

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!



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

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

Voices

Q: What do you like best about 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.