms. Thompson, Mrs. Silleman, and Mrs. Ward for participating in this fundraising effort!



## 3rd Annual 7th & 8th Grade Chorus Night Out

Students from Gowanda Middle School's grade 7/8 chorus dressed to impress Thursday, November 13, as they traveled to Shea's Performing Arts Center in Buffalo to see the Broadway touring production of "Wicked." From the moment they boarded the bus, the excitement was nothing short of "gravitationally defying."



Following the show, the students enjoyed a truly "festivating" dinner prepared by our amazing cafeteria team, led by the "spellbindingly" talented Mrs. Nichole Genovese. The cafeteria was decked out in pink and green, colors central to the "Wicked," with several large inflatable ornaments adding to the ambiance.



Music teacher Mr. Adam Bett says our students represented GMS to the highest standard. "Their behavior, enthusiasm, and respect made the night even more 'Ozmopolitan,'" said Bett. GMS students have been diving into the world of "Wicked" (both the Broadway show and the films) since last year, and seeing it live was the perfect way to bring that learning to life. It is will deep "graduation" that they say thank you to Mrs. Bettker, Ms. Clark, Mrs. Degenfelder, Mrs. Jones, Mrs. Krajewski, Mrs. Perry, and Mr. Wahl for chaperoning the trip.



The clever menu featured: Glinda's garden chef salad, Fiyero's irresistible breadsticks, Elphaba's enchanted, stuffed chicken, Madame Morrible's magical broccoli, The Wizard's Yellow Brick Road potato wedges, and defying gravity desserts. It was an unforgettable, emerald-hued night of music, memory-making, and pure musical theater magic.

# Middle School News

## Starting a New Chapter for Book Lovers at GMS

A unique literacy and engagement tool in the foyer at Gowanda Middle School is turning heads – and pages! A brand-new book vending machine is the talk of GMS. Donated by an anonymous donor via the Kiwanis Club of Gowanda, it is stationed directly outside the library/media center.

“It’s always fun to bring interesting and attention-grabbing opportunities to our students that promote literacy and the love of reading,” said library media specialist Kathy Degenfelder. “Picking out books from a flashy machine has created some buzz and anticipation.” She noted district library media specialist Kim Nobles served as the contact to the Kiwanis and did the research to find a vending machine that would best work for the GMS building. She also helped compile a list of books to purchase. “Our library team always works in tandem to find new ways to promote literacy and the love of reading,” noted Degenfelder.

Students’ good behavior is monitored at GMS and tokens for “buying” books are distributed via the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports rewards system. The vending machine will also tie into reading incentives. The donation has an estimated value of \$12,000 – \$6,000 for the machine and another \$6,000 to keep it stocked with a variety of titles of interest to students in grades 5-8.

“We are so thankful to the anonymous donor for their extremely thoughtful – and extremely generous – donation via the Kiwanis Club of Gowanda,” said Principal Darlene Sillemann, who welcomed Kiwanis representative Mr. Jerry Greenlee for a celebratory ribbon-cutting ceremony at GMS in November. “It is partnerships like these that help make so many valuable experiences for our students turn from a dream into a reality.”



## Gourd-geous in Gowanda



Gowanda Middle School students in Dakota Parks’ grade 5/6 science class enjoyed carving jack-o’-lanterns out of pumpkins with the help of Tracey Sauer in celebration of Halloween. Students used the knowledge of the scientific method to create a hypothesis and make observations about the inside of their pumpkins. Their creative gourds adorned the sign outside GMS and made a spectacularly spooky welcome for visitors.

## Keep up with our Panthers on Social Media



Facebook  
[www.facebook.com/gowandacentralschool](http://www.facebook.com/gowandacentralschool)

Instagram

@GowandaArt @GowandaMusic



TikTok  
@GowandaCSD



Twitter  
@GowandaSports @GowandaCSD

# Elementary School News

## Katy the Snowplow Visit



"Katy" the snowplow — of the New York State Department of Transportation — visited the Kindergarteners at Gowanda Elementary School on October 8th. Our curious Panthers learned about being safe around large equipment and got to sit in the driver's seat. The tires on "Katy" are larger than a kindergartner.

The DOT representatives discussed how we all must stay back away from the street because Katie can't see us if we are playing in the snowbanks. Katie "waves" by using the light on the top of the cab. Thank you to the NYS DOT for bringing "Katy" to see our students. We are thankful for your partnership in keeping our students safe!



## High Expectations

A new rock wall at Gowanda Elementary School is helping our Panthers reach new heights during physical education classes. All students in Pre-Kindergarten through fourth grade used it during gym lessons held the week of October 6-10th. They practiced safely going up, down, and sideways. "It has been fascinating to see the students progress and excel each day with climbing," says teacher Katie Stang, who describes watching the students enjoy the equipment as "amazing."

The GES physical education staff – Ms. Katie Stang, Mr. Anthony Puntillo, and Mr. David Bolen – are grateful for the rock wall addition and are enjoying watching the students gain confidence, utilize problem solving, and build strength. The PE team also collaborated to adapt a spare piece of the rock wall for students who use wheelchairs.

"Through trial and error, we found a way and one of our students was able to enjoy the wall through his own way," says Ms. Stang. "At the end of class he said 'I want to do that every day.'"

Mrs. Chelsea Kroll, GES Principal, expressed admiration for the PE staff's creativity and commitment to helping students try new things.

"These kids are going to remember these moments forever!" says Principal Kroll. "I am so proud of the PE team for being so innovative."



# Elementary School News

## Veteran's Day Tradition Endures in Gowanda

Dozens of area veterans gathered at Gowanda Elementary School on Friday, November 7th, for an appreciation ceremony ahead of Veterans Day. Students and staff — many dressed in red, white and blue — united in the gym in a show of patriotism to recognize military veterans prior to the federal holiday on Tuesday, November 11th.

The celebration featured student poetry, interviews, art, music, and some historical facts about Veterans Day. The presentations included an acknowledgement of the Navajo Code Talkers and honoring Native American veterans.

The district extends invitations to members of the local VFW, American Legion, and the Seneca Nation American Legion. More than 30 veterans were in attendance Friday as guests of students and staff.

The assembly is a schoolwide effort. Grade-level educators devote time teaching about the holiday while practicing presentation skills. Students also performed a medley of songs for the guests before a slideshow featuring area veterans closed the ceremony.

The Parent Teacher Organization also provided a warm welcome and refreshments for the veterans in the cafeteria prior to the assembly.



## Fire Prevention Week



Our Panther family welcomed dozens of first responders to Gowanda Elementary School on Friday, October 10th, in observance of National Fire Prevention Week.

All students had an opportunity to check out the emergency vehicles and explore the equipment. Our curious Panthers enjoyed chatting with the responders and firefighters.

THANK YOU to Gowanda Volunteer Fire Department, CIRVFD Fire/Rescue, Seneca EMS, Dayton Volunteer Fire Company, Collins Volunteer Fire Company, Versailles Volunteer Fire Company, and Perrysburg Volunteer Fire Company for their continued partnership in supporting our young learners.



# Elementary School News

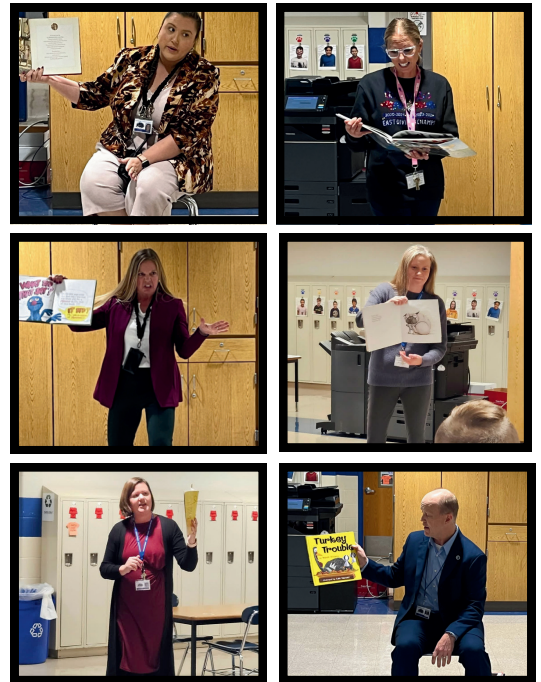
## Children's Book Week at GES

Third-graders had a page-turning good time celebrating National Children's Book Week at Gowanda Elementary School. They celebrated the magic of stories, and the highlight was when our awesome administrators visited to read their favorite picture books the week of November 3-9th.

GES Principal Mrs. Chelsea Kroll kicked off by reading *You are Special* by Max Lucado. GMS Principal Mrs. Darlene Silleman chose to read the story *Bruce Swap* by Ryan T. Higgins. GES Assistant Principal Mrs. Chandra Shaver entertained with the book *There's a Monster at the End of this Book* by Jon Stone. Mrs. Jalal, Director of Special Education, presented *Pig the Stinker*, *Pig the Fibber*, and *Pig the Winner* by Aaron Blabey and Mrs. Wakelee, Director of Learning, read *This is the Teacher* by Rhonda Gowler Greene. The literacy celebration wrapped up with Superintendent Dr. Anderson reading the book *Turkey Trouble* by Lee Harper and Wendi Silvano. The stories brought big smiles, lots of laughs, and plenty of imagination.

Third-grade authors also crafted their own humorous fiction stories inspired by "Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day" by Judith Viorst. They partnered with Mrs. Hillary Fagnan's Pre-Kindergarten friends to share their published stories aloud. Laughter, imagination, and storytelling filled the room as the third-graders brought their creative tales to life for an excited audience of budding readers!

We're proud of our young writers for their creativity, confidence, and kindness in sharing the joy of books with our youngest learners.



## Crayfish in the Classroom

Gowanda Elementary School students welcomed Dr. Robert Anderson, Superintendent, to participate in a science experiment with real live crayfish the week in October. The students recorded the crayfish's responses to different stimuli — and they were even able to see their response when being picked up! The students were then able to determine if this response helps them to grow and/or survive.

Thank you to Ms. Cheryl Trippy and Ms. Kaitlyn Wolf for facilitating this hands-on STEM experience.



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## Gowanda Central School District

**Mission:** The purpose of the Gowanda CSD is to prepare our students to be leaders and citizens who are ready to be successful and embrace a changing world.

**Vision:** The Gowanda CSD will provide a high quality, personalized education that will focus on developing communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking skills through unique academic opportunities.