

## *We choose Albany public schools because ...*

### **Principals attend Harvard program**

Four City School District of Albany principals attended the Harvard Summer Principals Institute for Urban School Leaders during the summer.



Anthony Clement from Harriet Gibbons High School, Thomas Giglio from Philip Livingston Magnet Academy, Vibetta Sanders from Pine Hills Elementary School and Cecily Wilson from Sheridan Preparatory Academy all attended the conference in Cambridge, Mass.. The conference examined the role of race, culture, equity, special education and social justice in urban classrooms and sought answers to common problems through shared experience and research.

The conference was designed to increase the efficiency of urban schools by teaming school principals with leading researchers and colleagues to explore new approaches and strategies.

One topic that influenced all members was Malachi Pancoast's presentation on organization.

The aim of this presentation was to help free up principals from their technical office work to allow them more time to spend in the classroom. To do this, Mr. Pancoast says, principals must reduce the clutter in their office and train office staff to handle all necessary paperwork.

The four Albany principals entered a pact after hearing this presentation, vowing to reorganize and streamline their offices to become more visible in the classroom as instructional leaders during the 2008-09 school year.

"The key to this restructuring is to become more efficient while continuing to be accessible," says Ms. Sanders.

Jeff Howard's efficacy model was another important part of the dialogue.

Mr. Howard's model is based on three components: clear targets, belief in the capabilities of all students and the use of data to evaluate progress and formulate strategy. This model allows principals and teachers to take several approaches and make strategic decisions based on their effectiveness.

Ms. Wilson planned to set baseline exit-skill standards in math and English for each grade and work with teachers in each grade to raise proficiency in these areas. Mr. Clement is implementing an efficacy model at Harriet Gibbons by organizing teachers into teams to research new techniques for presenting curriculum. They then will jointly

collect and analyze anecdotal and statistical data from the classroom to determine the success of these techniques.

Another topic discussed was the impact poverty has on learning. Ruby Payne's presentation outlined the social cues, or "hidden rules," that differ between classes and impact both students' expectations and behavior.

Ms. Payne's speech demonstrated ways to overcome these barriers and help teachers succeed through differentiated instruction, a method that maximizes learning for all students regardless of skill level or background.

Special education presenters stressed how important inclusion is for all students. A presenter with cerebral palsy outlined how being included in "normal" classes throughout school enhanced others' perception of him and his perception of himself, allowing him to fulfill his potential as a student

Mr. Giglio planned to have half of his special education students attend at least one regular education class per day this school year.