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## Reaffirming our commitment to all

*Interim Superintendent Kimberly Young Wilkins, Ed.D., shared the following message with all City School District of Albany families in early February, reaffirming the district's commitment to every student and family.*

We recognize that these are difficult and confusing days in our country. For all of us.

Our nation's changing leadership – and the sudden, almost daily, shifts in philosophies and ideologies that are accompanying it – have left many feeling uncertain about how the country views all of its people, or whether the country cares.

Many are questioning if this is the America we learned about, or are learning about, in school. A place of freedom and equality. A place of compassion and dignity. A place of honor and character.

I am writing to reassure you that all of those qualities remain alive and well in the City School District of Albany. I want to reassure every student, every family, every staff member and every community member that you are valued. You are supported. You are loved.

Our school district offers many resources for students who have questions or would like additional support.

Please always know you and your children can turn to the caring and compassionate principals and classroom teachers in each of our 17 schools. Our offices of Pupil Personnel Services, English as a New Language and Refugee Services, and Guidance provide additional staff members who are trained and ready to respond to all students' emotional needs.

You can contact your child's principal or teacher for more information about resources available at school, or use one of these phone numbers if you have additional questions:

- Office of Pupil Personnel Services  
475-6130
- Office of ENL and Refugee Services  
475-6147

- Office of the Superintendent  
475-6010

Whether you or your children were born across town, across the country or across the world, please know that we will continue to do our best every day to make sure you feel at home everywhere in our school district.

Our school district is 1,700 employees strong. Through all of our staff resources, we will continue to nurture and support each of our more than 9,600 students.

We will strive every day to provide rich learning environments in every classroom in every school, and to give every student the support they need to succeed academically.

We will honor the racial and ethnic background of every student, every family and every staff member.

We will celebrate all 57 languages that our students speak, and every religion they and their families choose to worship.

We will continue to enthusiastically welcome our growing population of immigrants and refugees, and embrace the beautiful cultures and customs that enrich our schools and our city.

We will provide safe, supportive schools where everyone is free to grow to their fullest potential and become whoever and whatever they dream to be.

No matter how national events unfold around us, in Albany's public schools we will continue to value and defend all of the rich diversity that makes us proud every day to serve this community.

Please know that we are always there for you.

## Student achievement

### Striving to make a difference

Albany High School senior Peggy Abdul-Korah caught the advocacy bug when she was a little kid tagging along with her two best friends and their moms.

The friends – seniors Sierra Mosley and Brynn Watkins – are the daughters of Leah Golby and Cathy Fahey, both of whom are active volunteers and now members of Albany's Common Council.

"I was always with them and we were always doing something in the community," Abdul-Korah said.

She began volunteering at the annual Albany High blood drives as a sophomore and is now the driving force behind their organization. The last one, on Jan. 12, netted 121 pints of blood – the most ever donated in a single drive at the school.

One of her main duties is recruiting donors among staff and her fellow students. It's not always easy to convince reluctant people to roll up their sleeves.

"I start off by telling people that when they donate they can save three lives," she said. "That's a strong incentive. I also talk about the afterwards feeling of knowing what an important thing you've done."

There's a lot of work in coordinating a drive. And Abdul-Korah is good at it.

"Peggy puts together the schedule of volunteers and recruitment, meets with them before the drive, and focuses her



*Albany High School senior and community advocate Peggy Abdul-Korah*

attention on the positive success of our school community giving back to the larger community," said Albany High librarian Alicia Abdul, adviser to the school blood drives (and no relation to Abdul-Korah).

Abdul-Korah will receive a \$2,500 scholarship from the American Red Cross. She is the sixth Albany High student to earn a Red Cross scholarship.

"She is an example for future student leaders to strive toward excellence," Abdul said.

Abdul-Korah plans to study public health at The Sage Colleges. Her dream job?

"I would love to work for Planned Parenthood as a career," she said. "That's my goal. I want to be an advocate."

## District offers education choices Magnet, pre-K lotteries set for April

The City School District of Albany will hold lotteries for magnet and prekindergarten programs on April 11, giving families choices for their child's academic journey.

The lotteries will be held at 10 a.m. Tuesday, April 11 at Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST).

Completed applications for the magnet lottery (kindergarten through grade 5/6, depending on the school) are due Feb. 28. Applications for the prekindergarten lottery, which includes pre-K seats in the magnet programs, are due March 31.

### Magnet schools or programs

A magnet school or program focuses instruction on a particular theme and incorporates that theme across all subject areas.

Albany's three magnet schools and one magnet program give families a choice in public education (see page 3 to learn more about each one). Students have a unique opportunity to deeply explore enriched,

theme-based programs in specific areas.

Our magnet programs are open to children city-wide and enrolled through the two separate lotteries. Students enrolled in a magnet program for pre-K can stay in that program throughout their elementary years.

(continued on page 3)



*Interim Superintendent Kimberly Young Wilkins, Ed.D., was the keynote speaker at the Albany County Black History Month Celebration on Feb. 2.*



*Evan Reichardt demonstrates his reading skills in his pre-K class at Eagle Point Elementary School. The City School District of Albany offers full-day pre-K in all 12 elementary schools and at several community locations. See page 3 for a complete list.*

## From the interim superintendent Gratitude and progress



Kimberly Young Wilkins, Ed.D.  
Interim superintendent

Once again, the people of Albany have stepped up to do what's right for our children.

On Jan. 10, taxpayers overwhelmingly approved two tax-free propositions that will allow us to better meet the needs of our rapidly growing student population, and specifically our middle-school and alternative-education students.

Thank you. The importance of our community's support cannot be overstated.

### New middle school

Thanks to the successful vote, we will be able to renovate 50 North Lark St., into a true middle school. When school opens next September, 50 North Lark will have learning spaces that are equivalent to those at Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School and William S. Hackett Middle School.

The community held up its end of the bargain by approving our plan for 50 North Lark. Now I am committed to seeing that we hold up our end by providing our newest middle school with strong leaders and equitable resources.

Two district veterans will serve as co-principals at the school: Malik Jones and Kandie Antonetti, the current principals at Montessori Magnet School and West Hill Middle School, respectively (see page 7 for more information).

We also will assign 50 North Lark an assistant principal and two guidance counselors. I am working with our unions to assure there is a balance of experienced and new staff people in all three of our middle schools in 2017-18.

Bricks, mortar and good people are key.

So is having programs in place that meet students' needs. The new school will be a "full-service" school, meaning the school and its partners will provide students and their families with a range of health, social and emotional supports.

The bulk of the renovations will be done over the summer and complete by September.

### New alt-ed school

The Jan. 10 vote also allowed us to buy the school at 395 Elk St., our current West Hill Middle School and the former home of a failed charter school. We completed the purchase at the end of January and the building will be home to our alternative-education programs for middle- and high-school students beginning in September.

Alternative-education students struggle academically or behaviorally in their home schools. The 395 Elk building's design, separate entrances and small classrooms are not suitable for a middle school but are ideal for the needs of our more vulnerable students.

We are in the process of redesigning all our alternative programs so they better meet the needs of students, and the new building is one of several improvements you'll hear about in the coming months.

Again, none of this would be possible without your support. I am grateful to you and our community, and I am proud to call Albany my home.

*Kimberly Young Wilkins*



**CAPITAL  
education**

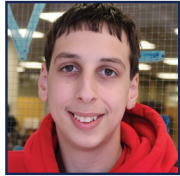
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Please direct comments about the newsletter, story ideas and questions to  
Ron Lesko at (518) 475-6065  
or [rlesko@albany.k12.ny.us](mailto:rlesko@albany.k12.ny.us), or  
Lisa Angerame at (518) 475-6066  
or [langerame@albany.k12.ny.us](mailto:langerame@albany.k12.ny.us).

City School District of Albany  
1 Academy Park  
Albany, New York 12207

## Voices

### Q: What do you like best about living in Albany?



I like living in Albany because there are so many things I can do without having to go far. For example, I can go to the Pine Bush Preserve and walk all the trails near Point of Woods. Another thing I like about Albany is that I can bike in the Crossings Park. I can use certain trails to get to Kurver Kreme for ice cream. I live close by Crossgates and the Commons. I also like to visit the State Museum and Swinburne Park for ice skating. There are a lot of places to go and things to do.

– Nick Califano, junior  
Albany High School



I like the parks and places around the city to visit, but what I like best is that Albany has the nicest people. Washington Park is my favorite park because you can look at the lights in the winter and see the tulips in the spring. And in the summer, you can ride your bike there. Albany also has many places to visit. I like to go to the theater to watch a performance or a magic show. I also like to run under the sprinklers in the summer on Third Street. Mostly what I like best about living in Albany is the people. They are nice. Our neighbors share with me and my mom. They are generous because once we had a flood and they let us stay with them.

– Mitchell Diggs, third grade  
Sheridan Preparatory Academy



I like living in Albany because of the snow! During the winter I get to play in the snow with my friends and most of my friends live in Albany. My friends and I go sledding down the hill near my friend's house when it snows and we have no school. I like my school in Albany, Arbor Hill Elementary. I have a really good teacher named Ms. Noble and I love my teacher. Living in Albany is beautiful because my family and friends live here! I also like living in Albany because I have a great mom and I attend a great school here.

– Al-lisa Moncrieffe, fourth grade  
Arbor Hill Elementary School



There are many things I like about living in Albany. The people are superb role models for me. We have a library with a huge selection of wonderful books and DVDs and we can walk to it! Also, I go to an excellent school. The food is yummy and there is a large selection of good food at the close restaurants. Also, I like the New York State Museum. It has the coolest exhibits. Of course, I also love the ice skating rink in the winter! These are the reasons I love living in Albany!

– Chloe Denno, fourth grade  
New Scotland Elementary School



I like that Albany has a lot of programs to help kids stay out of trouble and keep active. I love to play basketball, and Albany has a lot of basketball courts around that I can use. I also love summertime in Albany, going to the park and Lincoln pool with my friends. Albany offers a lot of after-school programs such as "Liberty Partnership Program," which provides extra help for kids with homework and classwork. It helped me improve my grades last year. There are a lot of activities and events to attend in Albany such as the Black Arts and Cultural Festival in the summer, the Tulip Fest in the spring and the New York State Museum, which is open all year. My favorite activity to do in Albany would be ice skating in December and January. I really do love Albany and hope to stay here for a long time.

– Zoe Malcom, eighth grade  
West Hill Middle School



I like Albany because the city has nice people who work in it, strong education opportunities and a lot of programs that will help me to find my future. Albany is a city that holds my memories. When I came to United States with no English, it was in this city that I learned the language and I studied to build my future. Now I'm a senior and I will graduate in a couple months here in Albany, so this city is my city.

– Assalah Othman, senior  
Albany High School



One of the most important reasons I love to live in Albany is because of the schools. They have some of the best teachers and they provide us help when we need it. I also enjoy going to restaurants in Albany because there are so many different types of them here. However, my favorite place to eat is I Love NY pizza because of the broccoli pizza they have.

– Jalin Kennerly, eighth grade  
William S. Hackett Middle School



First, there are a lot of festivals like the Tulip Festival and cultural festivals. Also, we have block parties every year. Second, there are many sporting events you can attend like basketball and hockey games because of the local colleges. Third, the New York State Museum is right here and it provides history about the past of Albany and New York state. There are also so many other great places in walking distance of my house like the library. Also, I am lucky to live in the capital of New York so I can visit the state Capitol with my teachers, the governor's mansion and all great places right in my hometown. Finally, Albany has great people and I love my school, teachers and friends.

– Donovan Fludd-Dickerson, fourth grade  
Giffen Memorial Elementary School

## At a glance: Albany High School

**Principal:** Dale Getto | **Grades:** 9-12 | **Address:** 700 Washington Ave.

The City School District of Albany's one comprehensive high school, located at 700 Washington Ave., is divided into four themed academies and includes its own career and technical education center (Abrookin). In February 2016, voters approved a \$179.9 million plan to renovate and rebuild the 42-year-old building by 2024.

**Students:** 2,393 | **Teachers:** 182 | **Total employees:** 350

**Clubs:** 47

**Athletics:** 17 girls' teams in 11 sports; 19 boys' teams in 12 sports

**Online newspaper:** *The Nest* ([www.ahsthenest.com](http://www.ahsthenest.com))

**Student government:** Falcon Council

**Website:** [www.ahs.albany.k12.ny.us](http://www.ahs.albany.k12.ny.us)

### Four unique academies. One great education.

Albany High's academies offer the same core classes in English, math, science and social studies. What makes each academy unique is its theme and the elective classes it offers. Each student is assigned to one academy but can take courses in any.

- **Citizenship** – Community service, social justice
- **Discovery** – Communication, performing arts
- **Innovation** – Science, technology, engineering
- **Leadership** – Business, finance, management

### Points of distinction:

- **International Baccalaureate (IB) program** – Albany High is one of five high schools in the Capital Region providing the prestigious and academically challenging IB program.
- **NanoHigh** – This one-of-a-kind collaboration with the SUNY Poly Colleges of Nanoscale Science and Engineering provides introductory and advanced nano courses in the classroom and at CNSE's Albany NanoTech Complex.
- **Regional leader in Advanced Placement** – Albany High offers 21 AP classes – college-level courses in which stu-

dents can earn college credit.

- **Career and technical education (CTE)** – Albany High's Abrookin Career and Technical Center prepares students for college and career through pathways in culinary, cosmetology, automotive technology, pre-engineering, business administrative assistant and construction, among others.
- **Internships** – Seniors can get an internship in architecture, law, engineering, teaching, biology and more through the Career Explorations Internship Program.
- **Smart Scholars Early College High School** – This unique partnership with Hudson Valley Community College allows students to take HVCC classes at Albany High and earn college credit.
- **College prep options** – Students can catch up or get ahead in their studies using a web-based program called Apex Learning that allows them to work after school and on weekends. The Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) program helps bolster student academic and organizational skills.

### Did you know?

Plans for the first phase of renovating and rebuilding Albany High will be submitted this spring to the State Education Department. Since the state's approval process takes about a year, work on the first phase – construction of a new three-story academic building behind the current school – is slated to start by mid-2018 and finish in August 2019.

## Explore these unique programs open to all Albany children

The City School District of Albany offers families a variety of elementary school choices. In addition to nine neighborhood schools, there are three themed elementary schools and a themed program.

These themed, or magnet, opportunities are open to children throughout the city.

A magnet school or program focuses instruction on a particular theme and incorporates that theme across all subject areas. At each one, students have the opportunity to deeply explore enriched programs with a unique focus.

Admission to all is done through two random lotteries: one for prekindergarten

students and one for older students (*see page 1 for more information about the lotteries*). Families need to apply for both lotteries, which will be held April 11 at Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST).

Applications for the magnet programs are available now at each school, at Central Registration at 75 Watervliet Ave. and online at [albanyschools.org](http://albanyschools.org).

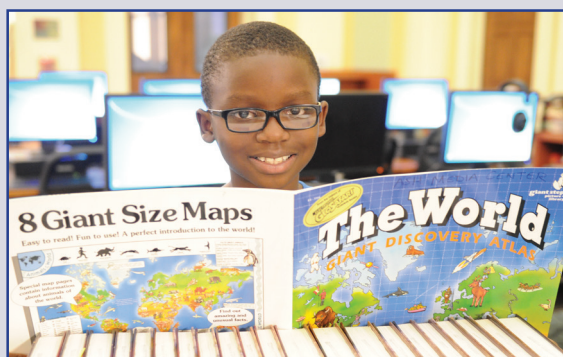
Prekindergarten lottery applications will be available March 1.

For more information, call 475-6551. You also can call the schools, listed below.

### Albany School of Humanities (ASH)

Prekindergarten-grade 6, 108 Whitehall Road, 475-6575, C. Fred Engelhardt Jr., principal

ASH learners explore global citizenship through the study of visual arts, literature, music and theater arts. Students participate in year-long activities that incorporate the humanities into daily teaching and learning.



### Dual Language Program at Delaware Community School

Prekindergarten-grade 5, 43 Bertha St., Kenneth Lein, Ed.D., principal

This unique program offers an elementary education in English and Spanish. The program features one bilingual class for each grade. Most students begin the program in prekindergarten and continue through fifth grade. Therefore, few spots are open for children after pre-K. However, the district keeps a waiting pool on the chance that a seat becomes available. Children enter the program speaking at least one of the two languages, and they leave speaking, reading and writing in both.



### Montessori Magnet School

Prekindergarten-grade 5, 45 Tremont St., 475-6675, Malik Jones, principal

Montessori seeks to educate students in a way that incorporates all five senses, creates a warm and inviting community and encourages students to give their best efforts. The Montessori curriculum is carefully structured to demonstrate connections among the different core subjects of English, math, science and social studies.



### Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST)

Prekindergarten-grade 6, Lincoln Park off Delaware Avenue, 475-6875, Teresa Brown, principal

At TOAST, learning strategies reflect and reinforce approaches that drive the development of science and technology: curiosity, discovery, observation, problem-solving, inquiry and creativity. The school's STEM – science, technology, engineering and math – theme is reinforced with specialized instruction in the state-of-the-art computer lab, the dedicated science room and an outdoor pavilion and geologic rock park.



## Pre-K programs in Albany's public schools

School-based programs		
<b>Arbor Hill Elementary School</b> 1 Arbor Drive Albany, NY 12207 475-6625	<b>Giffen Memorial Elementary School</b> 274 South Pearl St. Albany, NY 12202 475-6650	<b>Pine Hills Elementary School</b> 41 North Allen St. Albany, NY 12203 475-6725
<b>Delaware Community School</b> 43 Bertha St. Albany, NY 12209 475-6750	<b>New Scotland Elementary School</b> 369 New Scotland Ave. Albany, NY 12208 475-6775	<b>Schuyler Achievement Academy</b> 676 Clinton Ave. Albany, NY 12206 475-6700
<b>Eagle Point Elementary School</b> 1044 Western Ave. Albany, NY 12203 475-6825	<b>North Albany Academy</b> 570 North Pearl St. Albany, NY 12204 475-6800	<b>Sheridan Preparatory Academy</b> 400 Sheridan Ave. Albany, NY 12206 475-6850
Themed programs		
<b>Albany School of Humanities (ASH)</b> 108 Whitehall Road 475-6575	<b>Dual Language Program at Delaware Community School</b> 43 Bertha St. 475-6750	<b>Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST)</b> Lincoln Park off Delaware Avenue 475-6875
	<b>Montessori Magnet School</b> 45 Tremont St. 475-6675	
Community-based programs		
<b>Arbor Park Child Care Center</b> 96 Second Street 465-8466	<b>Head Start (four locations)</b> • Olivia Rorie Center, 7 Morton Ave. 462-5411 • Early Learning Center, 25 Monroe St. 463-0655 • Ontario Street Head Start, 170 Ontario St. 729-2001 • Hackett Blvd., 436-0013	<b>St. Anne's Institute</b> 160 North Main Ave. 437-6735
<b>Capital Milestones</b> 3 Harriman Campus Dr. 457-3210		<b>St. Matthew Lutheran School</b> 75 Whitehall Road # A 436-8672
<b>Children's Place at the Plaza</b> Swan Street Building, Core 2, Empire State Plaza, Crystal Room Pavilion 474-4736	<b>Infinite Care</b> 43 Quail St. 432-2750	<b>Temple Israel</b> 600 New Scotland Ave. 438-7858
<b>Ernestina DiCioccio Bilingual Day Care Center-Centro Civico</b> 230 Green St., #2 465-1145	<b>Jewish Community Center</b> 340 Whitehall Road 438-6651	<b>Trinity Nursery and Daycare</b> 215 Lancaster St. 436-4514
	<b>Nursery School at The College of Saint Rose</b> Saint Rose campus (half-day program) 337-2337	<b>Unity Sunshine</b> 50 Philip St. 434-0815

## District offers choices for young learners

(continued from page 1)

### Prekindergarten

The district offers full-day pre-K at all 12 elementary schools and at additional sites operated by community-based organizations (*see above for a complete list*).

The April pre-K lottery will be for spots for children who will be 4 years old by Dec. 1. Applications for that lottery will be available March 1. Pre-K programs for 4-year-olds are located at schools and community agencies.

Another lottery will be held in June for children who will be 3 by Dec. 1. Applications for that lottery will be available May 1. Pre-K programs for 3-year-olds are located in community agencies only.

There is no transportation for pre-K students.

### The lotteries

Both lottery applications ask families to select their top four choices. Student selection is random, but certain factors can affect a child's eventual assignment.

- Sibling preference – A child with a brother or sister already in a school will have a better chance of getting into that school. This is called "sibling preference" and the lottery selects these children first. Sibling preference works only if your first-choice school is the located at the elementary school your other child currently attends and will attend in 2017-18.

- Neighborhood preference – A child who lives within a neighborhood school enrollment zone or within a half-mile of a magnet program will have a better chance of getting into that school. This is called "neighborhood preference" and the lottery selects these children second.

- Number of applicants versus number of seats – Some programs are in greater demand than others, meaning more families apply to those programs. These seats also often fill quickly with students who have siblings or neighborhood preference.

Sibling preference and neighborhood preference do not apply to pre-K programs for 4-year-olds that are based in community agencies, only for those programs located in the district's 12 elementary schools.

### After the lotteries

Families are welcome to attend the lotteries April 11. Once the lotteries take place, the district will send letters to all families who entered children.

Families whose children were selected in the lotteries will have until May 18 to accept the spot and register at Central Registration. Families that miss the deadline will lose the seat.

Families whose children were not selected will be eligible for future lottery drawings if pre-K or magnet spots become available. Visit [albanyschools.org](http://albanyschools.org) to learn more.

# WE CHOOSE



When Albany High School needed a new mascot, students in Lisa Osterman's school-to-work class channeled their Falcon pride and did something about it. They raised money for, chose and purchased a new Falcon costume that arrived during the December break. On Jan. 10, seniors Samantha Caparelli, left, and Karen Rivera clowned around with the new bird in town.



Fifth-grader Amor Ware and first-grader Taleah Gordon swapped reading strategies and talked literature together on the morning of Jan. 31 as part of a reading buddies partnership between their respective classes at Philip J. Schuyler Achievement Academy.



From left, New Scotland Elementary School fifth-graders Nolan Sweet, Barbara Kirchraber and A'atya Underdue spent Jan. 19 putting the finishing touches on talk-show videos they created featuring interviews with a character from the book "Because of Mr. Terrupt." Their work is part of a larger district initiative to use Google Apps for Education and Chromebooks as teaching tools.



Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School seventh-grader Ricky Rice tries his hand at sketching a still life in his art class Jan. 26. The subjects of this first unit were recycled soda cans.



City School District of Albany Community Engagement Coordinator Cathy Edmondson welcomed more than two dozen families at William S. Hackett Middle School on the evening of Feb. 1 to kick off the winter and spring sessions of Parent University. Monthly Parent University meetings at all of the district's middle schools address a wide variety of topics designed to help keep students and families engaged, involved and informed. New this winter and spring, the district also is adding Parent University sessions for families at Albany High School and five elementary schools – Arbor Hill, Giffen, Schulyer, Sheridan Prep and TOAST. Please visit the Parent University section at [albanyschools.org](http://albanyschools.org) for more information.



Mild winter temperatures didn't prevent students and families from Montessori Magnet School from having their annual "Skating at Swinburne Park" gathering Jan. 7. Here, taking a break from the ice for a snack are, from left, prekindergartener Naomi LeHockey, kindergartener Luca Raveendranath, third-grader Maya Raveendranath and future student Dyan LeHockey.



Renovations to Albany High School's pool area are on track to be finished this spring. The pool has been out of service since March 2015 when a large section of the outside wall collapsed during a period of extreme cold. The \$4 million pool renovation is part of a voter-approved package of repairs and upgrades at 14 district buildings that has no tax impact. Albany High's boys' and girls' swim teams, displaced since the pool closed, will be back home next school year.



Pine Hills Elementary School first-grader Jordan Rivera made a quick adjustment to his "I Have A Dream" hat during his class performance at a Jan. 13 Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration. Students, staff and families gathered in the gym that day for a school-wide celebration of the life and work of Dr. King, who was born on Jan. 15, 1929, and assassinated on April 4, 1968.



Aspiring scientists from Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST) learned about the power of gas Jan. 25 by combining vinegar and baking soda to make a volcano. Here, second-grader Nicholas Vann pours vinegar dyed with food coloring into the homemade volcano while classmate Claudia Corradino looks on. Students also inflated balloons with gas created by combining the two household items.

# ALBANY SCHOOLS



Albany High School freshman Shanti Thomas and his classmates on Jan. 12 made signs, marched through the school hallways and read parts of Martin Luther King Jr.'s iconic "I Have a Dream" speech to honor the Jan. 15 birthday of the slain civil rights leader.



Fourth- and fifth-grade students left their classrooms at Delaware Community School on Jan. 25 and immersed themselves in the world of book-making and colonial art at the Albany Institute of History & Art. Here, fifth-grader Albert Dotel is inspired by a museum exhibit and sketched it to include in the book he later made.



**NORTH ALBANY ACADEMY  
EXCEPTIONAL AVID STUDENT**  
This award is presented to:  
**Delee Ford**  
For being an exemplary AVID student;  
always responsible, very respectful,  
intentionally safe and determined

North Albany Academy families on Jan. 11 celebrated the accomplishments of students who exemplify the core values of AVID: always responsible, very respectful, intentionally safe and determined. Third-grader Delee Ford, pictured with mom Renee Smith, was one of 30 students recognized that day. AVID – Advancement Via Individual Determination – is used by schools across the nation to prepare students for career and college success.

## New middle school to have co-principals

The City School District of Albany is taking an innovative approach to school leadership for the new middle school that will open in September at 50 North Lark St.

Veteran district educators Kandie Antonetti and Malik Jones will be the new middle school's co-principals. They will share responsibilities for leading a team of teachers and support staff that will serve approximately 400 students in 2017-18.

"It is critical that we have strong leadership at 50 North Lark from the beginning to ensure our goal of providing an equitable learning environment for our students," said Interim Superintendent Kimberly Young Wilkins, Ed.D., the founding principal of Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School in 2005.

"These are two uniquely qualified administrators, with experience at all levels in our district. They know what it takes to build and support a program that will prepare students for success in high school."

Jones is in his fourth year as the principal at Montessori Magnet School. He spent his first six years in the district teaching fifth and sixth grade at North Albany Academy, and also has served in an administrative role at Albany High School (as has Antonetti).

Antonetti currently is the principal at West Hill Middle School. She has served in that role since the school opened in 2015.

She has worked in the district since 1999, including 10 years as a sixth-grade teacher at the former Philip Schuyler Elementary School, the former Philip Livingston Magnet Academy and Myers Middle School.

The district is opening the new middle school at 50 North Lark to address rapidly growing enrollment. The student population from prekindergarten through grade 8 has grown more than 26 percent (nearly 1,500 students) over the past eight years.



Co-principals at the new middle school: Malik Jones, left, and Kandie Antonetti

The district cannot meet its enrollment needs with its current middle-school facilities – two 6-8 schools (Myers and William S. Hackett Middle School) and one school serving pre-K through grade 8 (North Albany).

Students from Arbor Hill Elementary School (current grades 5-6), North Albany (current grades 5-7), Philip J. Schuyler Achievement Academy (current grade 5), Sheridan Preparatory Academy (current grade 5) and West Hill (current grade 7) will attend 50 North Lark in 2017-18.

They will enter a newly renovated school ready to meet their needs.

That's thanks to overwhelming support from voters in January for a renovation project at 50 North Lark. Work will begin this spring and be completed for the start of school.

Voters in January also strongly supported the purchase 395 Elk St. That will be the new home for the district's alternative-education programs in 2017-18.

"We are grateful to our community for supporting both of these important proposals, and allowing us to plan to provide equitable programs and services for our new middle school," Dr. Wilkins said.

## State tests on the horizon

Each year the New York State Education Department requires schools around the state to administer tests that measure student skills in English, math and science.

The tests begin in third grade in English and math, and students take them every year through eighth grade. Students in fourth and eighth grade also take science tests. Students throughout the state take the same test at the same time.

Other exams State Ed issues include:

- Regents exams – high school exams that measure ability in English, math, science, social studies and foreign language.
- New York State Alternate Assessment (NYSAA) – these tests in English, math, science and social studies measure the progress of students with disabilities in grades 3-8
- New York State English-as-a-Second-Language Achievement Test (NYSESLAT) – these tests measure the progress of English-language learners from kindergarten through grade 12.

The testing schedule for this year follows:

DATE	TEST
March 20-June 2	English-language arts (ELA) alternate assessments, grades 3-8 (dates vary from school to school; families will receive a letter from school indicating the dates)
March 28-30	English-language arts (ELA) exam, grades 3-8 (make-ups March 31-April 5)
April 10-May 19	Speaking part of NYSESLAT exam begins (dates vary from school to school; families will receive a note from school indicating the date)
May 2-May 4	Math exam, grades 3-8 (make-ups May 5-10)
May 8-19	Listening, reading and writing parts of NYSESLAT exam (dates vary from school to school; families will receive a letter from school indicating the dates)
May 24-June 2	Performance part of science exam, grades 4 and 8 (dates vary from school to school; families will receive a letter from school indicating the date)
June 5	Written part of science exam, grades 4 and 8 (make-ups June 6-7)
June 13-22	Regents exams in a variety of subjects, grades 9-12

Please make sure your child comes to school well-rested and with a good breakfast so he or she is prepared to do his or her best on the days of the exams.

## Board selects Adler as president for 2017

Sue Adler is president of the City School District of Albany Board of Education for 2017.

She was selected by her peers at the board's Jan. 3 meeting.

First elected to the board in 2011 and re-elected in 2013, Adler served as board vice president in 2015 and 2016. Her term as president runs through Dec. 31, and she succeeds Kenneth M. Bruce in that leadership role.

"I truly believe the strengths of our school district far outweigh its weaknesses," Adler said. "We have our own set of challenges, like all districts. But with the

support of our community and the collective will to improve, our schools and our students will thrive. I am certain of this."

The board also selected Anne Savage as vice president and Vickie Smith as secretary. Savage was elected to the board in 2014 and served as secretary in 2015 and 2016. Smith is a first-time board officer; she was first elected in 2015 and won re-election to a four-year term last November.

Also Jan. 3, Smith and new board member Sridar Chittur were sworn in. Chittur also was elected in November to serve a four-year term.

## Volunteer spotlight

### Names

Debra and Eric Fagans

### Ages

71 and 73

### Occupations

Debra is a retired teacher and program coordinator of Literacy Volunteers of Rensselaer County.

Eric is a retired minister.

### Volunteer at

Giffen Memorial Elementary School every Tuesday. Once a week for the last six years, Debra has tutored second-graders and Eric has tutored fifth-graders. The Fagans also helped start Giffen's annual "Meet the Author/Illustrator Day" and soon will open a free after-school tutoring program for South End kids called "Wizard's Wardrobe."

### Why they volunteer

Debra: "We've been blessed with so many wonderful people in our lives, people who were there for us and supported us. I just want to show the children that we care about them and love them and want them to succeed." Eric: "Volunteering gives life meaning. And you get to meet really special people."



Veteran volunteers Debra and Eric Fagan tutor regularly at Giffen Memorial Elementary School. On Jan. 26, Debra read with second-grader Mahamat Yakhoub and Eric helped fifth-graders Ka'Cona Hinds, center, and Shiann Wright with their math.

## Myers student wins district bee again

For the second time in three years, Graham Gordon of Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School has won the City School District of Albany Spelling Bee.

Competing alongside the top spellers from elementary and middle schools across the district, Gordon spelled his way to victory in the final round with "conjecture" on Jan. 13.

Currently an eighth-grader at Myers, Gordon also won the spelling bee during the 2014-15 school year. He attributes his most recent win to an interest in literature and a sharp memory that allows him to recall words from things he has read in the past.

Along with runners-up Isaac Allen of Montessori Magnet School and Ingrid Colafati of William S. Hackett Middle School, Gordon advanced to the 34th Annual Capital District Spelling Bee on



Superlative spellers: Eighth-grader Graham Gordon of Myers Middle School, left, and fifth-grader Isaac Allen of Montessori Magnet School were the top performers in the district spelling bee Jan. 13.

Feb. 7 at Proctor's Theatre in Schenectady. ("Capital Education" went to print before the event.)

Congratulations to Gordon, Allen, Colafati and all the talented students who represented their schools at this year's district spelling bee.

## Giffen teacher meets gold standard

Another City School District of Albany teacher has reached a professional gold standard.

**Betsey Domenico**, an English as a New Language (ENL) teacher at Giffen Memorial Elementary School, has earned certification through the prestigious National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. She was recognized Jan. 18 along with other teachers from around the state that earned the certification

Domenico, pictured at right with one of her students, is the second member of her family to earn the highly respected certification. Her sister, **Katie Chainkyk**, is a fourth-grade teacher at Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST) and earned the certification last year.

The district now has 23 teachers with national board certification.

NBTS develops rigorous standards for teaching and certifies teachers who meet those standards. The process takes one to three years and teachers are required to submit four portfolio entries, including video recordings of classroom activities and examples of student work. They also must pass an assessment specific to their certification area.

## Myers teachers stand out

Two Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School teachers have been recognized for excellence.

WNYT/Ch. 13 named special-education teacher **Cindy Clo** as one of 13 top teachers in the Capital Region for the 2016-17 school year. WNYT profiled Clo in January; she also was featured in the fall edition of "Capital Education."

The New York State Technology Education and Engineering Association has recognized technology teacher **Melissa Hirt** as its Regional Teacher of the Year. The organization also has nominated Hirt for its statewide Teacher of the Year award.

Congratulations to both Myers teachers on this outstanding recognition!

## Falcon football players earn all-state honors again

Albany High School seniors **Ky'ere Tillery** and **Jarrell Chaney** have earned all-state football recognition for the second season in a row.

Tillery earned fifth-team recognition at running back among the state's largest schools (Class AA). He ran for 1,142 yards and 13 touchdowns during the fall to help the Falcons to a 5-4 record, their first winning season since 2005.

An honorable mention all-state pick as a junior, Tillery finished his two-year varsity career at Albany High with 2,521 rushing yards and 30 total TDs.

Chaney earned honorable mention all-state recognition at receiver for the second year in a row. He finished his senior season with nearly 600 receiving yards and led all Section II receivers in TD catches for the second year in a row with nine. He also had an excellent season on defense at safety.

Over the past two seasons, Chaney caught 21 TDs and accumulated nearly 1,500 receiving yards.



Teacher Betsey Domenico earns national certification.

## Albany High students Presidential Scholar nominees

Albany High seniors **Jacob Citone** and **Santos Otero** were among the short list of nominees for the 2017 U.S. Presidential Scholars program that the New York State Department of Education released in December.

Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy nominated both.

Out of all high school seniors across New York State, only 25 had the honor of being nominated for this highly prestigious award. Students are recognized for their outstanding work in academics and the arts, as well as their success in career and technical education programs.

Citone was one of 20 Academics and Arts nominees, while Otero was one of only five Career and Technical Education nominees.

Albany High provided half of the four Capital Region nominees and was one of only two schools in the state to have multiple students nominated.



Looking presidential: From left, Assemblywoman Patricia Fahy, senior Santos Otero, Albany High Acting Principal Dale Getto and senior Jacob Citone.

## Albany public school students dominate Creative Expressions contest

City School District of Albany students' writing, artistic and oratory skills eclipsed those of students from around the area in the Black History Month Creative Expressions Contest sponsored by Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Alumnae Chapter of Albany.

Of the 28 winners picked, 12 were from Albany public schools.

The contest asked students to submit a piece of writing, art or oratory about a person, group, event or movement that significantly affected people of color in a community, the United States or worldwide.

Winners are Albany High School's **Ian Boldiston**, **WillieMae Fiddemon**, **Sion Hardy** and **Emmanuel Tay**; Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School's **Onovu Otitigbe-Dangerfield**; William S. Hackett Middle School's **Nina Avallone-Serra**, **Ingrid Colafati**, **Hidayet Chowdhury**, **Gabriella Romeo-Artis** and **Brynn Russell**; Philip J. Schuyler Achievement Academy's **Christian Wasson** and Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology's **Erykah Herrine**

The winning students are being featured in a series of public service announcements on local TV and radio stations throughout February.

## Important special education reminders

The City School District of Albany has an obligation to evaluate students who may have disabilities to determine their eligibility and need for special education, special accommodations or other programs.

If you believe your child has a disability that requires special education or special accommodations, we encourage you to contact your child's building principal. You also can call Catie Magil, interim chair of the Committee on Special Education, at 475-6150 to discuss whether your child should be referred to the committee or the "504 Team" for a full evaluation.

**If your child attends a non-public school in Albany**, you may request an evaluation to determine eligibility and need for special education by writing to the Committee on Special Education, 75 Watervliet Ave., Albany, NY 12206.

For a student found eligible before April 1, a parent may request services to begin within 30 days of the determination.

If you plan to enroll your child in a non-public school in Albany in 2017-18, you must provide a written request for services to the Committee on Special Education by June 1. We urge you to provide your request as soon as you know your plans so we may work with you and develop your child's plan early.

If your child will attend a non-public school outside the City of Albany in 2017-18 and you want services, you need to request the services in writing from the public district where the school is located, also by June 1.

The district's Committee on Special Education will develop an Individual Education Service Plan (IESP) for students with disabilities. An IESP is developed in the same manner and includes the same contents as an Individual Education Plan (IEP).

The district does not provide services to non-public-school students found eligible for accommodations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

Please contact the Special Education Department or Catie Magil at 475-6150 if you have any questions.

## Non-public school transportation deadline ahead

State law requires Albany parents whose children will attend a non-public school in 2017-18 to submit to the district a written request for transportation **April 1**.

The purpose of this deadline is to enable districts to budget funds and make necessary arrangements to provide reasonable and economical transportation. This applies to students who will attend private, parochial and charter schools.

For non-public-school students who move into the city after the April 1 deadline, parents must submit a written request for transportation within 30 days after establishing residency.

In order to qualify for transportation, students must meet the requirements under the district's Transportation Policy. Visit the Transportation section at [www.albanyschools.org](http://www.albanyschools.org) for that policy.

Requests should be mailed to:  
Denise Towne  
Director of Transportation  
City School District of Albany  
75 Watervliet Avenue  
Albany, NY 12206

For more information, contact the Transportation Department at 475-6170.

## Check us out online!

We have an Online News Center to provide you as much news as possible about the great people and programs of the City School District of Albany. Visit [www.albanyschools.org](http://www.albanyschools.org) and click the Online News Center link in the right-hand column to read more about any of these stories and additional articles, including:

- Music staff bring down the house at annual teacher concert
- Board resolution opposes U.S. education secretary nominee
- Follow your child's bus with Durham Bus Tracker
- Stay in the loop on school news
- Albany High School Theatre Ensemble to present "Oliver"

Also check us out on Facebook, Twitter and School News Notifier!

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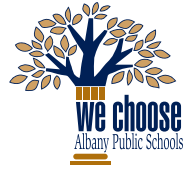
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**Sridar Chittur**

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## Leading the way Meet AVID teachers Liz Keller and George Stahler

Liz Keller and George Stahler have been teaching in the City School District of Albany for 24 and 29 years, respectively. When North Albany Academy began implementing AVID in the elementary grades, they both were among the first to fully embrace it. Two years in, their fourth-grades are now model classrooms that exemplify the benefits of AVID.

AVID, or Advancement Via Individual Determination, is an educational system in use across the country designed to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college and career readiness and success in a global society. To learn more, visit [avid.org](http://avid.org).



George Stahler

**Q: In terms of both instructional practice and the physical space, what does an AVID elementary classroom look like?**

**A: Keller:** As far as the physical space, you see a college and university theme throughout. Our walls are covered with college pennants and banners and student-created goals. Each classroom also has a college corner featuring the higher education of the classroom teacher, and we talk about our own college experiences with our kids to get them excited about the idea of college. You would also see students working collaboratively, sharing ideas and justifying their answers.

**A: Stahler:** Instructional practice is centered on collaborative learning, work involving Costa's Levels of Thinking and Questioning, and a growth mindset. Students use their AVID binders to stay organized and easily find the necessary materials for a lesson. Students use their agenda books on a daily basis to record homework and outside responsibilities, allowing them to self-monitor the completion of their assignments.

**Q: While the concept of a 'growth mindset' is an important one in education, AVID has a particularly strong focus on it. What does this concept mean to you as a teacher, and how do you see your students respond to it over time?**

**A: Keller:** Growth mindset is a vital component of AVID. In our classrooms, we believe all students can grow both academically and socially, regardless of where they start. The "D" in AVID stands for determination, and by focusing on this growth mindset, they learn to persevere in their work and can see their progress over time. This helps them feel proud not just of a final product, but of the hard work they put into it as well.

**A: Stahler:** Our students have come to know that mistakes are valuable to the learning process, and, through self-reflection, that they can actually be useful tools. As the year unfolds, we hear students move from saying, "I can't, it's too hard," or "I give up," to "When I started, I thought that I couldn't do it, but I did it," and "I feel good that I didn't quit, because I thought I would."

**Q: You both have seen various techniques, philosophies and practices come and go in education. What makes AVID different?**

**A: Keller:** AVID gives our students the foundation they need to feel confident in their learning and strive toward college. It helps our students understand the hard work that is necessary to reach their goals and each day they grow more confident to meet the challenges that they face. With the skills they are learning, such as organization, collaborating with others and self-reflection, we hope to send them into the world better prepared for what lies ahead.

**A: Stahler:** When we started with AVID, although we had seen it in action and had been trained, we were hopeful but still a bit unsure. But once we took the plunge and once we began seeing the results of AVID, we never looked back. AVID does not just feed the minds of our students, but also feeds their souls, and I truly believe that it will tip the scale for success in our students' favor.



Liz Keller

## Alumni achievement Wayne Jackson '65

The year was 1967. Army sniper Wayne Jackson was sitting in the trunk of a tree in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam. He heard a noise. Reached for his gun.

"God made me move at that point, and that's when it blew up," the 1965 Albany High School graduate recalled.

Jackson's perch was boot-trapped with a bomb. Had he not moved, he would have been dead. But the damage was done: his legs were shredded and his military service ended.

He spent the next two years recovering in military hospitals. He returned to Albany in 1969 with a Purple Heart, shrapnel in his legs and an addiction to painkillers.

It was a far cry from where he was in 1965: a senior at Albany High who sang in the chorus, served as class treasurer, wrote for the school newspaper and belonged to numerous clubs.

"I loved Albany High School. It was awesome," Jackson said. "I knew everybody and I loved the friends I had, and I still have many of those friendships to this day."

Nobody was talking about PTSD in 1969, and the year that followed was difficult.

"I was wandering," Jackson said.

He was angry and had lost faith. His legs always hurt and he was an addict. But his family did not lose faith in him, and another salvation of sorts came when Jackson met Jack McEneny.

At the time, McEneny was running a Vietnam veterans internship program for the City of Albany. He and Jackson became friends, a relationship that endures today.

Through the internship program, Jackson started a 30-day stint in the New York State Assembly; the month stretched into a year and in 1975 he became a full-time staffer on the Assembly Committee on Veterans Affairs.

McEneny helped Jackson start to confront his addiction. Jackson's family's faith sustained him until his own returned.

Then a job as Assembly sergeant-at-arms opened up in 1979.

"I said, 'I don't want that job but I'll do it for a couple of years.' That was 38 years ago," Jackson said.

As sergeant-at-arms, Jackson's job is to keep things civil in the Assembly chamber.

"I'm the chief protocol officer," he said. "I keep the craziness out and assess the safety of the members while they're here."

During his tenure, he has used diplomacy and humor to thwart overzealous lobbyists, break up fights between Assembly members and school decades of interns in the Assembly's rules.

Jackson knows everyone, and everyone knows him. It's part of the job.

He also said he's less intimidating than he used to be.

"I've become more relaxed in the job," he said.

Jackson was inducted into the City School District of Albany Hall of Fame in 2016. He still lives in Albany and is proud of his alma mater.

"It was a great school and I know it's still a great school," he said.



Wayne Jackson '65