



A NOTE FROM THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR

Stepping into 2026 with Lots of Love!

Welcome to February's newsletter!

INSIDE THIS EDITION

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- **New Supervisors Announcements**
- **Parent Portal Reminder & Upcoming Communications Improvements**
- **Winter Olympics Have Arrived!**

With the new year comes lots of opportunities, improvements, and exciting changes.

Take a look through to see how we celebrated the end of 2025 with a special visit from our Woodturner friends. Plus, meet our new Education Support Supervisors. Lastly, we'd love to make sure you're checking out the Parent Portal, as more updates are coming to that area of our website for your and your student's information and guidance as part of the Aspire of WNY Center for Learning family.

Thank you!

Christine Lalka
Vice President of
Educational Services

Woodturners' Help us Ring in the New Year!

An annual tradition that we love to see!

The Woodturners, a local group dedicated to creating wooden toys in their free time, come each year to allow Center for Learning students to select their own wooden figurines.



Thank you to the Woodturners for making the end of 2025 so special! We already can't wait for you to come back at the end of 2026!

Meet Our New Education Supervisors!



Kristi Carson

Kristi Carson has joined our team as one of our new Educational Support Supervisors! Kristi brings over 12 years of diverse experience to this role, ranging from high school instruction to specialized curriculum oversight. With a Master's in Special Education and advanced training in instructional design, she is uniquely equipped to support our educational initiatives and help our programs thrive. Her background as a Curriculum Specialist and her years in the classroom at Stanley G. Falk make her a fantastic asset to our educational programs. Outside of her professional work, Kristi is a self-proclaimed science enthusiast who loves exploring the "how" and "why" of the world around her. She is also a talented home chef who spends much of her free time baking and cooking. **Please help us welcome Kristi to her new role!**



Jamaal Carter

We are excited to welcome Jamaal Carter as one of our new Educational Support Supervisors! Jamaal brings an impressive background in student advocacy and program supervision, including leadership roles at Bennett Park Montessori and the Buffalo Urban League. His experience as a Behavioral Support Specialist and S.T.E.P. Supervisor makes him a fantastic addition to our educational leadership team. Jamaal also brings some unique life experiences to our office! Before beginning his career in education and social services, he played professional basketball in Europe and the Dominican Republic for 2 years. Additionally, in a city famous for its food, Jamaal may hold a local record: he is "apparently" the only person in Buffalo who does not eat chicken wings. **We look forward to the energy and unique perspective he will bring to our community!**

Meet Our New Education Supervisors!



Deb McCormick

Deborah McCormick is as one of our new Educational Support Supervisors! Deb joins us with a wealth of knowledge and a deep passion for student success, backed by nearly two decades of leadership in the education sector. As a certified teacher with a proven track record of managing high-quality programs—from regional oversight of early childhood centers to directing universal Pre-K initiatives—she brings a unique blend of regulatory expertise and heart to our team. Outside of her professional life, Deb is a former college swimmer who continues to share her love for the water through coaching and lifeguarding. She is also the proud mother of two daughters and is currently navigating the exciting milestone of sending her oldest off to college.

Please join us in giving Deb a warm welcome!



Claudia Panaro

Claudia Panaro joins the CFL as our new Supervisor of Teachers, Curriculum, and IEP Development! Claudia brings an impressive 25-year career in WNY public education to this role, having served as a classroom teacher and an elementary school principal. With two Master's degrees and a certification in School District Administration, she brings deep expertise in curriculum management and student support systems, which will be invaluable to our mission. Beyond her extensive administrative and educational expertise, Claudia brings a wonderful cultural perspective to our community as she is bilingual in Italian. Whether she is overseeing IEP development or collaborating on social-emotional learning initiatives, her wealth of experience will be a tremendous asset to our staff and families alike.

Please join us in welcoming Claudia!

Meet Our New Education Supervisors!



Jennifer Wolf

Jennifer Wolf is one of our new Educational Support Supervisors! She lives in Wheatfield, New York with her fiancée, Mike, and her dog, Meg. She is a proud mother and now a grandmother! She holds a bachelor's degree in Education and a master's degree in Literacy, both from Buffalo State University. She has spent over 35 years in the education and childcare field, working in both classroom settings and childcare centers. Throughout her career, she has been guided by a strong belief that every child can learn—and that success comes from discovering what works best for each individual child. Outside of work, she enjoys spending time with family and friends, being outdoors, reading, and trying new things. Building meaningful relationships and supporting children and families has always been at the heart of both her personal and professional life. **Please join us in giving Jennifer a warm welcome!**

Utilizing the Parent Portal for Important Information AND Updates to Communication Channels Coming in the Future!

We wanted to remind everyone of the **Aspire of WNY Center for Learning Parent Portal**. This portal serves as a primary hub for essential information, school updates, and tools + resources. Staying connected through this platform ensures you have the most up-to-date information about your child's educational journey and the services we provide. We encourage all parents and guardians to bookmark the link and check in frequently to stay informed.

Additionally, based on valuable feedback from our families, the Aspire of WNY leadership team is actively working to enhance the portal. Soon, we will be introducing more robust resources and communication tools to better serve our community.

We will also be implementing improved communication software to streamline how we share information and connect with you. We look forward to announcing these official upgrades.

In the meantime, if you have feedback, a specific concern, a new idea, or simply a question, please do not hesitate to reach out. You can contact **Christine Lalka, Vice President of Educational Services**, at any time at clalka@aspirewny.org. We value your partnership and look forward to providing you with even better tools to support our students and their families. You can visit the portal anytime here:

www.aspirewny.org/center-for-learning-parent-guardian-information-portal/

IMPORTANT DATES

COMING UP

FEBRUARY '26

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

MARCH '26

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

APRIL '26

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		



The Winter Olympics Have Arrived at the CFL

The halls of Aspire of WNY's Center for Learning are buzzing with Olympic spirit this February as students and staff kick off their very own 2026 Winter Games celebration

In a heartwarming display of teamwork and inclusion, classrooms are participating in a school-wide torch relay, passing a beautifully crafted, handmade torch from one room to the next.

The entire Center for Learning community is eagerly anticipating the Closing Ceremonies on February 25th, where they will come together to celebrate their personal victories, milestones, and the incredible spirit of perseverance. It is a month dedicated to proving that with the right support and a lot of heart, every individual can reach for the gold.

DATE	ACTIVITY
2.16	Closed President's Day
2.17	Closed Lunar New Year – Staff Report
3.16	Closed Staff Development Day
4.3 – 4.13	Closed Spring Break

To Learn More About Aspire of WNY Events Scan Here

