

## I champion Albany public schools because...

### **The opportunity:**

“One of the great things about Albany public schools, while I was there, was that they really kept us on the edge of our abilities all the time. I was in an honors program that began in fourth grade, and I stayed in that program through middle and high school. I think that being among kids who challenge each other is a great help, and I think it is a big part of why my school experience was so productive and prepared me well for the future. There’s a lot of focus these days on helping kids in public schools who fall below the average and who have special needs. And it’s really important to help them keep up. But it’s equally important to challenge the kids on the other end of the spectrum because they get bored easily and won’t reach their potential if they’re not challenged.

“I also made good use of the sports programs while I was there. I was on the tennis team and I ran both indoor and outdoor track. I was involved in some sport in almost every season of the year. It’s so important that kids have physical activity and such a great opportunity to give kids that outlet. I was really grateful for it.”

### **The achievement:**

“I was born and raised in Albany but moved around a few times and went to many different schools, including School 4, School 10, School 16, Hackett, and then I graduated from Albany High in 1979. I didn’t do any theater while I was there. I auditioned for one play, but didn’t get the role and that was the end of my high school acting career. After I graduated from Albany High, I went to SUNY Albany where I majored in business administration with a minor in French. My plan was always to be some sort of corporate CEO somewhere, but it didn’t work out that way.

“Even though I’ve moved on to pursue a career in show business, which really has little to do with my book learning in Albany public schools, I think what the school system did for me, that was more important than anything else, was to teach me how to be a good learner. It’s such a cliché thing to say, but I think that is the single most important thing to take away from school. I’m learning things I never thought I would, like music and about movies and cameras and theaters. I was never trained to do that, but what Albany schools did for me was teach me to learn any subject and to absorb material in the best possible way.

“My Latin teacher, Judy Greenwood, actually went to Albany High with my mother. She would come to visit all the freshman classes at the end of the



**Carolee Carmello, Albany High School, Class of 1979**

**Award-winning actress, currently starring in “Mamma Mia!”**

year to try to encourage students to take Latin the next fall. I saw in her this passion for what she did. She loved teaching Latin so much that it made it an attractive course. It was something I would never have considered taking but I was drawn to it because of her spirit and her love of it. And I continued taking it all through high school and into college.

"I think the biggest lesson is to follow your passions. Mrs. Greenwood was someone who loved what she did and continued to love it. I think that inspires students beyond anything that comes from a book."

**Carolee Carmello is an award-winning actress and currently starring as Donna Sheridan in the Broadway production of "Mamma Mia!" Ms. Carmello has had leading roles in numerous other Broadway productions including "City of Angels," "Falsettos," "Parade," "The Scarlet Pimpernel," "Lestat" and "Kiss Me Kate." Ms. Carmello also has performed in national tours of "Chess," "Big River," "Falsettos" and "Les Miserables."**

**Ms. Carmello's television credits include appearances on "Frasier," "Ed," "Law and Order," and "Late Night with Conan O'Brien." She also was a series regular on "Remember W.E.N.N."**

**Ms. Carmello received an OBIE Award for Outstanding Performance for her role as The Young Wife in "Hello Again" at Lincoln Center Theater, and an L. A. Ovation Award for Best Supporting Actress in a Musical, as Cordelia in "Falsettos." Her performance as Lucille Frank in "Parade" earned Ms. Carmello a Drama Desk Award for Leading Actress in a Musical as well as a Tony Award nomination. She received her second Tony award nomination for her role as Gabrielle in Elton John's "Lestat." She also was nominated for the Screen Actors Guild Award for Best Ensemble in a Comedy Series with the cast of "Remember W.E.N.N."**