

SUMMER 2023

THE PANTHER PRESS

A NEWSLETTER OF THE GOWANDA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

www.gowcsd.org

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Gowanda Central School's Class of 2023



Members of the Class of 2023 at Gowanda High strode to their place of honor – front and center at Hillis Field – for the district’s 139th commencement held Friday, June 23, 2023. Hundreds of loved ones and community members crowded the bleachers as graduates clad in blue caps and gowns dotted the green lawn on a mild and overcast summer evening.

The Pledge of Allegiance, led by class secretary Josalyn Degenfelder, was followed by a welcome from Principal Rebekah Moraites, who also offered thanks to everyone involved with facilitating the ceremony. Congratulatory remarks were made by Dr. Robert B. Anderson, superintendent of schools, before Board of Education member Mr. John Waterman Jr., a graduate of the Class of 1992 at GHS, spoke on behalf of the Seneca Nation of Indians. Waterman began by stating how proud he was of the Class of 2023 for persevering through many obstacles, not the least of which was the COVID-19 pandemic, which occurred during their freshman year. “There were so many challenges and changes, but you didn’t let them stop you,” said Waterman. “Instead you fought through them, overcame them and finished the job.”

Cover Story continued



Salutatorian Lani Farley, who plans to major in pre-medicine/biology at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Valedictorian Logan Forthman, who plans to major in computer science at Rochester Institute of Technology, then addressed the audience.

Farley asked her classmates to reflect on their common history before embarking on separate journeys into adulthood. "It is crazy

to think that we took our first steps into high school almost 1400 days ago and that was just the very beginning of our story. Time really does fly when we're least expecting it."

She said that the next chapter of their lives is up for the graduates to decide. "Don't try to get caught up in the past, instead show up and make the effort for your future," Farley said. "We have the world at our fingertips, and it may seem scary at first but I wholeheartedly believe that this class can make it through anything."

Forthman attributed some of his personal success to his fellow seniors, crediting them with helping him enhance his social skills over the years and took time to single out faculty and staff who taught them invaluable lessons. "Even if we're done with school, and even if you're not going to college, it's always important to go into something with an open mind," said Forthman. "Because you never know - maybe something you thought you'd hate turns out to be really nice."

Keynote speaker Zachary Steever (Class of 2012) is the senior qualitative analyst for the Philadelphia Eagles. He holds bachelor's master's and doctorate degrees from University at Buffalo. Steever's family has deep roots in the district - his grandmother and parents both taught at GCS - and he shared his excitement at "coming home." "I wish I could tell you that all the hard work was over once I was hired by the Eagles, but the reality is that everyone in an NFL front office has to earn the right to be there every day through the work they put forward. And that same thing is true for every profession represented in the crowd here today - past, present, and future."

Steever emphasized hard work, patience, and boldness in achieving one's dreams and goals. "I hope that each of you leaves here today in pursuit of your passion. I hope you work earnestly, and act boldly, and you find something that you can't wait to do every day; something where you feel excited to earn your place, even after you've given it your all and the confetti is still falling for the wrong team," said Steever. "Because a life spent doing what you love is the greatest success anyone could hope for"

Principal Moraites then declared that all 72 members of the Class of 2023 have met or exceeded the requirements set by the State of New York and the BOE for earning a high school diploma.

Following the presentation of diplomas, the ceremony concluded with the traditional turning of the tassels from left to right, led by class treasurer Madison Luder. Afterward, the graduates and their loved ones lingered on the field and posed for snapshots to cap off the celebration.

Superintendent Message



Dr. Robert B. Anderson

Greetings to the Gowanda community:

What a year. I've been reflecting on the past 12 months at Gowanda Central School District and am marveling at all our Panther family has experienced and accomplished just in the final quarter.

We kicked off the 2022-2023 academic year hopeful for a "typical" school year after three years of pandemic-related adjustments, and our optimism paid off. Not only did we enjoy a productive school year, but we ended things with the very first team state championship in district history.

The varsity girls' softball team's phenomenal season ended with a bang that brought our community together. The team returned from its final victory on Long Island in the middle of the night and was greeted by a legion of supporters cheering outside of the Historic Hollywood Theater. We are so proud of the players and coaching staff – the history-making team was also honored with numerous accolades, culminating in a special recognition by Assemblyman Joseph M. Giglio and Senator George M. Borrello on July 12 on the softball field.

As a district, we marked many milestones, granted tenure to several employees, and honored retirees for their dedication. Spring was busy with a myriad of field trips, celebrations, ceremonies, competitions and collaborations. As a community we celebrated the Class of 2023 with commencement at Hillis Field featuring alumni keynote speaker Zachary Steever, a member of the Class of 2012.

This summer, we are offering numerous opportunities for learning and exploration on our campus, including Camp Invention at the elementary school and new summer enrichment classes at the high school. We are onboarding new staff over the summer and offering various professional development opportunities to our instructional staff.

We said goodbye to longtime Board of Education member Dana Szalay-Delaney and welcomed new member Zachary C. Nobles at our organizational meeting in July. Shortly thereafter we held Community Blueprint Day. Thank you to all those who participated in our ongoing efforts to grow and excel as a district. Your input is invaluable to our mission and we are grateful for your collaboration.

I'm pleased to report that our Capital Project, initially approved in December 2018, is wrapping up with final improvements. In addition, the elementary school playground is being renovated to include our Pre-K students and updated equipment, a new score board is being installed at Hillis Field, and the high school gym floor is being redone.

Additional information about the 2023-2024 academic year will be released throughout the summer via our various communication outlets. We urge our families to check their Schoology accounts regularly, keep an eye out for texts and phone calls, and watch the mail to stay informed.

Sincerely,
Dr. Robert B. Anderson,
Superintendent of Schools

District News

GCS Softball State Champions

Gowanda Central School District welcomed New York State Senator George M. Borrello and Assemblyman Joseph Giglio to campus on Wednesday, July 12, 2023, for the presentation of senate certificates celebrating the varsity softball team on its New York State Public High School Athletic Association's Class C Championship.



Joined by their loved ones, district administration, and the Board of Education, each player was presented with a certificate. The presentation recognized the first-ever state championship won by the Panthers, capping off a historic 18-7 season.

The 2023 varsity girls' softball team includes seniors Lily Bobseine, Lani Farley, Kailyn Farner, Jada Geiger, Starla Smith and Wassy Stevens; juniors Hailey Christopher, Alhanna Gabel, Aubrie Heron, Ella Luther, and Emily Pound; sophomore Holland Browning; freshman Addison Kota; along with Coach Mike Maloney and assistant coach Jerard Capozzi.



The team received many accolades. In addition, Mike Maloney was named the Class C Coach of the Year and Addison Kota was named to the Class C First Team by the New York State Sportswriters and Coaches Organization for Girls Sports.

District News

Special Olympics

Students and staff from Gowanda Central School District traveled to The State University of New York at Fredonia on Wednesday, June 7, 2023, for the annual Special Olympics. They joined Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES and students from across the region for a celebratory day of athletic competitions and fun. Organizers planned to host a few of the events outdoors, but everything was moved into Steele Hall and Dods Hall due to poor air quality in Western New York from wildfires in Canada.

Students from each district received awards and medals during the opening ceremony. Gowanda recipients of the Katie Campbell Award, named in memory of a young teacher who died after being struck by a drunk driver, are Ryan Ariggo and James Hudson.



Keep up with our Panthers on Social Media



Facebook
www.facebook.com/gowandacentralschool

Instagram
[@GowandaArt](https://www.instagram.com/GowandaArt) [@GowandaMusic](https://www.instagram.com/GowandaMusic)



TikTok
[@GowandaCSD](https://www.tiktok.com/@GowandaCSD)



Twitter
[@GowandaSports](https://twitter.com/GowandaSports) [@GowandaCSD](https://twitter.com/GowandaCSD)

District News

Valley Bugle: 99 Years Strong

Dozens of seniors gathered for a celebratory yearbook signing party held in the cafeteria during first period Wednesday, June 7, 2023, at Gowanda High School.

The upperclassmen united as a class for one of the last times before commencement to admire and take turns signing the Valley Bugle, the 99th edition of the annual publication, chock full of photos and memories intended to reflect their days at GHS. Breakfast (including smoothies, sandwiches, granola bars, fruit and more) was provided by the Food Services and Nutrition team as a photo slideshow accompanied by music played on a screen in the background.



Yearbook class teacher and yearbook advisor Paula Ondus, along with co-advisor Melanie Kessler, and business advisor Mandy Pickering, prioritized giving the seniors a chance to gather and get a glimpse of the yearbook before underclassmen in ninth through eleventh grades received their copies Thursday, June 8, 2023.

The theme for the creative and colorful 2023 yearbook – which includes an impressive interactive element – is “View.” The “View” theme was selected because Gowanda means “in the valley,” featuring a cover image of Cattaraugus Creek. It is divided into sections titled “Panther Life,” “Find Your Focus,” “Look at Us,” “Instant Replay,” and “Details Details Details.” QR codes are dispersed throughout the book, and readers who scan them will be led to lovely videos providing additional behind-the-scenes peeks at daily life at GHS with a special appreciation of the district’s strong community connections. The Valley Bugle has been singled out for its excellence several times over the past few years. Herff Jones recognized and honored it as being a “best-of” yearbooks in the United States and Canada, specifically for layouts and coverage content from the 2020 and 2021 editions.

In August, a representative from Herff Jones is visiting the district to provide some professional development for students involved in the creation of the milestone 100th edition of the yearbook. Ondus’ yearbook staff includes: editor Alaina Kaczmarczyk, business editor Lani Farley, right-hand editor Madison Luder along with contributors Emma Cross, Lea Mohawk, Cianna Hidalgo, exchange student Abril Corrales Cascante, Alivia Capozzi, Kaylee Corbin, Andrew Clark, Holland Browning, Jillian Gernatt. These 12 students spent more than 4,600 hours on the yearbook and they collaborated on it for longer than a year.

District News

Close Up Civics Lessons

The My Brother's Keeper Indigenous Education Grant Program of Gowanda Central School District recently participated in a dynamic, hands-on, civic education program for students in Washington, DC.

New and interesting ways to provide extra challenges and opportunities to enhance Native students' educational experiences is one of MBK-IEG's goals. Six high school students spent five days at the Close Up - Tribal Youth Summit and had a learning experience of a lifetime between April 30-May 5, 2023.

Students lived and learned with peers from around the country while engaging in seminars with policymakers and exploring historical sites and government offices.



The Close Up lesson plans and interactive teaching methods inspired and empowered students to meet the challenges of governing themselves and their nation through:

- Discussions of key domestic and international issues with members of Congress and their staff, Washington insiders, and other leading policy experts;
- Comprehensive study visits to the significant historical sites and cultural neighborhoods of our nation's capital;
- Daily small-group workshops that encouraged students to connect what they see in DC with what they are learning in the classroom back home; and
- Self-directed time with their teachers to explore the nation's capital.

Student participants were: Juniors Gracie Carpenter, Layla Gamble; sophomores Ellarose LeBeau and Karice John; and freshmen Marcus Gamble, Cashis Montour. MBK-IEG director Amy Mohawk and GMS teaching assistant Ray Logan attended as well.

A Tail Wagging Welcome



Renny, a therapy dog from Gowanda Middle School, visited teacher Ms. Cheryl Trippy's fourth-graders at Gowanda Elementary School for a friendly meet-and-greet in June. Renny did well with the students and they are excited to see him more during the 2023-2024 academic year, when they are fifth-graders. Renny belongs to Ms. Gernatt and Mason Gernatt.

District News

Newberry Award Winning Author Visits GCS

Gowanda Central School District welcomed The New York Times best-selling author and illustrator Jerry Craft to campus Thursday, June 8, 2023, for a day of discussions with students at the elementary, middle and high school levels.

Craft has had an impressive career; his graphic novel "New Kid" is the first and only book to win the Newbery Award, Corretta Scott King award, and the Kirkus Prize. His books have been translated into 13 different languages and Craft meets virtually with children all over the world. Craft recently appeared on "The Daily Show" to promote "School Trip," his third book in the critically acclaimed "New Kid" series, which has been optioned by Universal Pictures for a feature film to be produced by LeBron James.

Gowanda middle and high students have been enjoying reading an e-book version of "New Kid" on their Chromebooks via a collaboration with Erie 2-Chautauqua-Cattaraugus BOCES. Craft kicked off the day at the middle and high school before heading to the elementary school for a presentation.

Craft's tales have roots in his experience of growing up the youngest and smallest in his class and the personal and social struggles associated in forming friendships amid unfamiliar faces after enrolling at a private school.

"As a child I went from reading Dr. Seuss to Marvel comics, to reading nothing at all," says Craft, who disliked all the books assigned by his teachers and began to believe he had to suffer to be a real reader. "I'd rather clean my room than read books. No kid should see a book and be intimidated." So, he worked on developing his skills and now writes books that kids want to read.



"I couldn't always draw like this," says Craft, who grew up doodling superheroes on the blank spaces of his school work printouts. He described his journey from a reluctant reader unable to find books that appealed to him, to artist to storyteller to publisher. He discussed the concepts of foreshadowing, rewriting, and redesigning. As his confidence grew, he began to flesh out his stories more, starting with a 96-page book to build confidence to completing a fully fleshed-out, 250-page graphic novel. The hard work, concentration and the ability to handle rejection all featured in his growth.

Craft, who tailors his presentations to the grade levels he is visiting, highlighted the process of creating a graphic novel and getting it published. He admitted to feeling as though he wasn't a talented enough artist when he was younger while simultaneously demonstrating on a large easel how he currently draws his characters. As his skills developed, so did his confidence.

District News

Author Visit continued

"I decided if I couldn't find books I want to read, then I was going to have to write them myself," says Craft, who now travels the country presenting about his "show and tell" journey to becoming a best-selling author and says his career has surpassed his wildest dreams. "All from a kid who hated to read."

Craft's appearance was facilitated by middle school library media specialist Kathy Degenfelder, who collaborated with high school librarian Kim Nobles with support from elementary library teacher Melanie Rosier.

Visit <https://jerrycraft.com/> to learn more about Craft.



Flag Day at GES

Flag Day was observed at Gowanda Elementary School on Wednesday, June 14, 2023, with a patriotic procession.



Third-graders from Mrs. Puntillo, Mrs. Shull, Mrs. Kelly, Mrs. Steklasa, Mrs. Baker and Mrs. Fullone's classes celebrated by parading the halls of GES with posters and miniature flags.

After listening to stories and songs about the American flag, some students picked their own fact about the flag. They then designed a poster to show their pride for the American flag.

They also displayed a variety of flags created using students' handprints. Mrs. Brind'Amour's students joined in with instruments and flag hats.

Panthers in Mrs. Bylbie's second-grade classroom watched a short film, read a passage, colored a flag, then created their own flag to take home.



District News

Don Quixote Performance



A remarkable display of talent, comedy, and passion unfolded in an 8th-grade Spanish classroom in June 2023.

A short rendition of “Don Quijote: Man of La Mancha” by Miguel de Cervantes debuted in Ms. Erika Austin’s classroom Tuesday, June 13, 2023, at Gowanda Middle School. Fellow staff and students came together as a supportive community to celebrate the students' accomplishments.

Considered the first modern novel, “Don Quijote” is considered one of the finest works of literature in the world.

The entire GMS show was performed in Spanish, but the students thoughtfully included English text on the screen throughout the performance to ensure all could follow the plot. “It’s a great opportunity for our students to showcase their language skills and immerse themselves in the rich world of Spanish literature,” says Ms. Austin.

What made the performance extra impressive is that it was entirely student-directed. From casting to set design and everything in between, these students poured their hearts and souls into the production. “It’s a testament to their creativity, dedication, and teamwork,” notes Austin.

The production starred Jayden Fish as Don Quixote, Zach Stark as Sancho Panza, JJ Whipple as The Narrator, Kyan Austin as Aldonza & Ines, Kory Degenfelder as the Horse Salesman, and Alex Pire as Cabballero de las Luna blanca/ gigante windmill. All the students played a crucial role in the performance. At certain plot points, the entire class would chant in unison “Así piensa, y así es,” which translates to “He says therefore he is.”

Behind the scenes were directors Richard Kuras and Isabella DeGolier, casting directors McKoy Luce and Kory Degenfelder, prop managers Kory Degenfelder and Drew Kota, costume designer Isabella DeGolier, composers Richard Kuras and Alex Pire, program designer Malayna Pawlak, stage crew McKoy Luce and Drew Kota, and set designers/translations JJ Whipple, McKoy Luce, and Malayna Pawlak.

Principal Todd A. Miklas enjoyed the performance along with library media specialist Kathy Degenfelder, district clerk Kathy Ferneza and teachers Ms. Geist, Ms.Lutz, Mr. O'Donnell, Ms.Ackley and Ms. Jackson. Following the show, attendees enjoyed light refreshments with the class.

District News

GCS Retirements and Tenures

Gowanda Central School District said goodbye to several longtime employees who retired during the 2022-2023 academic year. Congratulations to the following retirees as they embark on the next chapter of their lives:

- Julie Kewley a school monitor
- Joan Goodemote, keyboard specialist II
- Barbara Storey, a teacher aide
- Cynthia Kerker, a keyboard specialist II
- William Bentzoni, head custodian
- Amy Fantaske, teacher
- Jacquelin Reese, teacher
- Margaret Smeltz, teacher
- Lynn Shea, school monitor
- Eric Strickfaden, automotive mechanic

The district also granted tenure to several staff members during the 2022-2023 academic year including:

- Tamara Fabbianno, teaching assistant
- Riley McDonough, teacher
- Nicole Gangloff, teacher
- Samantha Chiappone, teacher
- Megan Kasprzak, teacher
- Kathleen Saia, teacher
- Kimberly Nobles, teacher
- J. Golanka-Wittcop, teacher
- Kelly Bylbie, teacher
- Jacquelyn Barczykowski, teacher
- Amber Reding, teacher
- Ashley Wright, teacher
- David Bolen, teacher
- Holly Smith, teacher
- Robert Ryan, teacher
- Rebekah Moraites, principal

2023-2024 School Tax Collection

School tax bills will be mailed out September 14, 2023

Tax payments will NOT be accepted at the school. Make Check Payable To: Gowanda CSD—School Tax Collector

To Pay By Mail:

Gowanda CSD—School Tax Collector
PO Box 346
Gowanda, NY 14070

To Pay In Person:

Community Bank, NA
76 W Main St
Gowanda, NY 14070

September 15, 2023 through November 30, 2023

Monday – Wednesday: 9am – 4 pm, Thursday: 9am – 5pm, Friday: 9am – 6pm

Collection dates are as follows:

Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties

September 15—October 16: No Penalty
October 17—November 15: with 2% Penalty
November 16: Returned to Counties to be re-levied on Town and County Tax Bill.

Erie County

September 15—October 16: No Penalty
October 17—October 31: with 7.5% Penalty
November 1—November 30: with 9.0% Penalty
December 1: Returned to Erie County to be re-levied on Town and County Tax Bill.

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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.