

Students guide students using theater

Setting: A contemporary elementary school classroom.

Scene: A student on the brink of adulthood stands facing a student on the brink of adolescence.

"I am me. And I am beautiful," they say together. The older student looks the younger one in the eye, grabs both her hands and says, "Got it?"

Their exchange was a fraction of the buzz happening during the first meeting of this year's Theatre Mentor Program. Students taking advanced theater classes at Albany High School meet with sixth-graders at Albany School of Humanities (ASH) to collaborate on what will become a series of plays about identity.

The program is the brainchild of teacher Noelle Gentile, who first brought high school students to ASH four years ago to help teach *MacBeth* to the younger kids.



Albany High School senior Khalel Hamlin, in blue, gave performing tips to sixth-graders at Albany School of Humanities (ASH) on Oct. 11. Hamlin is one of about 40 Albany High students taking part in the unique Theatre Mentoring Program.

The collaboration worked so well that Gentile continued the program, expanding it so a rotating group of 40 high school mentors travel monthly to ASH for half a school day to work with every sixth-grader over the course of the year.

"The high school students are essentially student teaching," Gentile said. "And it's really powerful for the younger students to have teachers who look like

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More students to 'feed and read' in 2017-18

This year, 150 more students in the City School District of Albany are taking home backpacks filled with food to help their families provide nutritional meals on the weekends.

The Feed and Read Program, formerly the Weekend Backpack Food Program, has expanded to serve 625 families in the 2017-18 school year. City School District of Albany Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams joined the Homeless and Travelers Aid Society (HATAS), the program's lead organization, and other community partners Oct. 4 to kick off the program for another school year.

"We are so thankful for all of the community partners and volunteers who have come forward in such a significant way to support our students and families," Adams said. "The Feed and Read Program helps us in addressing one of the first steps in breaking the cycle of poverty.

"When students are able to focus in school because they're not hungry, that improves their academic success and increases their opportunities as they grow up."

The backpack program began in the 2014-15 school year serving 14 families. It expanded to 109 families the following year and jumped to 475 families in 2016-17. Under HATAS' leadership, financial support continues to grow.

The program will provide 625 elemen-



Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams, right, joined Assemblyman John McDonald and other local officials to fill backpacks with healthy food Oct. 4, the 2017-18 launch of the Feed and Read Program.

tary and middle-school students with 12 pounds of food every Friday afternoon during the school year. This year the program also has expanded to provide a gift card redeemable for milk each week as well as an age-appropriate book in every backpack.

SEFCU, CDPHP and the City of Albany are the program's primary sponsors.

"We are grateful to our partners for helping to feed some of Albany's neediest children," said HATAS Executive Director Liz Hitt. "We are humbled by their generosity and by their selfless devotion to the well-being of our community."

For more information about the Feed and Read Program, or to find out how you can help, please visit <http://hatas.org/programs/weekend-backpack-program/>.

Student achievement

Albany karate champs go international

As a result of top-notch performances at a recent national karate championship, five City School District of Albany students will represent the United States at an international competition in Scotland next June.

The students are Albany High School senior Joseph McCarthy, junior Claire Patnaude and sophomore Andre' Woods, and Albany School of Humanities (ASH) fifth-graders Grace Neville and Tessa Weklar.

All five made the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Karate World Team thanks to their rankings at the AAU national championships June 27-July 1 in Raleigh, N.C. As a result, they are eligible to compete in the 2018 World Championships in Glasgow.

Several of the students got their start in karate at after-school programs in the City School District of Albany. All are students of the Albany Council of the Traditional Karate-Do Organization, Inc., led by Shihan Tony Butler.

Sensei Kristen Dawson, a 2005 Albany High graduate and student of Butler's, teaches at the dojo as well.



World-class karate kids: from left, Albany High School senior Joseph McCarthy and junior Claire Patnaude, Albany School of Humanities (ASH) fifth-grader Tessa Weklar, Sensei Kristen Dawson (Albany High Class of 2005) and Albany High sophomore Andre' Woods.

"Shihan" means master teacher and "sensei" means teacher. Both are titles of respect in Japanese martial arts.

Over a span of 25 years, Butler volunteer-taught karate to hundreds of district students in after-school programs at ASH, Arbor Hill Elementary School, New Scotland Elementary School and Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST). He retired from his volunteer service last year and continues to operate his dojo, or martial arts studio.

Congratulations and good luck to Albany's karate kids!

New vision, mission, goals to guide district's work

What do we aspire to be as a school district, and how do we plan to get there?

City School District of Albany staff and the Board of Education have been working through those questions this summer and fall under the leadership of first-year Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams. The outcomes are new vision and mission statements, as well as goals that will guide the district's work in the years ahead.

The board reviewed these important guiding elements at its Nov. 2 meeting and was scheduled to consider adopting them Nov. 16.

"Our vision and mission now will guide how we make decisions in the best interest of our children," Adams said. "It will keep us focused on what we need to accomplish."

Vision Statement

The City School District of Albany will be a district of excellence with caring relationships and engaging learning experiences that provide equitable opportunities for all students to reach their potential.

Mission Statement

We will work in partnership with our diverse community to engage every learner in a robust educational program designed

to provide the knowledge and skills necessary for success.

Goals

- Increase **student achievement** in early literacy, close the achievement gaps and increase the graduation rate by focusing on the unique factors that impact student success.

- Enhance the delivery of **quality instruction** by providing our teachers and staff with high-level, meaningful professional development to promote student growth and proficiency.

- Build our **leadership capacity and increase accountability** through ongoing professional growth opportunities designed to improve effective leadership in our organization.

- **Empower families** to support the success of their children through relationships of mutual respect and clear and effective communication.

- Partner with our **diverse community**, including local businesses and community leaders, to engage and empower stakeholders in the wrap-around services needed to support our students

Adams, who began her new job Aug.

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From the superintendent Beginning our work together



Kaweeda G. Adams
Superintendent

"It is our responsibility as educators to believe in the possibilities of all of our students, all of the time."
– Marva Collins

We are off to a fantastic start for the 2017-18 school year!

Besides the wonderful weather this late summer and fall, my arrival coincided with a flurry of positive activity in the City School District of Albany. The district was in the process of launching several new initiatives in which I had the good fortune to participate.

We opened a new program designed to meet the needs of our growing refugee and immigrant population – the Albany International Center at North Albany Academy.

We also dedicated two buildings after beloved former district principals – the Tony Clement Center for Education, home to our alternative-education programs, and Edmund J. O'Neal Middle School of Excellence, our new third middle school.

In addition, we celebrated expansion of an ongoing partnership with Whitney Young Health Center to provide services to students at North Albany and the Albany International Center.

I would like to thank my predecessor, Interim Superintendent Kimberly Young Wilkins, Ed.D., who welcomed and assisted me in a smooth transition. Dr. Wilkins built a foundation of progress and achievement for our district; the aforementioned successes were just a few of the accomplishments under her leadership.

Since I began Aug. 14, I have had the opportunity to work with our Board of Education and staff members throughout the district on creating new vision and mission statements as well as district goals (see related story, page 1). We have analyzed student performance data and survey results in addition to numerous conversations with varied stakeholders.

These important pieces will serve as the guiding beacons for our work in the years to come.

I also have had the opportunity to visit every school and meet with every principal. I have visited scores of classrooms and had the privilege of talking with our students.

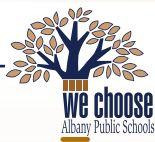
I have observed students interested and motivated in their learning. I have engaged with teachers and staff who are committed to the success of our children and work diligently each day to create a caring environment conducive to learning.

I also have seen first-hand that Albany is a city that supports its public schools.

Whether meeting with elected officials, business leaders or community advocates, it is obvious we share the goal of having strong schools capable of meeting each child's unique needs. I also am honored to have been able to meet many parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends who are eager to move our school district to the next level!

Albany is a fabulous community that truly cares about our children ... our future! It is a wonderful place to live and work.

I am excited to be here, working together with you to build a stronger school district and an even stronger community in which all students can and will learn!



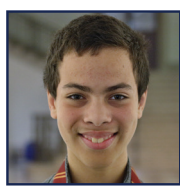
CAPITAL
education

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Voices | Q: What do you like best about fall?



Why do I like fall? I like fall because all the different things change. The leaves begin to change, the weather gets cooler, it gets darker earlier and the atmosphere of school changes to spooky times. One of my favorite holidays is Halloween because for one day we get to be something we are not. That is what I like the most about fall.

– Xavier Allen, eighth grade
William S. Hackett Middle School



Fall, also known as autumn, is the transition from summer to winter. I like the fall because of the colorful and beautiful leaves on the trees, and as they fall they look even more satisfying and magnificent. Fall is really chilly and cold, but that is one of the things that I like about it because you get to try really hard to be warm and comfortable. I also like that Halloween is celebrated in fall, but personally I don't go trick-or-treating because I don't need that much candy. My favorite part about Halloween is when my brother, uncles and I try to scare each other as much as we can, just for the fun of it. Finally, the last thing I like about fall is that I get to spend time with my family and have fun. Mostly we stay at home to relax, but sometimes we go out and explore nature.

– Keziah Espina, seventh grade
Edmund J. O'Neal Middle School of Excellence



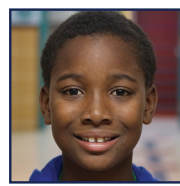
I love autumn because of pumpkin-carving, apple-picking and watching football. I love watching the leaves fall and remembering the good times of the summer while looking forward to the winter. I'm always excited for Halloween and going to haunted houses, making caramel apples and getting ready for trick-or-treaters. Some of my favorite things to do are normal activities like taking my dogs for walks or baking, which just seem a hundred times better in the fall.

– Peyton Hunt, senior
Albany High School



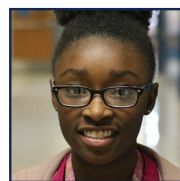
I think fall is the best season. I like when the leaves turn yellow, orange and red. I love when the leaves fall and I can play in them outside. I like when school starts and I meet my teacher and friends. I like when I go collecting apples with my family. I like when I go to school so I can get my education. I love when all my sports start. That is why I love fall.

– Stefanos Sofi, sixth grade
Eagle Point Elementary School



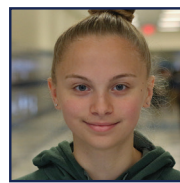
What I like about fall is that we went to the CDTA Fall Festival. We went apple-picking, and for Halloween we are going bowling. I am having fun. We went to the pumpkin patch to get a pumpkin. We also went in a maze and got on the hayride with my friends. I play soccer in the fall, too. I also like playing outside in a pile of leaves. That is all I like about fall.

– Ja'len Skervin, third grade
Philip J. Schuyler Achievement Academy



I like fall because the leaves change colors. Also, it gets cooler outside. When fall comes, the weather starts to change and it's not so hot anymore. When fall is here I know that Halloween is almost here. Fall is one of my favorite seasons. It's one of the best seasons ever. Also, when the leaves start to fall off the trees, I like to roll in them. Also, I like to make a pile of leaves and then jump in them. This is why I like the fall!

– Gavionna Thomas, fifth grade
North Albany Academy



Fall is one of my favorite seasons. My birthday is in the fall and so is my favorite holiday, Halloween. I like the changes in color on the leaves, and the temperature is perfect for outdoor activities. I love the whole atmosphere of fall. Like many people, apple- and pumpkin-picking are some of my favorite things to do in the fall. Although raking leaves isn't very fun, it is fun to jump in them afterwards. This time of year is a common ground between summer and winter. I'll miss the fall.

– Sahsa Post-Lais, eighth grade
Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School



Every season has its special beauty, and fall is no exception. Watching the trees turn from a uniform green to all varieties of gold and amber is a spectacular experience. One can almost be blinded by the fiery brilliance. So how can it be that all this beauty is a sign of death and decay? Even so, with all this beauty, autumn never fails to show us how beautiful it is to let things go.

– Harry Zay, senior
Albany High School

At a glance: Edmund J. O'Neal Middle School of Excellence

Co-principals: Malik Jones and Kandie Antonetti | **Grades:** 6-8 | **Address:** 50 North Lark St.

The City School District of Albany's newest middle school, Edmund J. O'Neal Middle School of Excellence opened in September. The district renovated the building during the summer to create new classrooms for science, family and consumer sciences, technology education and music. Other improvements included upgrades to the swimming pool, a new kitchen, and a new stage, better seating and a new sound system in the gym.

Students: 443 | **Teachers:** 45 | **Total employees:** 97

Points of distinction:

- The school offers sixth-grade elective classes in AVID – Advancement Via Individual Determination, a national program that teaches students skills and behaviors that prepare them for college and careers.
- Each grade-level student team is named after a college or university.
- Twice a day, the school practices “mindful moments.” Using the public address system, an adult leads the whole school in two minutes of calm reflections.

Programs and partners:

- Albany Police Athletic League (PAL)
- Modified athletics (grades 7-8): baseball, basketball, softball, volleyball, track, wrestling

- Parent University
- PTA
- Liberty Partnership
- Robotics Club

What makes our school special?

The new school is named after the late Edmund J. O'Neal, a beloved City School District of Albany teacher, principal and administrator who spent 36 years serving students, staff and families of Albany, especially the Arbor Hill community. He was the district's first African-American principal.

Did you know?

Students who now attend the school helped come up with the name of their new school last spring.

Hall of Fame adds eight new members

President Obama's last guardian of the environment. A top agriculture official from President Clinton's administration. The City of Albany's first female deputy fire chief. A deeply respected former teacher and administrator.

These accomplished individuals were among the eight members of the City School District of Albany Hall of Fame Class of 2017 honored at the induction ceremony during Homecoming Weekend at Albany High School on Sept. 22-23.

A list of this year's inductees follows. You also can learn more about each person in the Hall of Fame section at www.albanyschools.org.

- **Kenneth D. Ackerman**, Albany High School Class of 1969 (*Learn more about him on page 8.*)

- **Linda Jackson-Chalmers**, Philip

Schuyler High School Class of 1969

- **Kevin C. Justice**, former teacher, principal at William S. Hackett Middle School

- **Holly Fernandez Lynch**, Albany High School Class of 1999

- **Catherine McCabe**, Albany High School Class of 1969

- **Melanie Pores**, former teacher, Board of Education member

- **James P. Sano**, former teacher, coach

- **Maria McGarry Walker**, Albany High School Class of 1986

The Hall of Fame was established in 2009 to recognize accomplished graduates, exceptional district staff people and community leaders that have supported our schools. Each year, new Hall of Famers are inducted after being nominated by the public and selected by a committee of district staff and community members.



The City School District of Albany inducted eight new members into the Hall of Fame on Sept. 22. Front row from left: Maria McGarry Walker, Linda Jackson-Chalmers, Catherine McCabe and Melanie Pores. Back row from left: Kenneth Ackerman, Holly Fernandez Lynch, Kevin Justice and James Sano.

District picks new crop of 'Golden Apples'

The City School District of Albany recognized excellence in teaching Sept. 14 with the presentation of the 2017 Golden Apple awards.

The Golden Apple recognizes people who practice creative methods that significantly affect students' grades, behaviors and motivation to learn.

Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams, joined by members of the Board of Education, presented the awards to representatives from each district school. First New York Federal Credit Union sponsors the annual Golden Apple and Crystal Apple awards.

This year's Golden Apple recipients, recognized for their service during the 2016-17 school year, are:

- **Amanda Weklar**, Abrookin Career and Technical Center

- **Lawrence Bizzaro**, Albany High School

- **Orly Contreras**, Albany High School

- **Christina Hettie**, Albany School of Humanities (ASH)

- **Amy Wilson**, Arbor Hill Elementary School

- **Leslie Bello-Brown**, Delaware Community School

- **Diane Lemieur**, Eagle Point Elementary School

- **Kimberly Healy**, Giffen Memorial Elementary School

- **Natalie Aiello**, Montessori Magnet School

- **Mary Indovina**, New Scotland Elementary School

- **Mary Anziano**, North Albany Academy

- **Tamara Colman**, Philip J. Schuyler Achievement Academy

- **Kevin Retell**, Pine Hills Elementary School

- **Melissa Hunt**, Sheridan Preparatory Academy

- **John Cole**, Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School

- **Deborah Whipple**, Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science Technology (TOAST)

- **Jack McCulley**, Tony Clement Center for Education

- **John Batch**, West Hill Middle School

- **Edwin Newell**, William S. Hackett Middle School

The Crystal Apple is awarded annually to the best of the best. This year's Crystal Apple recipient is Liz Gialanella, Psy.D., a school psychologist at Albany High. (*Learn more about her on page 8.*)

Albany High lottery ahead

The lottery to determine placement in Albany High School's four academies for the 2018-19 school year is coming up Dec. 7.

Each of Albany High's four unique academies has its own theme: Citizenship, Discovery, Innovation and Leadership. These physically smaller learning environments are designed to help students feel connected, involved and engaged.

Each offers electives specific to its theme. The themes also are woven into the core curriculum. However, students also can take electives in different academies and the electives are equally available to all.

The Albany High lottery is open to all incoming freshmen and new students, as well as to current Albany High students wishing to change academies for next school year. Students need to submit a lottery application to increase their chances of entering the academy of their choice; applications were available in October and early November.

The lottery includes caps to help balance enrollment across the academies. For each academy, the lottery will randomly select 175 students who listed that academy as their first choice on the application. Remaining seats will be randomly filled with students who selected it as their second, third or fourth choice.

Albany High staff visited each of the district's three middle schools to talk about opportunities available in high school. Guidance counselors at each middle school and at the Albany International Center also met with students to help complete the application and academy selection.

Students then had the opportunity to bring the application home for review with parents or guardians before returning it to school by the Nov. 13 application deadline.

The district also mailed applications to Albany families whose children are in eighth grade in charter schools, as well as to private and parochial schools to share with their eighth-grade students.

Students guide students through theater

(continued from page 1)

them, and with whom they perform and collaborate."

Shakespeare was the playwright the first year. Now the program spotlights pieces written, staged, directed and performed by younger students with guidance from their mentors.

Each year's shows have an overarching theme. This year's is "The Best Part of Me."

Sixth-graders have written essays about what they like best about themselves. They will work in small teams with each other and the older students to weave the essays into six plays that ultimately will be performed for the school.

The first performance was Nov. 9, with two more in 2018 at the school's Black History Month Program and Multicultural Celebration. All performances will be in multimedia format created in collaboration with Youth FX filmmakers.

Great student performances aren't the only outcome of the program. There's a therapeutic effect as well, Gentile said.

"So often we expect students to come to class ready to learn when there are social and emotional components that need to be processed," she said. "When you give students the space to do that, when they understand that their voices matter, the change is remarkable."

Like all good mentoring relationships, benefits flow in both directions.

"We learn from each other," said Albany High senior Khalel Hamlin. "I think that's the most important experience."

Senior Camille Dobbs recalled mentoring a student upset about her parents' impending divorce at the same her own parents divorced.

"Not only did she cry, I cried as well," Dobbs said. "Just talking and listening to each other helped us both."

Gentile said the Theatre Mentoring Program is her favorite part of a job she loves.

"I really believe that if you give someone a chance to shine, they will," she said. "Our students are brilliant."

New vision, mission, goals to guide district's work

(continued from page 1)

14, initiated discussions to develop these pieces during a summer retreat with the board and her senior leadership team. She shared the outcomes of those discussions with all of the district's approximately 1,700 staff members during the annual Superintendent's Convocation at the Empire State Plaza Convention Center in the days before the start of the 2017-18 school year.

More than 620 staff members – about

37 percent of all district employees – responded to a survey over the following weeks providing important input and changes that helped shape the final statements and goals.

"It is important to hear the voices of those who will be doing the work as we begin to set a collaborative direction moving forward, so everyone can see themselves in our future," Adams said.

WE CHOOSE



Albany School of Humanities (ASH) fourth-graders Devin Moulden, left, and Nevaeh Campbell were eager to pitch in on the morning of Sept. 6 helping unload school supply donations collected over the summer by members of The Sage College's athletic teams.



Fourth-grader Yasiel Carrasquillo-Torres took some time to enjoy the playground while celebrating a great start to the 2017-18 school year at Philip J. Schuyler Achievement Academy's PTA Meet and Greet Barbecue on Sept. 14.



Eagle Point Elementary School kindergarteners Arianna Allen, left, and Camilla Diefendorf were two of the many students and families who immersed themselves in the world of reading through a series of creative and engaging activities at Fall Literacy Night on Oct. 5.



Delaware Community School third-grader Jack Jimenez-Livent was all smiles as he sat down for business on the first day of the 2017-18 school year – Sept. 5..



Giffen Memorial Elementary School fifth-grader Paw Eh Gay Moo, second-grader Christopher Astacio Aponte and his fifth-grade sister Carolina posed with English as a New Language (ENL) teacher Betsy Domenico at the school's ENL Family Night on Oct. 18.



Prekindergartener Jayceon Wilson gets a boost from his father Tony at Arbor Hill Elementary School's Family Day on Sept. 15. More than 300 students, family, staff and community members turned out to help make this event a huge success.



Kindergartener Da'Mya Smith wrapped up North Albany Academy's spirit week at the school's Bulldog Pride Ice Cream Social on Sept. 15.



The morning of Aug. 30 marked an historic moment for Albany High School as the girls' swimming team returned home after two years away. The pool had been closed from March 2015 until this year for repairs and renovations. The sense of Falcon pride was palpable among students, families and staff as our student-athletes dove into their first home meet against Mohonasen in the newly renovated pool.



On the first day of school, Sept. 5, Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST) sixth-grader Julianne Eslabon looked on as her teacher, Kewsi Burgess (Albany High School Class of 2008), discussed the high standards he will hold his scholars to throughout the 2017-18 school year.



Senior Ra-Shon Lester and his classmates were able to plan for their future and meet first-hand with representatives from institutions across New York and around the northeast at Albany High School's College Fair on Sept. 27. About 100 colleges and universities participated.

ALBANY SCHOOLS



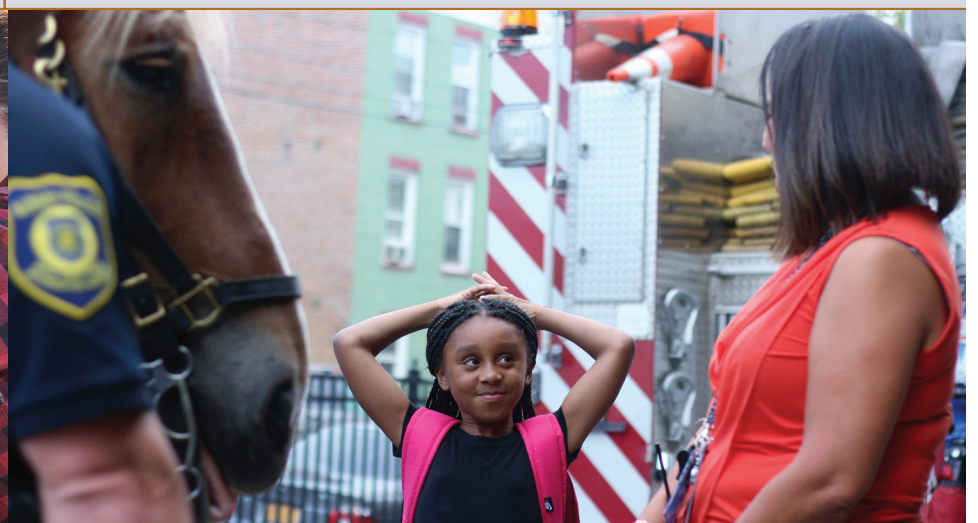
Students at Edmund J. O'Neal Middle School of Excellence returned from Columbus Day weekend to a completely renovated gym including a new floor, roof, basketball hoops, scoreboard, wireless sound system and bleachers, along with improved acoustics and insulation. Caitlyn Rana's eighth-grade class, including Ohjahmeir "OJ" Jones, was one of the first classes to break in the gym on the morning of Oct. 10.



Albany High School senior David Dimase, left, and junior Peter Wiley enter the home stretch of the Falcons' home cross country meet at Capital Hills Golf Course on Sept. 12.



On Oct. 12, Montessori Magnet School fourth-graders Edwin Caguana Lema, left, and Ny'ier Mott joined thousands of students from New York City to Troy in the annual "Day in the Life of the Hudson and Harbor" sponsored by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The event gives students the opportunity to practice their scientific powers of observation and data collection while getting a first-hand look at the wildlife that calls the river home.



Sheridan Preparatory Academy fifth-grader Egypt Carter chats with Assistant Principal Tina Cascone while visiting with members of the Albany Police Department and Albany Fire Department during the school's Back to School Blast on Sept. 14.

Fresh starts for the new school year

The City School District of Albany began the 2017-18 school year with three ribbon-cutting ceremonies to mark the official opening of three new schools or programs.



Seventh-grader Ungwa Mnyomoelwa, at the podium in white, shared her dreams with more than 150 guests on Aug. 30 as the district officially unveiled the new Albany International Center at North Albany Academy. The center serves refugee and immigrant students in grades 6-12 – students like Ungwa, who recently moved to Albany with her family from Tanzania. Speaking in her native Swahili – one of 57 languages students speak throughout the district – Ungwa told the crowd with the help of a translator that she plans to be a doctor.



Sophia Newell, right, principal of the Tony Clement Center for Education, presented a dozen roses to Jennifer Clement, widow of Tony Clement, at a Sept. 16 block party and ribbon-cutting ceremony for the school. Tony Clement died of cancer in 2012 at the age of 47. He worked for the district for 18 years as a teacher, coach and principal. The Tony Clement Center for Education is formerly known as the Alternative Learning Center and located at 395 Elk St.



The daughter and wife of the late Edmund J. O'Neal were among family, friends and former students who turned out Sept. 12 to officially cut the ribbon on the district's new third middle school. The district's first African-American principal, O'Neal served the district's students, families and staff for 36 years until his 1996 retirement. He died in 2009. The school, which serves about 450 students in grades 6-8, is located at 50 North Lark St.

Take the Family Engagement Survey

The City School District of Albany is asking all families to take part in a survey that will help inform the district's school-improvement work.

The Family Engagement Survey is open through Dec. 22. You can find a link at www.albanyschools.org in our From the Superintendent section. From that page, just click on the link and enter the password Albany.

It's easy to complete. The survey has 50 questions rated on a five-part scale, plus three open questions for comments. We ask that there be one survey per household; all responses will remain anonymous.

Students in grades 3-12 also will have opportunities to complete the survey. This will allow the district to build a comprehensive database important for our planning.

"We appreciate your assistance in completing this important survey," said Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams. "Parents and guardians are such an important part of what we do, and we are grateful to you for taking the time to respond."

The district also mailed a letter about the survey all district families in November. If there are questions or if you need clarification, please contact our Office of Curriculum and Instruction at (518) 475-6060.

Superintendent lauds calendar students

City School District of Albany Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams recognized the outstanding students who appear in the district's 2017-18 calendar at an Oct. 3 reception at Academy Park.

The calendar features students who stand out in a variety of ways. Some excel in academics, sports, fine arts, visual arts or performing arts. Others are actively involved in community service.

Whatever their interests, they are all exceptional students who proudly represent their schools and the district as a whole. Principals chose the students to represent their schools last spring.

Albany High School

- Zaeqwan Cancer
- Christopher Cedeno
- Reeve Churchill
- Zakirah Fiddemon
- Theotis Johnson
- Vashti Sooknanan
- Clark Zafran



Pride was evident on the faces of the family of Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School eighth-grader Deshawn Caldwell, one of 25 exceptional students Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams recognized Oct. 3.

Albany School of Humanities (ASH)

- Jazlyn Gorousingh

Arbor Hill Elementary School

- Curtis Wilson

Delaware Community School

- Sebastian Tenempaguay

Eagle Point Elementary School

- Elijah Ivy

Edmund J. O'Neal Middle School of Excellence

- Jalyne Alexander
- Noman Al-tiri

Giffen Memorial Elementary School

- Jasmine Flanagan

Montessori Magnet School

- Sophie Wilson



Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams congratulated New Scotland Elementary School second-grader Emerson Denno on Oct. 3 for being a student of excellence and representing his school in the City School District of Albany's annual calendar.

New Scotland Elementary School

- Emerson Denno

North Albany Academy

- Roiyel Babb

Philip J. Schuyler Achievement Academy

- Shan'cere Morton

Pine Hills Elementary School

- Khadija Astif

Sheridan Preparatory Academy

- Estrella Galindez

Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School

- Deshawn Caldwell
- Eleanor Farrell

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

- Junior Htoo

William S. Hackett Middle School

- Xavier Allen
- Jessica Minaya Mejia

Visit www.albanyschools.org to learn what makes each student exceptional. Congratulations to all of them!



Pine Hills Elementary School second-grader Khadija Astif eagerly awaited her turn to be recognized by Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams at the Oct. 3 reception honoring the 25 outstanding students featured in the 2017-18 school district calendar.

Dads turn out for education

More than 1,600 men showed up at various City School District of Albany schools Sept. 19 with a shared goal: to support their children's education.

With that common purpose, fathers, grandfathers, stepfathers, uncles, brothers and other male mentors took part in 2017's Dads Take Your Child to School Day.

The event is part of a national effort to encourage men to be active in their children's education. Schools throughout New York took part. The event is sponsored by the Fatherhood Initiative of the state's Office of Children and Family Services and the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance.

District schools recognized dads in a variety of ways: breakfast for dads and their kids, speakers, photo ops, school tours and more.

Kids who have a father or father figure involved in their schooling are more likely



Abraham Kamara took a selfie at North Albany Academy on Sept. 19 with sons Yusef, left, and Isaac. He was one of more than 1,600 fathers and father-figures who took part in Dads Take Your Child to School Day activities throughout the City School District of Albany.

to get good grades, feel better about themselves and make good choices, research shows. Our thanks to all of the parents and guardians who support their children's education every day!

Bravo! Albany High musicians accepted to regional festival

Eleven Albany High School virtuosos will represent their school Nov. 18 at the Area All-State Music Festival of the New York State School Music Association (NYSSMA).

The annual event features outstanding music students from high schools throughout the Capital Region performing in band, chorus, jazz band or orchestra. Students were selected based on scores they received at NYSSMA auditions last spring.

Performing at the Nov. 18 festival, held at Saratoga Springs High School, were:

- **Robert Ackerman** (chorus, tenor)
- **Richard Andrews** (chorus, bass)
- **Logan Bennett** (symphony orchestra, trumpet)
- **Reeve Churchill** (symphonic band, French horn)
- **Sofia Fasullo** (symphony orchestra, clarinet)
- **Anna Kennedy** (symphony orchestra, piccolo)
- **Elizabeth O'Toole** (symphonic band, flute)
- **Alexandra Sipos** (chorus, soprano)
- **Elli Sol Strich** (symphony orchestra, French horn)
- **Mara Strich** (symphony orchestra, flute)
- **Fiona Streznewski** (symphonic band, trombone)

Three of the students – **Sofia Fasullo**, **Elli Sol Strich** and **Mara Strich** – also were selected from among thousands statewide to perform in the highly selective Conference All-State Festival, which will be held on Dec. 2-3 at Kodak Hall in Rochester.

The Strich sisters will play in the Conference All-State Symphonic Band and Fasullo will play in the All-State Symphony Orchestra.

Albany High seniors National Merit semifinalists

Albany High School seniors **Matan Adler** and **Max Heller** have been named semifinalists in the 2018 National Merit Scholarship Competition.

Their outstanding scores on the PSAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test placed them in the top 1 percent of the 1.6 million students nationwide who took the test.

The students must continue their strong academic performance throughout high school, including SAT scores on par with their performance on the PSAT. National Merit Scholarships are awarded in the spring.

Congratulations and good luck to both students!

'STEM Master Teacher' recognized

An Albany High School teacher has joined the ranks of City School District of Albany teachers recognized for excellence in science, technology, engineering and math – or STEM.

Shannon Stevenson, an English as a New Language (ENL) living environment teacher, was recognized Oct. 18 in the state's STEM Master Teacher Program, celebrating her work to deliver innovative instruction to her students.

The Master Teacher Program network includes more than 900 outstanding teachers statewide. Stevenson is among 23 new STEM Master Teachers from the Capital Region this year. The district's other STEM Master Teachers, recognized in previous years, are:

- **Andre Castagna**, Albany High School, math
- **Erin Erickson**, Albany High School, math
- **Melissa Hirt**, Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School, technology
- **Michelle Huckins**, Albany High School, math
- **Margot Wyan**, Albany High School, math



English as a New Language (ENL) science teacher Shannon Stevenson, right

Arbor Hill speech teacher wins national award

The Capital Area Speech Language and Hearing Association (CASHA) has recognized Arbor Hill Elementary School speech teacher **Dawn Ray** as the winner of its 2017 Distinguished Service Award.

Ray's career in education spans more than three decades, of which the past 23 have been spent serving the children and families of Arbor Hill Elementary.



Arbor Hill Elementary School speech teacher Dawn Ray

Elementary grades to remain the same for 2018-19

The City School District of Albany's elementary grades will remain the same in 2018-19 while the district continues to plan for long-term solutions to its growing middle-school enrollment.

The Board of Education has set a goal of having all sixth-graders in middle school. However, the district does not currently have enough room in its three middle schools for all students in grades 6-8.

Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams told the board in October that the district will not carry out any moves for sixth grades in 2018-19 while planning continues for long-term middle-school facilities and enrollment needs.

Albany School of Humanities (ASH), Eagle Point Elementary School, Giffen Memorial Elementary School and Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST) will continue to serve students through sixth grade in 2018-19.

The district's three middle schools are Edmund J. O'Neal Middle School of Excellence, Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School and William S. Hackett Middle School. O'Neal opened in September with a temporary enrollment pattern for an anticipated 3-5 years.

Those elementary and middle configurations will stay in place for at least another school year, Adams said, noting that any moves now could end up being temporary with the district's long-term middle-level configuration still to be determined.

Along with growing enrollment at the elementary and middle levels, four charter middle schools have closed since 2012, including two in 2015. Hackett, Myers and O'Neal can accommodate about 1,800 stu-

dents; the district currently has nearly 2,100 total students in grades 6-8 and expects that to increase.

A committee of parents, staff and community members spent a year reviewing issues affecting overall enrollment, facilities, middle-school enrollment patterns and the district as a whole.

The committee presented two possible scenarios to the board Sept. 14:

- **Scenario 1** – Hackett, Myers and O'Neal continue at current capacity. Arbor Hill Elementary School is renovated to create a fourth middle school serving about 500 students. North Albany Academy is expanded to serve the Arbor Hill Elementary students.

- **Scenario 2** – Hackett and Myers continue at current capacity. Arbor Hill Elementary and North Albany are converted to 500-student middle schools. O'Neal becomes an elementary school.

In these or any other future scenarios the board may consider, the committee also recommended that all middle schools should be enrolled using a formula that evenly spreads higher-, medium- and lower-performing elementary schools.

The board will continue the planning process this school year, and would need to approve any future changes. The board also would need to plan a public referendum on any facilities work, with voter approval needed before any facilities work could go forward.

Read more in the Grade Configuration/Middle School Enrollment section at www.albanyschools.org. The board welcomes feedback. Find a schedule of meetings on the website, or use the Feedback form to send your thoughts.

Volunteer spotlight

Name
Ella Samuria
Age
88
Hometown
Albany
Occupation
Helping people. "I'm everywhere. I'm all over."

Volunteers at
Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST). For the past 12 years, Samuria has helped our youngest learners with writing. She volunteers in prekindergarten and kindergarten classes for two hours on Mondays, Tuesdays and Fridays.



On Oct. 24, volunteer Ella Samuria guided TOAST kindergarten Kayden Ellis through a writing exercise.

Why she volunteers

"I love children. Also, a long time ago someone helped me along the way, and I want to do the same. I believe in helping others along the way."

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 and click the Online News Center link in the right-hand column to read more about any of these stories and additional articles, including:

- District seeks input on next Albany High principal
- Message from the Superintendent: social media and safety awareness
- Wellness Policy update
- New STEM focus takes flight
- Albany High blood drive saves 318 lives
- Board appoints Albany High grad to fill vacant seat
- District to take part in state health survey

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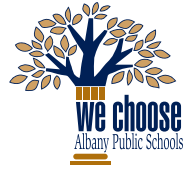
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Leading the way Meet Dr. Liz Gialanella School psychologist; Crystal Apple recipient

Being “the world’s most miserable teenager” helped Dr. Liz Gialanella decide, at the age of 15, that she wanted to be a psychologist and work with teenagers. She never veered from that course and has worked as a school psychologist in the City School District of Albany for 23 years, the past 20 at Albany High School.

Gialanella is the 2017 recipient of the Crystal Apple, an annual award given to the very best of a select group of district leaders who have received Golden Apples (*see page 3 to learn more*).



Liz Gialanella, Psy.D.

Q: What does a school psychologist do?

A: The role of the psychologist has changed drastically since I first started, moving from a testing focus toward providing many levels of intervention and support. School psychologists at Albany High – there are four of us – all have a counseling caseload, provide consultation to teachers and parents, develop academic and behavior intervention plans, perform psychological assessments and provide direct crisis intervention.

Q: How are the issues that today’s students deal with different than 20 years ago?

A: Students today have to contend with the impact of technology on their lives, which has both positive and negative consequences. Social media provides a place where isolated students can interact with others who are like themselves. However, along with this benefit comes a host of negatives including diminished privacy, opportunities for bullying, decline in time spent on academic learning and the substitution of virtual for face-to-face relationships.

Research has found an association between depression and social media use, especially for individuals already prone to depressed moods.

Q: What do you like best about your job?

A: Without exception, the best part of my job involves spending time with the kids! I love the creativity, intensity and emotionality of teenagers. They constantly make me smile and keep me on my toes, as I enjoy listening and learning about their world, culture and realities. The pictures they draw for me and the heartfelt cards that they write are the greatest rewards!

Q: What advice would you give to parents of high school students?

A: Appreciate how smart, clever, ambitious, creative and wonderful your child is, and if you don’t immediately see this, take another look.

Make opportunities for down time to be with your teenager and really listen without judgment or telling stories of your past. Find out what is meaningful to them and make every attempt to understand their music, fashion, artwork, interests and so on. And in the midst of all of this love and unconditional regard, provide your kids with the most caring gift: a structured and stable home. Don’t be afraid to be the parent that sets limits, has rules or is old-school strict. Sometimes the most loving thing you can do is have high expectations and hold another person accountable for their actions.

Alumni achievement Kenneth Ackerman '69

After more than four decades in Washington, D.C., attorney and author Kenneth Ackerman remains optimistic about the United States.



“Americans are smart people,” the 1969 Albany High School graduate said. “Even if we get out of balance, we tend to get back in balance over time.”

Ackerman should know. He’s worked for both Republicans and Democrats in Congress in a career spanning five presidential administrations, first as a staff attorney and eventually manager of a federal agency.

He’s now in private practice at an influential D.C. firm, and joined the City School District of Albany Hall of Fame in September.

Ackerman cut his teeth on current events as a member of the debate team at then-William S. Hackett Junior High School. He went on to Albany High to write for and eventually co-edit *The Patroon* school newspaper, which tackled national issues ranging from the anti-Vietnam War movement to the voting age, then 21.

Advanced Placement history and English classes further sharpened his interests.

He headed to Brown University in the fall of 1969, with anti-war movements on college campuses in full swing and the country still reeling from the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. the year before.

As a college junior, Ackerman supported George McGovern in the presidential race and headed home in the fall of 1972 to volunteer as a poll watcher. He saw questionable practices and spoke up.

“I ended up getting thrown out before the day was over,” he said. “It turned into quite a to-do.”

Ackerman knew he wanted to be in Washington and be a lawyer – Georgetown Law was his next step.

An internship on Capitol Hill led to his first job on the Senate Committee on Government Affairs. He went on to be senior counsel for two Senate committees and a federal commission for two decades before becoming head of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Federal Crop Insurance Corp. He made the jump to private practice in 2001.

“Being on the outside you have a freedom that you don’t have when you’re part of a big bureaucracy,” he said.

That includes having time to pursue his other love, writing. He’s seen a lot and has a lot to say: Since 2005, he’s penned six non-fiction books and numerous articles and publications.

Kenneth Ackerman: Washington insider