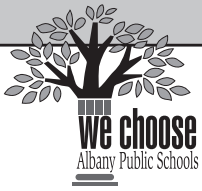


A VISION FOR TOMORROW

THE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT OF ALBANY'S STRATEGIC PLAN

"... to educate and nurture all students ..."





Our Mission

The mission of the City School District of Albany is to educate and nurture all students to be responsible citizens, critical thinkers and lifelong learners to successfully compete in the global community by providing an academically rigorous and safe environment in partnership with parents, students and the community.

-- Strategic Planning Team
December 2, 2007



It takes a community to build a school district.

This was our approach in crafting a strategic plan for the City School District of Albany's future.

On behalf of the Board of Education and the Strategic Planning Committee, I am pleased to provide this overview of the successful outcomes of an inclusive, year-long process that has set the framework for dynamic and important progress. We invite you to visit www.albanyschools.org for the full strategic plan.

We have looked carefully at the critical areas of our district's functions, examining not only our role in educating children, but also our role in helping to build a stronger community.

Certainly, topics such as the future of Albany High School, school safety, parent involvement and equal access for all students were among our top priorities. Some outcomes began moving forward even as the final elements of this plan were coming together, such as the structure of our middle schools.

We also were careful to consider not just how our schools can better serve students, but how our schools can better serve families and the community, and how families and the community can better serve our schools.

How do we foster more involvement in school activities and planning initiatives? How do we provide more and clearer information to allow parents and community members to make informed decisions about important issues affecting our schools? How do we make better use of the new advances in technology that are moving our world forward at warp speed?

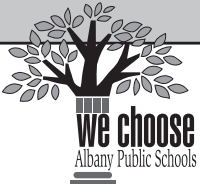
How do we do all of this together? A vibrant, successful school system is the sum of all of its parts, the product of an entire community's collaborative efforts.

We are fortunate in Albany to have wonderful partners and resources available to support our children. As a school district, we are grateful to the scores of volunteers who committed their time and talent to build this strategic plan, and we look forward to continuing to work together to make our enthusiastic vision for tomorrow a reality for every child in our community.



Barbara Gaffuri
President, Board of Education





A vision for tomorrow.

As superintendent of the City School District of Albany, it is my pleasure to present to you the City School District of Albany Strategic Plan.

This document is the result of a process that began in November 2007 when a 25-member team consisting of community members, students, faculty, staff and members of our Board of Education was convened to set the strategic direction for the district. Following a year-long process, the board approved the plan unanimously on Nov. 5, 2008.

The plan is the result of a very comprehensive, full-fledged effort, a real commitment on the part of so many. Over the period of a year, action teams came together on the seven strategies identified in the strategic direction and completed deep thinking and investigation about setting direction and real action for the district.

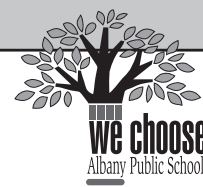
Seven strategies and action plans have been developed, which will be implemented over a period of five years. The result statements created by each action team are highlighted in this brochure. We welcome you to visit www.albanyschools.org to read the full Strategic Plan, including the action steps for each result statement.

We look forward to the implementation of this plan in partnership with our community to ensure the highest quality education is available to all the children in the City of Albany.



Eva C. Joseph, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools





Strategic Planning Team

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City of Albany

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Facilitator
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Enduring Value Statements

An enduring value statement describes how everyone throughout the district is expected to communicate with, relate to and treat one another. It applies to students, families, teachers, staff, administrators, board members and community partners.

1. We will fulfill our responsibilities and be accountable for ourselves and to each other for our actions at home, in school and in the community.
2. We will communicate effectively in an open and honest manner.
3. We will embrace, respect and celebrate our diversity, which is among our greatest assets.
4. We will consistently show care, concern and respect toward one another.
5. We will uphold the right of everyone to learn, work and live in a safe environment.
6. We are committed to continuous self-improvement, setting high expectations, assessing our progress and modifying our course as needed.
7. We value education and promote lifelong learning.
8. We will value all students, families, employees and the entire community as partners in our mission.

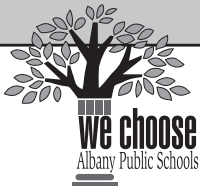


Strategic Boundaries

A strategic boundary is a self-imposed limit that states what the district will always do or never do. It guides the district to make substantive decisions consistent with its enduring values. Equally important, a strategic boundary further defines the mission. Strategic boundaries must be enforceable.

1. We always will work to enhance students' intellectual, emotional and physical well-being.
2. We always will make instructional, curricular, placement and program decisions based on improving student performance and individual student needs and never on arbitrary or discriminatory factors.
3. We always will offer professional development with appropriate ongoing support to teachers and staff.
4. We always will seek to involve affected students, parents, community members and other stakeholders in decisions regarding our schools and the well-being of our students.





Student Performance Standards

A student performance statement describes a high expectation outcome that applies to all students in the district. A student performance statement describes a high expectation for student achievement and/or performance, and the way in which it will be observed, demonstrated and/or measured.

Student performance statements are driven by the enduring value statements and the aspirations reflected in the mission.

1. 100 percent of students in grades 3-8 will score at Level 3 and above on English Language Arts and Mathematics tests as measured by the New York State testing program.
2. 100 percent of the students in the City School District of Albany will graduate in accordance with New York State graduation requirements.
3. The district's suspension rate will move incrementally to the state average by 2010.
4. 100 percent of students will attain a 95 percent attendance rate across the district, K-12.
5. 100 percent of students in middle and high school who are present in school will be on time and stay all day as measured by period-to-period attendance rate.
6. 100 percent of students in the City School District of Albany will abide by the rules of conduct set by the district in classrooms, buildings and grounds, as measured by suspension data and reports on classroom disruptions and conduct violations.



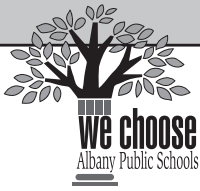
Strategies

A strategy is a broad statement consistent with the district's values and strategic boundaries. It describes how resources will be used to achieve the mission and student performance statements.

A strategy represents an idea in which the district is willing to invest energy, expertise, time and resources. Strategies are broad enough to yield a variety of programs, products, functions and/or services.

1. We will design and implement a more effective way to engage parents and families in the education of their children at home and at school.
2. We will ensure the emotional and physical safety and well-being of our students in collaboration with community and family partners.
3. We will assess and redesign all aspects of the high school with the community to ensure academic rigor and high-level student performance.
4. We will improve education in grades 6-8 in partnership with our community to address academic rigor and the disparity in academic achievement.
5. We will develop and implement more effective communication, ensuring input from all district stakeholders about matters affecting the well-being of our students. We will use all assessment data to drive academically rigorous instruction, pre-K-12, to improve the performance of every learner.
6. We will use all assessment data to drive academically rigorous instruction, pre-K-12, to improve the performance of every learner.
7. We will develop a variety of ways for ensuring every student's access to all school education and extracurricular activities.





Strategy 1

WE WILL DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT A MORE EFFECTIVE WAY TO ENGAGE PARENTS AND FAMILIES IN THE EDUCATION OF THEIR CHILDREN AT HOME AND AT SCHOOL.

ACTION TEAM

Co-Leaders

*** Judy Rosen**

Board of Directors

Greater Capital Region Association of Realtors

Linda Rudnick

Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education

City School District of Albany

Team Members

Denise Cokes

Director

Head Start

Leah Golby

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Fifth-grade Teacher

Pine Hills Elementary School

Anuola Surgick

Administrative Assistant

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Clarence Samuel Johnson

Teaching Assistant

Philip Livingston Magnet Academy

Cecily Wilson

Principal

Sheridan Preparatory Academy

* Denotes members of the Strategic Planning Team



BRIDGING THE GAP

Every parent is his or her child's first teacher.

It was from this simple starting point that our Action Plan developed. We recognize that effective schools are those that welcome parents and guardians into meaningful partnerships, and successful partnerships happen when there is a shared understanding of expectations for student success.

We believe that families who need extra supports must be able to rely on schools for guidance and direction in securing those supports. We believe that the greater community serves an important role in student growth and development.

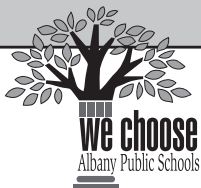
Additionally, we believe that effective and consistent communication between parents and school personnel helps students understand that all adults in their lives are working in tandem to ready them for the challenges that they will face, both in school and in society.

Communication is the bridge that ultimately will close the achievement gap and prepare students to be productive citizens and life-long learners.

RESULT STATEMENTS

- 1.1 Create a standard elementary orientation program, customized at each school site, in collaboration with parents and community, to help parents and families contribute to student success in school.
- 1.2 Provide information and training for families about how to help students at home with homework and other curriculum-related activities.
- 1.3 Involve parents in school governance, ensuring that parents and families of a diverse nature such as socioeconomic background, race, special needs and English language learners are represented on district and school-wide planning committees and shared decision-making bodies.
- 1.4 Orient and connect parents and families to available key services and resources, to empower them to be active participants in their children's education.
- 1.5 Design, in coordination with the City Council PTA or other agencies, a quality program framework and implementation strategy for effective volunteerism in our schools.
- 1.6 Provide modules of study to teachers and parents in school-based forums to foster and improve communication skills to support effective parent-teacher collaboration.
- 1.7 Implement effective forms of one-way/two-way communication about children's progress, including report cards, progress or interim reports and biweekly updates (at the elementary level).





Strategy 2

WE WILL ENSURE THE EMOTIONAL AND PHYSICAL SAFETY AND WELL BEING OF OUR STUDENTS IN COLLABORATION WITH COMMUNITY AND FAMILY PARTNERS.

ACTION TEAM

Co-Leaders

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Linda Jackson-Chalmers

*Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources and
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City School District of Albany

Team Members

* **Mark J. Barth, Ph.D.**

Board Member

City School District of Albany Board of Education

Rose Brandon

Teaching Assistant

Philip Livingston Magnet Academy

(Ms. Brandon was elected to the City School District of Albany Board of Education in November 2008)

Brother Yusuf Burgess

Community Member

* **Brendan Cox**

Commander

Albany Police Department

* Denotes members of the Strategic Planning Team



SAFE SCHOOLS ARE HEALTHY SCHOOLS

When children head off for school each day, their parents' most basic expectation is that they will be safe. The City School District of Albany takes this responsibility seriously.

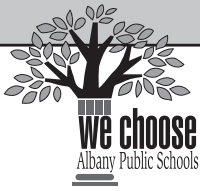
School cultures are shaped by the values and attitudes of the individuals they involve. This includes students, teachers, administrators and staff, parents, partner organizations and the community at large. In a safe, caring and orderly school environment, it is imperative for all stakeholders to make a personal commitment to create and maintain a welcoming, respectful and nurturing environment.

Our Action Team considered numerous ways in which the school district can maintain safe schools while focusing on a variety of important areas: the needs of students, improving school climate, improving student behavior, engaging community resources and partnerships, and developing a seamless understanding of roles and expectations between our schools and the community.

RESULT STATEMENTS

- 2.1 Provide school-based, district-wide professional development for all school staff to respond constructively to unproductive, off-task behavior of students, helping all feel emotionally and physically safe.
- 2.2 Provide a school-based safety program on a quarterly basis that reinforces personal responsibility and teamwork through a variety of techniques (such as movies, invited guest speakers, field trips to law enforcement, etc.).
- 2.3 Create a think tank to evaluate how our existing alternative educational programs are doing and research new innovative ideas.
- 2.4 Conduct a two-day summer orientation program for students transitioning to a new school that instills team-building and cooperation needed to succeed.
- 2.5 Create an accountability system that ensures all programs geared to ensuring the emotional and physical safety and well being of our students are being implemented throughout our schools.





Strategy 3

WE WILL ASSESS AND REDESIGN ALL ASPECTS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL WITH THE COMMUNITY TO ENSURE ACADEMIC RIGOR AND HIGH-LEVEL STUDENT PERFORMANCE

ACTION TEAM

Co-Leaders

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*Former Instructional Supervisor for Science
City School District of Albany*

*** Tresa Diggs, Ed.D.**

*Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education
City School District of Albany*

*** Maxine Fantroy-Ford**

*Principal
Albany High School*

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Armlin, Damon & McMordie*

Kimberly Baker

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*Student, Class of 2009
Albany High School*

Esther Thornton

*Former Co-President
Albany City Council PTA*

Michelle Washington

District Parent

* Denotes members of the Strategic Planning Team



A NEW PLAN FOR A NEW ERA IN SECONDARY EDUCATION

Four decades ago, a comprehensive high school serving all students in the City School District of Albany was the right plan at the right time. As Albany High School nears its 40th anniversary, we know that times have changed.

The school district and the community are at a critical juncture in deciding how best to structure our academic programs and facilities to serve the needs of students in grades 9-12, assuring opportunities for all students to enjoy success and achievement in the 21st century.

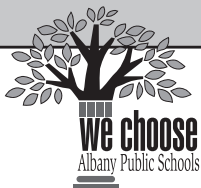
Building on the work of the district's previous High School Restructuring Committee, our Action Team focused much attention on the idea of separating Albany High into smaller learning communities and redesigning the facility to accommodate this new learning environment.

We also addressed a number of avenues to provide better support and mentorship for all of our high school students.

RESULT STATEMENTS

- 3.1 Develop, design and implement a formal advisory/mentorship program to be built into all student schedules to foster true and positive relationships between students and faculty.
- 3.2 Create smaller learning communities for all Albany High School students.
- 3.3 Redesign the high school facility to support the creation of smaller learning communities.
- 3.4 Provide mandatory professional training development for all administrators, teachers and paraprofessionals that will help them work with economically and culturally diverse students to ensure academic rigor and higher-level student performance.
- 3.5 Implement a series of programs to inform, engage and increase participation of all students to enroll in and pass at least one advanced course of study prior to graduation.
- 3.6 Create a full-service community resource center to provide parents/guardians with opportunities to interact with staff, to become familiar with program and curricular requirements for graduation and to participate/support their children in achieving success.





Strategy 4

WE WILL IMPROVE EDUCATION IN GRADES 6-8 IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OUR COMMUNITY TO ADDRESS ACADEMIC RIGOR AND THE DISPARITY IN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.

ACTION TEAM

Co-Leaders

*** Cathy Corbo**

Family and Consumer Science Teacher
Philip Livingston Magnet Academy

President

Albany Public School Teachers Association (APSTA)

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Albany City Court Judge

Lisa House

Sixth-grade Teacher
Philip Livingston Magnet Academy

Joan Moore

Higher Education Services Corporation

Randella Nurse

District Parent

* Denotes members of the Strategic Planning Team



STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITIES SUPPORT FUTURE PLANS

Assessing and planning for the future of the City School District of Albany’s middle school programs has been an especially challenging endeavor this decade with the rapid expansion of charter schools in the City of Albany.

Yet, the lack of historical data on charter school enrollment and the unpredictability of their longevity cannot impede the important work of developing and enhancing excellent academic programs and learning environments for all of the city’s students at these critical ages.

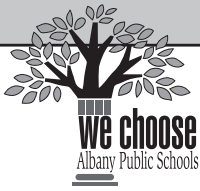
Our attention was geared to the following components: program and instruction, staff facilities, resources, and students, families and community. Our goal was to enhance our school district’s middle-level program so that all students are challenged to actively strive for academic success.

The school district already has made great progress in middle-level education through its facilities project. The learning environments are second-to-none at North Albany Academy (completed in 2005), Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School (2005) and William S. Hackett Middle School (2008).

RESULT STATEMENTS

- 4.1 Implement an annual middle school orientation program for all parents and students.
- 4.2 Create a comprehensive middle school mentoring program in collaboration with community partners, staff and students.
- 4.3 Identify the needs of at-risk middle school students and make resources available to address these needs.
- 4.4 Offer enrichment opportunities for all middle school students.
- 4.5 To address enrollment and ensure academic success, transition the middle school programs to two 6-8 middle schools and one Pre-K-8 school, and evaluate other options in collaboration with parents and community members to address any excess enrollment.





Strategy 5

WE WILL DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT MORE EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATIONS, ENSURING INPUT FROM ALL DISTRICT STAKEHOLDERS ABOUT MATTERS AFFECTING THE WELL-BEING OF OUR STUDENTS.

ACTION TEAM

Co-Leaders

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*Director of Communications
City School District of Albany*

*** Shawn Morris**

*President
Albany Common Council*

Team Members

Barbara Smith

Albany Common Council

Bill Stoneman

Journalist, District Parent

*** Kimberly Wilkins**

*Principal
Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School*

* Denotes members of the Strategic Planning Team



PROVIDING THE INFORMATION STUDENTS AND FAMILIES NEED FOR SUCCESS

The goal in developing this Action Plan was to create avenues of access, both from the community into the school district, and from the school district into the community.

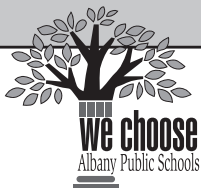
We wanted to develop communication strategies that would give parents the information they need to help their children succeed, and to make the path they travel smoother. We wanted schools and neighborhoods to find new ways to know each other. We wanted to reach into communities that have been disconnected from educational resources and provide them with new contacts and ways to participate in their children's education.

We wanted our "village" to be able to engage with the school district in creating a system in which all children learn, in which all have access to our district's opportunities and all have a stake in our children's success.

RESULT STATEMENTS

- 5.1 Research and develop outreach and communication efforts to more effectively reach all families and communities, taking into account how messages are shaped and received.
- 5.2 Develop an annual communication blueprint to guide efforts at the district, building and classroom levels to provide greater integration and enhance clarity and access to information.
- 5.3 Support the establishment of a newsletter in each building of at least monthly frequency during the school year.
- 5.4 Implement a weekly or biweekly TV show featuring a variety of constituents to communicate the work and importance of public education in Albany.
- 5.5 Create public engagement models, including meeting and hearing to ensure that public input on major decisions is heard and processed.
- 5.6 Establish an informational phone line to provide access to information 24 hours a day.





Strategy 6

WE WILL USE ALL ASSESSMENT DATA TO DRIVE ACADEMICALLY RIGOROUS INSTRUCTION, PRE-K TO 12, TO IMPROVE THE PERFORMANCE OF EVERY LEARNER.

ACTION TEAM

Co-Leaders

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City School District of Albany

*** Melissa Mackey**

Vice President

City School District of Albany Board of Education

Team Members

*** Faye Andrews**

Commissioner of Youth and Family Services

City of Albany

*** Felicia Green**

Co-President

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Carol Hill

District Parent

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*** John Viggiani**

Staff Development Director

Albany County Department of Children, Youth and Families

Sal Villa

Deputy Commissioner

Department of Youth and Workforce Services, Truancy Abatement Program, City of Albany

* Denotes members of the Strategic Planning Team



USING DATA TO EDUCATE, INFORM AND IMPROVE

The work of our Action Team was intended to bring to school district administrators, teachers, staff, parents, community members and other stakeholders the greatest amount of information currently available on student achievement and district accountability.

School and district-level staff, well informed regarding the types of assessment information and the results of those assessment tools, will be ideally situated to use that information to direct instruction.

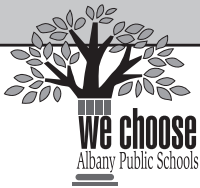
Assessment information also is useful to community stakeholders. A better-informed community is one key to improving student achievement, as the stakeholders are better equipped to participate in decision making based on a greater understanding of assessment data, and its uses and meanings.

An actively engaged community creates buy-in and generates support for new initiatives aimed at increasing student achievement, the ultimate goal for all of our students in all of our schools.

RESULT STATEMENTS

- 6.1 Provide school-level and district-wide training for building and district administrators, teachers and instructional support staff in the use and application of a variety of assessment to target instruction that will promote students' academic success.
- 6.2 Provide a series of trainings and information (written, face-to-face, Web-based) to support parents, students, families, community members and other stakeholders in their efforts to read, understand and interpret student, building and district reports presented in a variety of formats (SED report cards, student ISR, etc.).
- 6.3 Develop a data warehouse system that allows for the collection of individual student assessment and other pertinent data points (i.e., absenteeism, mobility, elementary schools attended, services provided, etc.) that can be accessed by teachers, administrators and staff for the purpose of making informed academic program decisions.
- 6.4 Develop a program evaluation tool (template) that can be applied to existing programs that would assist in establishing programmatic benchmarks that determine the success of the program. This tool must use both student and program expense data to help inform decision making for future programming.





Strategy 7

WE WILL DEVELOP A VARIETY OF WAYS FOR ENSURING EVERY STUDENT'S ACCESS TO ALL SCHOOL EDUCATION AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES.

ACTION TEAM

Co-Leaders

Gregory Jones

Principal

New Scotland Elementary School

*** Debora Brown-Johnson**

President

NAACP, Albany Chapter

Team Members

Lisa Angerame

District Parent

Thomas McGurn

History Teacher

Albany High School

Nolene Smith

Community Member

* Denotes members of the Strategic Planning Team



ENSURING ACCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS TO ALL OPPORTUNITIES

Every student's success.

That was our Action Team's driving mission. We defined this to mean that all students will have an opportunity to participate in any program, course or extracurricular activity the City School District of Albany offers, and that all students will be assured the knowledge, skill and resources to fully participate in any school activity.

We began with the creation of Personalized Education Plans for each student. The PEP should identify a student's goals and interests, and be considered when developing their class schedules.

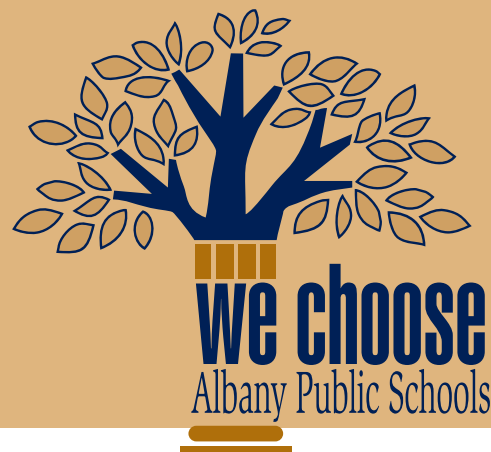
The location of a particular activity, course or program also should not be a barrier to participation. Ensuring student access must mean that all programs are open to all students.

In order to achieve the school district's mission, we must ensure that students are engaged in rigorous, challenging academic and social endeavors from prekindergarten through high school graduation – and that every student is assured access to every opportunity..

RESULT STATEMENTS

- 7.1 Design a Personalized Educational Plan (PEP) format that will be used for each student that drives and supports academic rigor and high-level performance.
- 7.2 Develop a plan to implement and monitor pilot to integrate Personalized Education Plans into the City School District of Albany.
- 7.3 Develop a Community and School Resource Guide to be used in support of the implementation of Personalized Education Plans.
- 7.4 Standardize and publicize in a guide requirements for class and program placements in clear and concise layman's terms.
- 7.5 Provide professional development training to all teachers, guidance counselors and support staff on the concept of vertical integration that will work with economically and culturally diverse students to ensure academic rigor and high-level performance.





City School District of Albany

Board of Education

Barbara Gaffuri, President
Melissa Mackey, Vice President
Judy L. Doesschate, Secretary
Mark J. Barth, Ph.D.
Rose Brandon
Daniel Egan
Wayne P. Morris

Eva C. Joseph, Ed.D.
Superintendent