

## *From the superintendent*

### **2009-10 middle school enrollment planning**



The City School District of Albany and a group of parents and community representatives are working together this fall toward a solution to one of the most important questions our school system has faced in many years: How do we restructure our middle school enrollment?

A newly formed Middle School Enrollment Planning Committee will consider the steady and significant enrollment decline at Philip Livingston Magnet Academy, which has approximately 250 students in grades 6-8 this year. That is approximately 100 fewer than 2007-08, as anticipated, and nearly four times below the building's capacity.

Because of this, our enrollment plan for 2009-10 includes phasing out Livingston as a middle school and establishing two middle schools – William S. Hackett Middle School and Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School. Our master plan for rebuilding our middle schools has provided two outstanding facilities for students at this important age, both offering state-of-the-art facilities.

We also will maintain North Albany Academy, the former Public School 20, as the district's only school for students in prekindergarten through grade 8. As another of the school district's fully renovated schools, North Albany will continue to serve about 150 students in grades 6-8.

The primary question before the committee is how we will enroll Hackett and Myers equitably, each with about 600 students.

Historically, the question of which of two public middle schools students in Albany attend has been an easy one for parents. Families on the north side of Western Avenue sent their children to Livingston; families on the south side sent their children to Hackett.

With Hackett and Myers on the same side of Western Avenue, a new model is needed, one that ensures the same opportunities for all students.

Should the district create "feeder" schools by designating middle school assignments for each of our elementary schools?

Should we use a lottery system?

Should we follow the nationally recognized Controlled Parent Choice model initiated 20 years ago in the White Plains (N.Y.) City School District? Controlled Parent Choice governs the placement of students based on parental choice, available space and a racial and ethnic balance policy that the board designed.

Is there another option that would better suit our needs?

The committee is scheduled to deliver a recommendation to the Board of Education for its consideration Dec. 2. The committee then will refine its plan based on the board's feedback.

The board will review an updated plan Jan. 15, and is scheduled to approve a plan Feb. 3 so that we can assure our families ample time to plan for 2009-10.

We are grateful to the dedicated volunteers who stepped forward this fall to help us plan for this important step. We look forward to their recommendation as we near the completion of our elementary and middle school restructuring plan and prepare to turn our attention and energy to the future of the district's high school structure.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Eva C. Joseph".

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