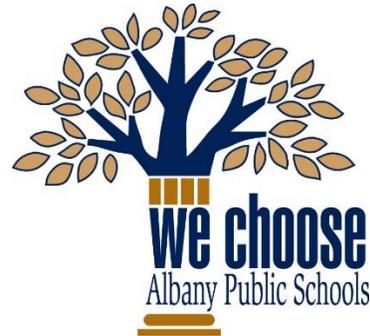


Equity a priority for new middle school

The proposed 2017-18 City School District of Albany budget supports equitable staffing and programs for a new middle school that will open in September at 50 North Lark St., addressing the district's rapidly growing enrollment.

In January, voters approved \$6.5 million in renovations with no additional cost to taxpayers to prepare 50 North Lark to serve students in grades 6-8.



The new middle school will help alleviate overcrowding at Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School and William S. Hackett Middle School. Since the 2008-09 school year, district enrollment from prekindergarten through grade 8 has grown by more than 26 percent, or about 1,500 students.

The new middle school also will bring the district closer to its long-term enrollment plan to have all sixth-graders be in middle school.

Currently, about 300 sixth-graders attend district middle schools, but due to the rapid enrollment growth in recent years about 420 sixth-graders still attend elementary school. The school day for elementary students is 30 minutes shorter, one of numerous academic inequities in the divided sixth-grade model.

"Our goal is to provide students at 50 North Lark with an equitable middle-school experience, meaning the school will have the academic and social-emotional supports that all students need to succeed," said Interim Superintendent Kimberly Young Wilkins, Ed.D.

Veteran district administrators Malik Jones and Kandie Antonetti will serve as co-principals of the new middle school.

Jones currently is principal at Montessori Magnet School. Antonetti is principal at West Hill Middle School, which will merge into 50 North Lark. (*The Alternative Learning Center, currently housed at 50 North Lark, will relocate to 395 Elk St.*)

The proposed budget calls for \$1.3 million to fund positions at 50 North Lark, including an assistant principal, home school coordinator, two guidance counselors, two social workers, a behavior specialist and a psychologist.

Of the 68 positions proposed for 50 North Lark, about 50 are transfers from other schools in the district and 18 are new hires.

Students at the new school would have access to academic intervention services as well as health and social-emotional services supported by the budget proposal.

The budget also would invest in AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) for sixth-graders at 50 North Lark. AVID is a college- and career-readiness system that supports students for success in rigorous academic programs. The program is currently offered at the district's other middle schools.

The school will be enrolled with an interim feeder pattern for 3-5 years while the district completes the ongoing process of planning for long-term elementary and middle school facilities and enrollment needs. *(You can visit the [Grade Configuration/Middle School Enrollment](http://www.albanyschools.org) section at www.albanyschools.org to read more about that process).*

Students attending 50 North Lark will be from Arbor Hill Elementary School, North Albany Academy, Schuyler Achievement Academy, Sheridan Preparatory Academy and West Hill.

Jones and Antonetti already have visited with their soon-to-be new students this spring, and they look forward to more opportunities to get to know students and their families before the new school year begins.