

Office of Grants & Program Development

The Latest and Greatest News from the World of Grants

Looking Back ...

The end of the calendar year usually provides us all with opportunity for reflection of the past twelve months - the ups and downs, the victories and disappointments. The Grants Office, like other departments throughout the district, certainly had challenges and celebrations this year.

Ronnie Pastecki, a long-time administrator and champion of innovative programming, retired in July. During her tenure in the Grants Office, Ronnie was responsible for managing over \$182 million in grant funds. While she is missed dearly, rumor has it that her friends and family all over the country are enjoying spending time with her and her husband.

Tammy Duncley and **Jamie Clark** ventured forward into the beginning of the school year, securing an award for the largest grant in the district's history, the \$7.5 million Magnet School Assistance Program, as well as applying for an additional \$6.6 million of grant funds. Sunsetting grants were closed out and accounts were established to allow for the implementation of new programs.

Eileen Leffler joined the department in October as its new administrator. As a well-respected and seasoned leader from the Berlin Central School District, Eileen brought with her a wealth of knowledge and experience in program development and grants. Her expertise was invaluable as the district prepared its application for over \$1.2 million in Race to the Top funds and her leadership will be imperative as the Magnet initiative is implemented at the high school over the next four years.

... and Moving Forward

As goals and objectives are being developed for the coming year, the Grants Office is confident that it's heading in the right direction. It is anticipated that more than \$30 million in grant funds will be monitored by the Office in 2011, including these larger competitive and entitlement initiatives :

Competitive Grants

- Magnet School Assistance Program
- Smaller Learning Communities Initiative
- Smart Scholars - Early College in High School
- Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative (A-PLUS)
- Enhancing Education Through Technology (ARRA)
- NYGEAR UP (plus two supplemental programs)
- Learning Technology at North Albany Academy

Entitlement Grants

- Race to the Top Initiative
- Title I, II, III and Title ARRA programs
- Title I School Improvement Grants
- IDEA and IDEA ARRA special education programs
- Universal Pre-Kindergarten
- Education of Incarcerated Youth

The Grants Office will continue to partner with local, state and federal government agencies, institutions of higher education, community-based organizations, and private funders to support and expand district programs.

Academy Park (Elk Street), Albany NY 12207 • 518.475.6080 (phone) • 518.475.6084 (fax)

[www.http://www.albanyschools.org/district/AtoZ/grants/grants.htm](http://www.albanyschools.org/district/AtoZ/grants/grants.htm)



Connecting with Our Project Coordinators

Plethora of Paperwork

The day-to-day responsibilities of a Coordinator include the implementation of project activities and balancing budgets. And then there's the reporting. For many Coordinators, the internal and external accountability for grant-funded programs feels like a combination of the most time-consuming and least rewarding parts of their project. Yet, it's what allows us to build our programs and develop new ones.

The Grants Office appreciates the burden of reporting and has tried to streamline the internal paperwork over the years. With feedback from Coordinators, we have tried to eliminate unnecessary and redundant forms; we have taken on more responsibility for completing external reports; and have tried to find the balance between too much and too little communication about the status of accounts.

That being said, we would like to gently remind our Coordinators whose funds have been approved to complete and submit the following list of internal forms to the Grants Office. Paper and electronic copies of these forms have been sent out and each can be downloaded from our webpage.

- Form A:** Grant Information Sheet
- Form B:** Paid and Matching Grant Personnel
- Form F:** Quarterly Grant Records Checklist

In addition, those with staff paid from their grants must also submit one or both of the following forms with the employee's signature.

- Form C-1:** Certification for Paid and Matching Grant Personnel - 100% Funded
- Form C-2:** Certification for Paid and Matching Grant Personnel - not 100% Funded



Welcoming New Coordinators

With all the personnel changes taking place throughout our district, it makes sense that the individuals responsible for grant-funded projects shifted, as well. We'd like to welcome a handful of colleagues who have joined our grants family this year.

Kerry Welcome, a science teacher at NAA, is the new Coordinator for the Learning Technology grant. The project is a partnership between North Albany and Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

George Benson, a teacher from the Academy of Engineering, has been charged with coordinating the Smart Scholars Early College in the High School initiative, a complex project from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

Stan Harper, former Assistant House Principal at the High, is now responsible for two multi-layered movements within the district to restructure the high school

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Cumbersome Encumbrances

Try saying that phrase three times fast! When you're done, keep this in mind ... encumbrances are your friends. They are nothing more than earmarks, a holding place for a future expense. They are important because they communicate to our office, as well as to the Purchasing Department, that a Coordinator has a plan for the money in her/his budget. They help the district make decisions regarding cashflow, since individual grant budgets are only small parts of a larger whole.

So, when does a Coordinator need to encumber funds? At the beginning of the grant year, the Coordinator should earmark (encumber) as much of their budget as possible. Encumbrances can always be adjusted. If a Coordinator waits too long to do this, it sends red flags to the district that the money might not be spent on time, which puts programs in jeopardy of not being fully funded! This is why the Grants Office starts making a fuss around April, which is the 3rd quarter mark in the project period for most of our grants. Accounts cannot be closed out at the end of the project period until all encumbrances are spent or cleared.

How does a Coordinator encumber funds? The Coordinator simply fills out a requisition form (available from the Purchasing Office) identifying the vendor and the amount they want to set aside for the purchase. The form is submitted to the Purchasing Office, who uses the information to create a Purchase Order on Finance Manager, our fiscal monitoring system. The Grants Office can then see the encumbrance as a charge to the grant's budget, thereby indicating that the money will be spent accordingly.

How does a Coordinator spend an encumbrance? When the time comes for the actual money to be spent, the Coordinator should follow these steps:

1. Attach the invoice and any other back-up documentation to the Purchase Order.

2. Date the Purchase Order.
3. Write a note on the Purchase Order specifying how much of the expense should be charged to the encumbrance (sometimes Coordinators order multiple times from the same vendor and can use the same Purchase Order).
4. Submit the documents to the Purchasing Office.
5. Double check the following month's Budget Summary (sent by the Grants Office) to make sure the correct amount was charged to the correct budget line in the grant.

We know that this can be a confusing process for many Coordinators and encourage those with questions to call the Purchasing Office at 475.6050.

Just the Facts, Ma'am ...

- 50 - Grant-funded projects
- 26 - Project Coordinators
- 11 - Coordinators managing more than one project
- 3 - Coordinators managing five or more projects
- 2 - Full-time Coordinators with no additional duties

(New Coordinators, Continued from previous page)

- the Magnet School Assistance Program and the Smaller Learning Communities project.

Dale Getto, in her new role as School Improvement Manager at the high, has been charged with managing the district's 1003a funding (AKA School Improvement Grant). Dovetailed with the Magnet and Smaller Learning Communities projects, this funding stream will help the district implement the federally-mandated Transformation Model at the high school.

Other administrators have taken on responsibility for new and existing grant-funded projects, including **Anthony Clement, Kim Wilkins, Lesley Buff, Zuleika Sanchez-Gayle** and **Dan Stilson**.

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Fall/Winter 2010

Funding a Pet Project

When many people hear the word 'grants' they think about multi-million dollar projects or that crazy man on the TV that sells 5,000-page books on "Free Government Money" for just three easy installments of \$19.99. The truth is that while many grants are overwhelmingly large and extremely competitive, there are plenty of opportunities out there for smaller projects - like school gardens, art shows, field trips, science fairs, etc. You just need to know where to look!

The following list of websites may be useful in your search for funding for your pet project. If you find an opportunity that you'd like pursue, be sure to get the approval of your building administrator and let us know if you need technical assistance. We'd also love to hear about your program once it's funded!

Pepsi's Refresh Projects

<http://www.refresheverything.com/>



The Albany Fund for Education

<http://www.thealbanyfundforeducation.org/grants/index.html>

Greater Capital Region Teacher Center

<http://www.teachercenter.org/programs/grant-center/index.cfm>

Health in Schools

<http://www.healthinschools.org/en/News-Room/Grant-Alerts.aspx>

Do Something

<http://www.dosomething.org/>



Have questions about one of our grant-funded programs?

Need technical assistance on a grant application or competitive narrative?

Email us!

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