

Capital Education

Fall 2022

albanyschools.org

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Digital transformation: To infinity, and beyond!

We asked. You answered. And then we went to work implementing your suggestions.

Beyond the urgent need to provide Chromebooks to every City School District of Albany student at the start of the pandemic, educational technology has remained among the top priorities throughout our school community in district surveys each of the past two years.

As a result, students in every building are engaged every day in tech-forward, state-of-the-art learning environments.

That includes last summer's deployment of 75-inch Promethean interactive panels at six schools – 200 classrooms altogether! – a massive undertaking for our

Technology Department staff. Throughout the 2022-23 school year they will install more than 300 more in the remaining elementary buildings.

When they're done, the district will have more than 900 panels in every building district-wide.

"The pandemic forced a greatly accelerated rate of technological adoption within the district to afford student access to quality instruction and resources in a fully remote, virtual environment," said Assistant Superintendent for Assessment, Accountability and Technology Innovation Kent Baker.

"However, well before the shift to virtual instruction mandated by COVID-19, the district endeavored to

strategically build capacity for blended learning. We have long understood this shift to be a combination of technological infrastructure, resources and a shift in instructional design and delivery."

Supported by the district's own investments, as well as the federal government's one-time Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act funding, tech improvements are now in place in all 21 buildings and span almost every department.

Some changes are highly visible, like the Promethean panels, Hovercam/document cameras in all classrooms and 1:1 Chromebook access for students.

(Continued on page 6)

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Eagle Scout project benefits South End organization

When Henry Hypnarowski decided to take on the challenge of becoming an Eagle Scout, he knew one thing: He wanted to do a project that would help the South End Children's Café.

And that's what he did.

Hypnarowski, a freshman at Albany High School, earned the rank of Eagle Scout last summer and received his badge and medal at an Oct. 29 ceremony at Joseph E. Zaloga American Legion Post 1520. It's the highest advancement in scouting.

Before he got there, he had to earn 21 merit badges, serve in a leadership position in his troop for at least six months, be interviewed numerous times, and design, get approval of, raise money for and complete a community service project.

Choosing the café as his service project was an easy decision.

"I picked the Children's Café because I'd volunteered there before and I knew the work they did," Hypnarowski said. "It was the first place that came to mind."

Rewind to September 2021.

Hypnarowski needed to know what he could do that would help the café, which offers kids free, healthy meals along with homework help, academic enrichment, mentoring, exercise and more. He asked café director Tracy Killar (Albany High Class of 1981), and she told him they lacked a performance stage.

Hypnarowski spent the fall and winter researching designs and materials for a stage, and drafting a proposal that had to be approved by the local Boy Scout council. The plan included getting materials for and building two 4' x 8' moveable stages and large wooden blocks that can be used as seats or storage cubbies.

"I did lots of research," he said. "There was sooooo much paperwork that went with it."

His plans were approved in February and he started fundraising. His initial efforts were discouraging until he struck gold with a proposal to Amedore Homes, a local homebuilder.

(Continued on page 6)



Moving forward

My time here in the City School District of Albany has been filled with love, advocacy and purpose.

There are many great things happening in our school district.

Two initiatives on which we have made great progress over the past five years are our district-wide commitment to equity and our practice of empowering students to use their voices for social justice.

In 2018 – two years before a Minneapolis police officer murdered George Floyd, sparking worldwide outrage and further galvanizing the Black Lives Matter movement – we began the challenging work of creating an Equity in Education Policy.

Scholars, faculty, staff, families and community partners worked together to craft a policy establishing a framework for the district to implement equitable, anti-racist, research-based educational practices designed to eliminate obstacles to opportunity and access.

The Board of Education adopted our district's first equity policy in 2019.

We have backed the policy's words with action, working tirelessly over the past 3½ years to provide all administrators, teachers and support staff with the tools that manifest equity in action in their everyday work with students.

We created a diverse committee to identify equity gaps and provide feedback on areas that need improvement, and equity teams composed of community members, employees and scholars at each school.

This school year, we are in the process of developing the metrics that will map our progress toward our equity goals, and the criteria to hold us accountable to that critically important work.

This IS equity in action.

The process of including our scholars in equity discussions was intentional and strategic.

Inasmuch as we educate our scholars, we can learn from them as well.

We learn from them by listening. Truly listening to what our scholars say and considering their opinions on matters that directly affect them in the world they will inherit is an important part of what we do, how we live and what we believe, particularly when it comes to social justice concerns.

As we listen, we encourage our scholars to be conversant in issues that affect their lives, ranging from weighty social issues like equity, diversity, global warming and anti-racism to more immediate issues like school culture, school lunches and school safety.



When we embrace student voice, we empower our scholars to reach beyond those systemic, historical barriers that too often have limited and divided us. We equip our scholars with the critical-thinking skills that enable them to become advocates for themselves, their peers, their school, their community and their future.

It has been an honor to work alongside our families, faculty, staff, administrators and board members toward a shared vision of a school district with caring relationships and learning experiences that provide equitable opportunities for all scholars to reach their potential.

As we move forward, I truly believe the district is on the path to achieving our vision and accomplishing our mission. Our protocols and procedures are systemic and serve as the foundation for supporting the delivery of quality instruction and the social-emotional well-being of our scholars.

In addition, I consider myself to be incredibly fortunate to have worked with community partners, too numerous to list, that have supported our mission to engage every learner in education that provides them with the knowledge and skills necessary for success.

I thank all of you for entrusting me to serve our city's children, their families and the Albany community.

My final day as superintendent will be Jan. 6. Moving forward, I am excited to take on the challenge of being executive director for research and policy at the Conference of Big 5 School Districts. This will allow me to continue advocating for our scholars, families and community.

I will forever be "All in for Albany!"

Yours in education,

Kaweeda G. Adams
Superintendent

Voices

Q: If you could travel to any place in the world, where would you travel and why?



“ I would like to go to California, because in California there is Disneyland. Disneyland has rides like Splash Mountain and a tower of terror. Also, my dream college is in California. My dream college is Stanford because it is a technology college and a prestigious school. ”

— **Paulie Tarullo**

Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School
Sixth Grade



“ Japan! The interest most likely blossomed following my introduction to anime. Anime has spawned a keen interest in the Japanese language, culture, foods and products. I am hoping to be able to visit in person one day. For now, I will travel through Japan virtually and in my imagination. ”

— **Gianna Bonney**

Albany High School
Junior



“ If I could travel to any place in the world, it would be Puerto Rico. I want to see my family that lives there, and I don't see them often. My family and I have been to Puerto Rico two or three times. I would love to see the beautiful beaches and eat the delicious food. I would love to visit again. ”

— **Yanielly Perez**

New Scotland Elementary School
Fifth Grade



“ If I could travel to any place in the world I would travel to Japan. I would like to travel to Japan because their food and desserts look delicious and unique. One food I would like to try is mochi ice cream. I would also like to travel to Japan because of their amazing decorations. Lastly, I'm very interested in Japanese culture. ”

— **Ella Squires**

Pine Hills Elementary School
Fifth Grade



“ I would travel to Jamaica. My mom was born in Jamaica, so I would be able to visit my family there. I would ask my family what my mom was like as a child. Also, it is a beautiful place for a vacation. The trees have fresh fruit on them, and there is an ocean that you can swim in. ”

— **Zayden-Lee Edwards-Grant**

Sheridan Preparatory Academy
Fifth Grade



Capital Education is published by the City School District of Albany. Please direct comments, story ideas and/or questions to either:

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Meet our interim superintendent

The Board of Education has appointed John Yagielski to lead the district on an interim basis following the retirement of Superintendent Adams in January.

Yagielski brings extensive experience to Albany, including five months as the district's interim deputy superintendent for business and finance earlier this year.

"Mr. Yagielski knows and understands our school district and community very well," Board President Vickie Smith said. "We are very fortunate that he has agreed to join us while the board engages in a thoughtful and thorough process to identify our next permanent superintendent."

Yagielski's career includes 11 years' experience as superintendent of two of upstate New York's largest school

districts – Greece, in the Rochester area, and Shenendehowa. He also previously served as the chief financial officer in Baltimore's public schools.

"I have great admiration and respect for the leadership team in place in Albany," Yagielski said. "At the Board of Education, district and building levels, the district has an exceptional group of talented, dedicated, hard-working individuals who care deeply about the success of every student."

"I am looking forward to joining this team and serving this community as we work together to continue the progress the district has made under Superintendent Adams."

You can read more about Yagielski's appointment by visiting albanyschools.org/interim.

Measuring our equity progress

The City School District of Albany is taking the next steps in support of our Equity in Education Policy this fall, developing the metrics and dashboard that will help track our progress in this fundamental work.

"We have been looking long and hard at our organization, our practices and our goals, and at how we measure equity so that we are able to determine where we stand with regard to our policy as we move forward," said Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams.

The Board of Education adopted the district's first equity policy in 2019. Next steps included helping all employees develop a deeper understanding of complex societal, racial and historical factors that create and perpetuate barriers to access and opportunities.

Steps also have included embedding principles of equity throughout all

academic and operational systems, and developing seven categories and indicators by which the district will measure progress.

This year's work focuses on identifying specific data points in each category, and developing a dashboard to gather and track that data over time.

Adams and Assistant Superintendent for Assessment, Accountability and Technology Innovation Kent Baker reviewed that progress at the board's Sept. 22 meeting, which you can view at albanyschools.org/equity.

The board plans to review the work again in December.

"When we talk about equitable opportunities for all of our students so they can reach their potential, we do have to look at what areas we are going to measure to say that we have gotten there," Adams said.



Pre-K & magnet apps available Jan. 5

The City School District of Albany offers families several elementary choice options, and applications for the lotteries that enroll these programs for next school year will be available beginning Jan. 5.

The district offers full-day prekindergarten in all 12 of our elementary buildings, and in several locations throughout the community. To be eligible for the 2023-24 school year, a child must be 4 years old by Dec. 1, 2023.

Families also can apply for seats in kindergarten through grade 5 in our three magnet schools and our Dual Language Program, where students learn in both English and Spanish.

The magnet schools are Albany School of Humanities (ASH), Montessori Magnet School and

Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST). The Dual Language Program is located at the Edmund J. O'Neal School of Excellence, 50 Lark St.

The pre-K and magnet lotteries are designed to provide equal access to all children in Albany regardless of where they live. You need to apply for your child to have an opportunity to get a seat in one of these programs. Applications will be available Jan. 5. at albanyschools.org, where you also can learn more about each program.

Applications for both lotteries are due by March 17, and the lotteries are scheduled April 19.

The application process for our pre-K programs for 3-year-olds is held separately later in the spring.



(Above left) Arbor Hill Elementary fifth-grader **Za'Nylya Castro** paused to reflect while practicing her reading comprehension skills on Lexia during her Oct. 7 English Language Arts lesson.



(Above) Albany High School celebrated Homecoming in-person for the first time since 2019 this fall, welcoming Niskayuna on a glorious October afternoon. Pictured above, senior quarterback **Jah'Quil Thompson** finds some running room against the Silver Warriors defense during the first quarter.



(At left) Students at Montessori Magnet School were encouraged to bring in their favorite stuffed animal on Oct. 21 for the building's inaugural Stuffy Day. Younger students practiced reading out loud to their plush friends while these fifth-graders - **Davaiah Carrington, Skylar Creamer, Madison Smith** (back) and **Ira Nasrin** - simply enjoyed bringing a comfort from home to school for the day.

(Below left) Delaware Community School fifth-graders **Kalia Poole, Jaeleesa Edmonds** and **Leilani Garcia** bond during the school's Welcome Back Barbecue on Sept. 30.



(Below) U.S. Rep. Paul Tonko made a special stop at William S. Hackett Middle School on Oct. 4 to deliver books that librarian **Sonji Greenaway** had requested through the Library of Congress Surplus Books Program, which donates surplus books to schools, public agencies and other nonprofits. Tonko also spent about 45 minutes answering questions from a group of students in grades 6-8.





(Above left) Giffen Memorial Elementary School students joyfully got their hands dirty doing cool fall-themed science projects Oct. 21 at the Families Rising Together Harvest STEAM Festival. Third-grader **Kylea Henry** shows off her glittery slime project in this photo.



(Above right) Hispanic Heritage Month runs from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 each year, and the Dual Language Program – including **Ana Banda-Wemple's** pre-K class – marked the occasion with their annual parade on Oct. 12. The parade is the culmination of their month-long celebration, and gives families, staff and community members the opportunity to showcase their cultural heritage and pride.



(At right) Eagle Point Elementary School fifth-graders were tasked with creating a 3-D diagram of a cell, and did they impress! **Markel Bristol** proudly showed off his project to classmates on Oct. 17. His was just one of many incredible (and in some instances, edible) displays of intellect and creativity!



(At left) Albany High School sophomore **Sean Keefe** and his fellow JROTC cadets helped guide community members through the school's new spaces – including the auditorium, library, CTE classrooms, music and art wings, and more – during the Oct. 13 ribbon-cutting celebrating the progress in our Rebuilding Albany High project.

(Below left) Food, a DJ – even free haircuts! – were part of Tony Clement Center for Education's annual block party on Sept. 22. Faculty and staff hung out with students and families, and community organizations were on hand to share information about their services. Here, eighth-grader **Masih Johnson** shares a hug with social worker **Tiffany Davis**.

(Below) On Sept. 28, a representative from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Albany – in partnership with The Vegetable Project – helped sixth-graders like **Samuel Sebatware** (pictured with volunteer **Ronnie Siegel**) start a small fruit tree orchard and perennial planting that can be enjoyed at North Albany Middle School by students and staff for years to come.





Celebrating adults who inspire our students

City School District of Albany elementary and middle schools celebrated the adults who support and inspire our students with a special day of recognition earlier this fall.

The Sept. 22 events grew out of the national Dads Take Your Child to School Day, which encourages fathers and father figures to be engaged in their children's education. District schools have celebrated "Dads' Day" for many years. The district took a broader approach to the day this year, celebrating all adults who play a significant role in the lives of our students.

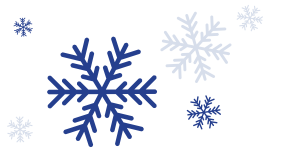
Schools recognized the day in range of

ways: breakfast, guest speakers, photo booths and more.

"We value the critically important role of a father or father figure in a child's life, and we also recognize that all adults who have a positive impact on a child's growth and development are to be celebrated," Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams said.

"It has never been our district's intent to exclude anyone from that recognition. Rather, we strive to be inclusive. We understand that families are defined in many ways, and we seek not just to celebrate, but also to champion the diversity that enriches our community."

Wintry weather reminders



When bad weather hits, New York school districts once again will have the option to hold either a distance learning day or a traditional snow day this school year.

The City School District of Albany will evaluate these decisions on a case-by-case basis, including whether a two-hour delay may be an option.

The simplest way for families to find out about weather-related decisions is to sign up to receive a text message through our SchoolMessenger communication system. Just text "Y" or "yes" to 67587. Families also will receive a SchoolMessenger email if weather

causes the district to close or switch to distance learning for the day.

The district also shares information about weather-related changes on Facebook (@albany.schools), Twitter (@albany.schools) and, new this school year, Instagram (@albany.schools).

You also can find information on the *Times Union* website, and on the following radio and TV stations: CBS6 Albany (Ch. 6), Spectrum (Ch. 9), WTEN (Ch. 10), WNYT (Ch. 13), WROW-AM 590, WGY-AM 810, WFLY-FM 92.3, WYJB-FM 95.5, WTRY-FM 98.3, WRVE-FM 99.5, WPYX-FM 106.5 and WGNA-FM 107.7.

Technology *(continued from page 1)*

Additional changes have included upgraded devices for teachers to support instruction and family communication.

While other updates may not be as visible – hybrid network and cloud application architecture; network visibility and threat-hunting and mitigation tools; and recovery infrastructure – they also have been critically important to help the organization operate in a secure tech environment.

"People don't generally recognize the efforts of the division as phased, strategic action toward realizing the goals articulated in our Instructional Technology Plan," Baker said.

The hardware and back-end changes come with a lot of behind-the-scenes person power to install and train teachers on classroom implementation in a way that meaningfully supports students.

In the past three years, the district has gone from a single technology coach who works with instructional staff to a team of four full-time and 10 part-time technology coaches.

Similarly, the district's technology budget was \$1.1 million annually three years ago; during the past 18 months the district has allocated a total of \$6.5 million to technology.

With the exception of training staff, most of the improvements must occur

after hours or on the weekend so instruction can continue unhindered. Resources also are available to make every classroom, and every student, technologically successful.

"The professional development our instructional technology coaches are providing is a vital piece of the installation process," said Technology Coordinator John Wyld. "Their primary focus is assisting our teachers on how this new technology and its functionality will enhance instruction."

All of the investments – and all of those still to come as the district strives to remain on the cutting edge of ever-evolving advancements in educational technology and pedagogy – empower students to use technology to extend learning beyond the confines of time, physical spaces and inequities to develop the skills they need to succeed in the careers of the future.

"The return to in-person instruction has served as an opportunity to leverage the capacity we built during the pandemic toward more authentic application of blended learning principles," Baker said.

Editor's note: This article was completed prior to the cybersecurity threat that the district encountered in November. The district retained an industry-leading independent cybersecurity firm to assist in our investigation of that matter, in addition to collaboration with local, state and federal agencies and partners. We continue to work internally and with experts to ensure that access to our network is safe and secure.

Hypnarowski *(continued from page 1)*

He received a response right away from company owner George Amedore, who agreed to fund the building materials and set up an account for Hypnarowski at Curtis Lumber.

"Mr. Amedore bought everything, and the materials were the best quality, too," Hypnarowski said.

Hypnarowski started shopping in March and building in April with the help of friends, fellow scouts and family members. Construction involved some trial and error, he said, and at times he was tempted to give up.

He hung in there, though, and delivered the finished products in late April. He also bought a karaoke machine for the performance space with some of the funds he raised.

The kids in the café started using the

space immediately, and it was a hit. Killar said the stage provides a much-needed place for kids to perform and express themselves.

"We sing on it and have fun," said Deanna Daniels, a sixth-grader at Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School.

Also an exceptional student, JROTC cadet and captain of the boys' modified-9 soccer team this fall, Hypnarowski hopes to attend the U.S. Military Academy at West Point after graduation from Albany High.

He said there is a great sense of satisfaction knowing that he did something to help his community through his Eagle Scout project.

"It feels really good," he said.



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Awards & Achievements

Albany High seniors earn National Merit recognition

Congratulations to four Albany High School seniors who have been named Commended Students in the 2022-23 National Merit Scholarship Program.

They are **Grace Ustin, Isabella Plastiras, Jacob Madden** and **Kevin McLeod** (pictured at right, L-R with Principal Jodi Commerford).

The seniors entered the National Merit Scholarship Program competition when they took the preliminary SAT (PSAT) qualifying test last October.

Their scores placed them in the top 3% nationwide of more than 1.5 million students who took the test.

Great job, Falcon scholars!

Falcon librarian publishes nationally

Albany High School librarian **Alicia Abdul** is happiest introducing students to the wonders of the written word, and an influential national library publication has published an article she wrote about her work.

Abdul's article "I'm the Lucky One: Readers Advisory at the Core of School Librarianship," appeared in the September/October issue of *Knowledge Quest*, a journal of the American Association of School Librarians.

Her article discusses the important role school librarians play in fostering a culture of reading and guiding students (and colleagues) to books. It was a supporting article to the theme of the issue: "The Intentionality of School Librarianship."

Abdul is an active member of the American Library Association's Young Adult Library Services Association, having chaired the 2022 Excellence in Nonfiction Award Committee. She also teaches Young Adult Literature to graduate students at two universities.

Arbor Hill's 32nd Annual Pumpkin Run

Arbor Hill Elementary School held its 32nd Pumpkin Run on Oct. 27. The annual autumnal event has students racing against grade-level peers. First-place finishers receive a medal and a pumpkin to take home.

Congratulations to **Jalayah Lewis** and **Paul Riley III** (pre-K), **Farzad Mirzaie** and **Ava Alexander** (kindergarten), **Marlon Williams Jr.** and **Shanelle Cooper** (first), **Blu Moore** and **Synariah Traynham** (second), **Thaw Htet** and **Nylia Cano-Black** (third), **Messiah Archibald** and **Andrea Tatum** (fourth) and **Christopher Rowell** and **BabyElena Ocasio** (fifth).

'Do the Right Thing' returns: nominate a student!

We are once again looking for recommendations of worthy students for Do the Right Thing.

The program is a partnership with the Albany Police Department and recognizes middle and high school students for their accomplishments, positive behavior and good deeds. You can nominate a student at albanyschools.org/dtrt. Top students have a chance to win a Samsung tablet and more.

Behaviors that might earn a student recognition include striving to do well in school; helping peers, family and neighbors; working to overcome obstacles with grace and compassion; shining academically, athletically or artistically; or being overall good citizens in school, at home and in our city.

Please help us focus on the good in our kids and submit a nomination!

Hall of Fame ceremony celebrates three classes

The City School District of Albany tripled the star power for this year's Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony, welcoming three classes during the Oct. 15 event at Albany High School.

In-person induction ceremonies were cancelled in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Those Hall of Famers and their families got their long-awaited celebration this year, joining their newly minted colleagues from the Class of 2022.

"The individuals we are inducting into our Hall of Fame – and each of you who are here to support or represent them – are shining examples of the strength of the City School District of Albany," Superintendent Kaweeda G. Adams said during the ceremony. "We are honored to be able to recognize your achievements."

The district inducted 18 new Hall of Famers during the ceremony, which also coincided with Albany High's Homecoming activities. The newest members, from the Class of 2022, were:

Richard Bruni
Philip Schuyler High School
Class of 1954

Kirk Daniels
Philip Schuyler High School
Class of 1968

Coach Carmen Duncan
Albany High School
Class of 2002

Zach Korzyk
Albany High School
Class of 2002

Eugene Toney
Albany High School
Class of 1952

Our Hall of Fame recognizes and honors people in three categories: alumni who excelled during their time as students, in their careers or through community involvement; administrators, teachers, support staff and coaches; and loyal and devoted supporters of the district.

You can read each inductee's bio at albanyschools.org/hof, where you'll also find bios of all inductees since the Hall of Fame's inception in 2009. You'll also find nomination forms for the Class of 2023 (deadline Feb. 1).

Congratulations to all of this year's inductees!



Albany High's National Merit seniors



Falcon librarian Alicia Abdul



Arbor Hill's Pumpkin Run winners



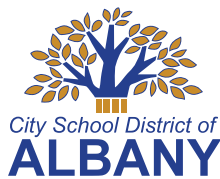
Hall of Fame inductee Kirk Daniels

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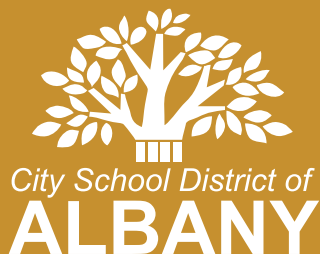
Kaweeda G. Adams
Superintendent

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in this newsletter and more at:
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OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

OUR VISION

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.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the City School District of Albany is to 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.

OUR GOALS

Increase student achievement; Enhance the delivery of quality instruction; Build our leadership capacity and increase accountability; Empower families; Partner with our diverse community

LEADING THE WAY:

Tia Corniel

Principal, Pine Hills
Elementary School



The City School District of Albany has embraced Yale University's RULER program as an integral part of social-emotional learning.

Pine Hills Elementary School Principal Tia Corniel has been at the forefront of these efforts after studying under RULER's founder, Marc Brackett.

RULER is an acronym for the five skills of emotional intelligence:

- Recognizing emotions in oneself and others
- Understanding the causes and consequences of emotions
- Labeling emotions with a nuanced vocabulary
- Expressing emotions in accordance with cultural norms and social context
- Regulating emotions with helpful strategies

RULER helps people use their emotions wisely, opening opportunities to succeed in school, at work and in life. District staff have been trained on how to incorporate RULER into their interactions with students and each other.

Q: What is emotional intelligence, and why is it important?

Emotional intelligence (also known as EQ, a play on IQ) is the ability to understand, use and manage emotions in productive ways. I was immediately struck by the fact that many adults have not received training around EQ; I certainly did not. I believe this type of learning starts with adults, who then model EQ with students while teaching them how to identify, label and regulate emotions.

Q: How can RULER help school climate?

When everyone in our schools is more emotionally intelligent, we see more empathy between people and deeper understanding with each other. The focus moves from teaching students how to manage emotions to applying concepts of emotional intelligence into learning experiences so that we can all build the school community up.

Q: How can RULER support students outside the classroom?

You might find it difficult to believe, but there are more than 154 different emotions that a person can feel throughout the day depending on our experiences. The application of RULER is all around us in our daily lives. To connect to each other, we must see and understand that experiencing an array of emotions is natural. Then we can take the first step to be able to regulate emotions for ourselves and support others.



ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT

Joe Bonilla '04

Not every high school offers opportunities in both journalism and architecture. And, considering their very different content, not every student would pursue both.

Joe Bonilla did, and the ability to explore a variety of college and career options is one of many opportunities at Albany High School for which he is grateful.

"One spoke to my love of writing and the other spoke to my mind's creativity," said Bonilla, a 2004 graduate.

It turned out journalism was his passion – a passion that grew with extracurriculars he pursued. Bonilla served as president of AHSCOM, a TV production club, and co-editor-in-chief of *The Patroon*, the student newspaper since replaced by the *The Nest*.

Bonilla went on to graduate from the Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy at the University at Albany. He remains a busy man.

Bonilla is the co-founder of Relentless Awareness, an Albany-based integrated public relations, advertising, events, management advisement and public affairs agency.

He also runs back-office operations for Two Buttons Deep, a fast-growing digital media and entertainment platform based in the Capital Region.

And – perhaps riffing on that journalism-architecture dichotomy

from his days as a Falcon – he also is co-founder of Motor Oil Coffee, a local craft coffee company (retail locations in Albany and Schenectady on the way!).

Bonilla thinks it's important to take chances. He advises current students to always explore new opportunities.

"Say 'yes' to that new project that might be out of your comfort zone but will ultimately help you along the way," Bonilla said.

Since forming Relentless Awareness in 2012, Bonilla has grown the firm from a two-person operation started with \$200 to a 20-person company with clients around the world and offices in Albany, Las Vegas and Greenville, S.C.

He credits Ron Mattice, the City School District of Albany's educational television specialist, for getting him started on his career path.

"He was instrumental in me learning the 'ins and outs' of video and television production," Bonilla said.

Albany High didn't just inspire Bonilla's professional trajectory, though.

"Albany High is a microcosm of the world," he said. "The diversity of students in every which way, and understanding the environment there, was great preparation for life post-Albany High."