



Community Update

June 2021

An update for our community on important news and highlights from around the City School District of Albany.



Congratulations to the Albany High Class of 2021!

We are so excited to celebrate the Albany High School Class of 2021 with our graduation ceremonies at the school on Sunday, June 27. This year's seniors have faced unprecedented challenges and disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. They have persevered through it all! We are planning seven separate graduation ceremonies outdoors June 27 to align with the current COVID-19 guidance from the New York State Department of Health.

We anticipate well over 600 graduates once again this year, and we are both proud and excited to celebrate the first African-American valedictorian ever for Albany High. Onovu Otitigbe-Dangerfield will graduate at the top of her class academically and plans to attend Harvard University in the fall. This year's salutatorian is Chai Kam, who will attend the University at Albany. Our seniors continuing on to higher education have been accepted at nearly 180 colleges and universities throughout the country. We congratulate all of our seniors, including those continuing on career pathways or entering the military, on their achievements. Look for our congratulatory Class of 2021 posters at CDTA bus shelters throughout the city, and for lawn and window signs that allow our seniors to show off their Class of 2021 Falcon Pride!

Instructional planning for 2021-22 school year

The City School District of Albany has been working diligently since March to prepare instructional models for the 2021-22 school year based on the most up-to-date COVID-19 guidance from the New York State Department of Health and the New York State Department of Education.

Our goal is to return to daily in-person instruction for all students whose families want to choose that option next school year. We also are waiting for guidance from the State Education Department about whether a distance learning option will be allowed or required in 2021-22. Our budget, paired with the support of our one-time federal COVID-19 relief funds, will allow us to support all instructional models that are necessary in 2021-22 due to COVID-19 health and safety guidelines that are in place.

While required COVID-19 protocols may change for all New York schools prior to the start of next school year, the instructional models we have developed to date are based on the information available to all schools at this time – including social distancing of 3 feet and the wearing of masks while indoors. Visit albanyschools.org/planning for more information.

The district also continues to advocate, along with our colleagues region-wide, for guidance from the state that will allow all schools to maximize in-person instruction next school year.



American Rescue Plan community process

The district is scheduled to receive approximately \$32.8 million in one-time federal COVID-19 relief funds through the American Rescue Plan. These funds will be available to the school district for three years, through September 2024.

The district has provided all stakeholders with opportunities this spring to learn more about how the one-time ARP funds can be used to support students during the pandemic, and to address impacts that the pandemic has had on students, faculty and staff. The district received 540 responses to an ARP survey conducted from May 26-June 7, and also planned three virtual community forums to provide information and allow additional opportunities for input and feedback.

The district held its first ARP forum June 10, and additional forums are planned:

- Saturday, June 19 – 10-11 a.m.
- Monday, June 21 – 6-7 p.m.

You can watch these forums live on the district’s YouTube channel, and provide input using the Feedback form on the district website. To find those links and more information, including the slides and video of our community presentations, visit albanyschools.org/arp.



Committee to study elementary, middle enrollment

The district is forming a committee of parents and guardians from all schools to partner with district personnel to develop criteria and make recommendations for an equitable feeder pattern for all students transitioning from elementary to middle school.

The committee's work, along with the ongoing expansion of North Albany Middle School, will culminate a multi-year process the district has undertaken in partnership with our community to provide equitable middle school opportunities for all students, in terms of both programming and facilities. Beginning in the upcoming school year, all elementary schools will serve students PK-5, and all middle schools will serve students in grades 6-8. The district's three middle schools will be:

- **North Albany Middle School**, 570 North Pearl St.
- **Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School**, 100 Elbel Court off Whitehall Road
- **William S. Hackett Middle School**, 45 Delaware Ave.

The committee accepted volunteer applications for the Feeder Alignment Committee through June 4, and now is in the process of selecting members. The committee is scheduled to meet 1-2 times a month through September. The Board of Education then will review the committee's input and determine the new feeder patterns in the late fall or winter. The new feeder patterns will take effect at the start of the 2022-23 school year.

Spring sports superlatives

Albany High School student-athletes achieved historical milestones during the recently concluded spring season. In boys' tennis, freshman Masami Surisawa (*pictured at right*) advanced to the semifinals of the Section 2 singles tournament. It was the first time in more than two decades that an Albany High singles player reached the final four. Playing at first singles, Surisawa entered on a nine-match winning streak and won three more to advance to the June 15 semis. Surisawa was eliminated in that round and finished an exceptional season 14-5.

The Albany High softball team beat Niskayuna in a nail-biter in its first-round playoff game June 7. Sydney Speanburg, a junior, struck out 14 in eight innings as Albany High prevailed 4-3 after a wild eighth inning. The Falcons scored three times in the top of the inning, and then held on in the bottom for their first playoff win in more than two decades.



Top 10 Falcons flying high

In recognition of their outstanding academic careers, the Top 10 graduating seniors from Albany High School's Class of 2021 continued the tradition of "climbing to new heights" atop the building.

The students and their next destinations are listed below (and pictured L-R by academic rank in the group photo).

Congratulations to these high-achieving and high-flying Falcons!



1. **Onovu Otigibe-Dangerfield;**
Harvard University
2. **Chai Kam;**
University at Albany
3. **Suzanne Penna;**
Williams College
4. **Noah Graber;**
Johns Hopkins University
5. **Noah Levine;**
University at Albany
6. **Erika Bopp;**
University of Vermont
7. **Sarah Bearden;**
Columbia University
8. **Maura Mulholland;**
Barnard College
9. **Hailey Krasnikov;**
Harvard University
10. **Edith DeRosa-Purcell;**
Northeastern University

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 • Partner with our diverse community
Build our leadership capacity and increase accountability
Empower families • Enhance the delivery of quality instruction



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