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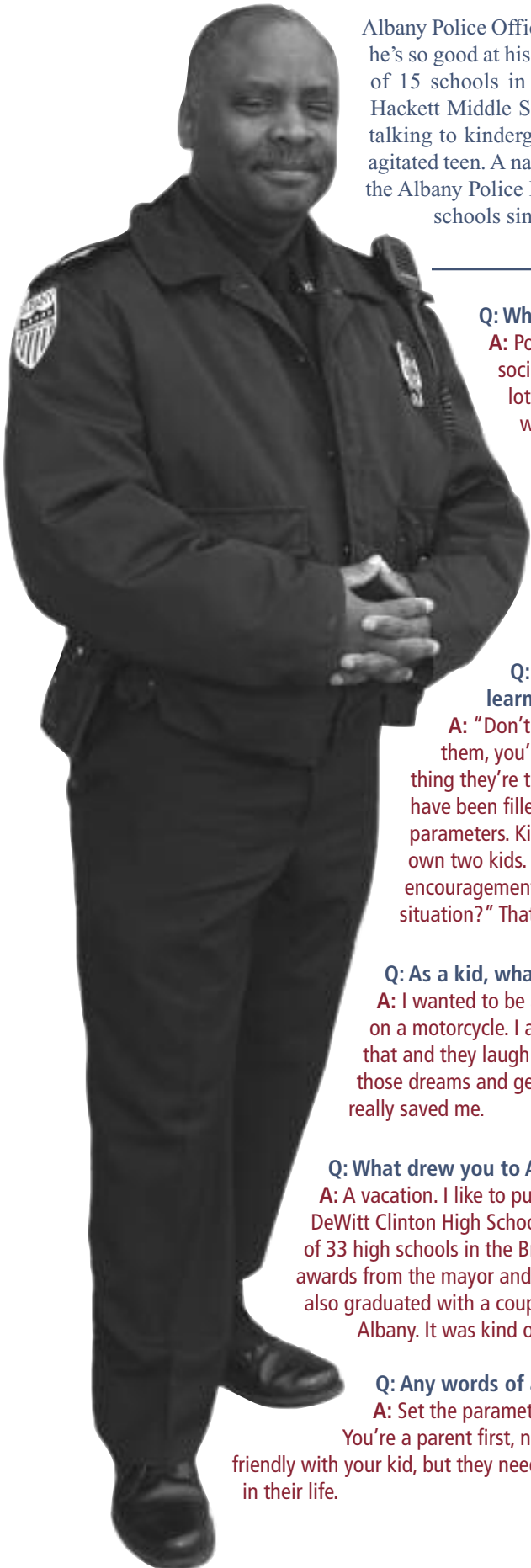
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Leading the way Meet Willie Hughes

School Resource Officer



Albany Police Officer Willie Hughes understands kids. That's why he's so good at his job as a school resource officer. Walk into one of 15 schools in the city on his beat – including William S. Hackett Middle School – and he might be doing anything from talking to kindergartners about crosswalk safety to calming an agitated teen. A native of the South Bronx, Officer Hughes joined the Albany Police Department in 1989 and has worked in Albany schools since 1993.

Q: What's a school resource officer?

A: Police officers in general wear a lot of hats – social worker, caregiver, defender and enforcer – a lot of different things. As a school resource officer, we're just more focused on a particular location: the schools. We're trained to go into classrooms or assemblies to discuss a number of different topics with children and adults. Occasionally they'll be hot topics, but usually we try to help bridge the gap between different segments, mediating as best as possible without having to enforce.

Q: What's the most important lesson you've learned from students?

A: "Don't give up on me." When you sit there and hear them, you're able to empathize. I know that empty, hollow thing they're trying to fill with something. This void should have been filled with nurturing and love and some parameters. Kids need that. When I see them, I have to see my own two kids. I'm a single dad, and I think, "What words of encouragement would I give them if they were in this situation?" That's what helps to motivate me.

Q: As a kid, what did you want to be when you grew up?

A: I wanted to be a professional baseball player and drive around on a motorcycle. I also wanted a pet eagle. The kids ask me about that and they laugh when I tell them, but I had a dream. Having those dreams and getting involved with after-school stuff really, really saved me.

Q: What drew you to Albany?

A: A vacation. I like to put it that way. By the time I graduated from DeWitt Clinton High School I had a couple of scholarships. I was president of 33 high schools in the Bronx. I was captain of the fencing team. I had awards from the mayor and the governor and people on the City Council. I also graduated with a couple of ulcers. When I came here I went to SUNY Albany. It was kind of like a getaway for me.

Q: Any words of advice for parents?

A: Set the parameters to keep your kids safe. It's OK to say no. You're a parent first, not a friend. There's nothing wrong with being friendly with your kid, but they need to know you are the ultimate authority figure in their life.

Alumni achievement

Jason Gough '88



WNYT/TV-13 meteorologist Jason Gough in the newsroom surrounded by the many tools he uses to determine the forecast.

Jason Gough thinks we'll have a snowy winter.

He might have made the same prediction 20-plus years ago when he was a student at Albany High School, since "snow" and "Albany" are synonymous to those who live here. Today, though, Jason bases his calculations on hard science and his years in the business – first as a meteorologist in Texas and now at Albany's NBC affiliate, WNYT/TV-13.

Figuring out stuff is what Jason does.

Looking back on his years in Albany's public schools, Jason credits his parents and teachers with urging him to think for himself and find the answers himself.

"My mother instilled in me this idea that I had to look everything up," he said. "I'd ask her how to spell a word and even though nine times out of 10 she knew how to spell it she made me get the dictionary and look it up myself."

Education in Albany's public schools gave Jason the academic foundation he needed to succeed. But one of his most important lessons came from outside the classroom, when he became friends with kids from different backgrounds.

"I learned there was a lot more out there than what I was used to," he said. "My family didn't have a money tree growing in our back yard, but I had everything I needed."

Besides taking college courses at Albany High, Jason was captain of the track team. He recalls riding the team bus from meets and swapping music with his friends.

"They listened to Rush and I listened to Run-DMC and the Fat Boys. I loved it," he said. "It didn't matter that we looked different. We were pals, we were on the same team and we had the same goals. We wanted to be successful at something."

Jason took those lessons with him first to Auburn University, where he studied chemistry, and then, after taking a break from school following his father's death in 1992, to the University of Maryland, where he studied meteorology.

He landed a job at a Texas TV station shortly after his 2001 college graduation. Three years later, he traded mild winters to come back home to the Northeast's snowy climes.

And he's told us when the snow will start and stop ever since.

Words of wisdom: "The better prepared you are when you get out of school, the more choices you have. Generally speaking, the more choices you have, the happier you'll be."

A lot to do after school at Albany High

Diverse clubs offer something for nearly every interest

Interested in Japanese-style animation? Check out the Anime Club at Albany High School.

Want to help your peers grapple with their problems? Learn about the Natural Helpers Club.

A lover of languages? There are four clubs to choose from.

When the school day ends at Albany High, students have a wide range of extracurricular options.

"Clubs are great in so many ways," said Liz Gialanella, Psy.D., a school psychologist and advisor to two after-school clubs. "They connect kids with each other, with teachers and with the school as a whole.

"As a faculty member, clubs allow me to interact with the kids and find out what's going on. I consider it some of my best time spent."

For a full list of clubs, check out the online version of *Capital Education* in the Online News Center section at www.albanyschools.org. Here is a small sampling from one week in October.

On Monday, sophomore Robert Taylor and his classmates in Robotics Club tinkered with a mishmash of screws, gears and gizmos they will transform into a working robot by December.

"It's a nice hands-on thing, and we get to

brainstorm and solve problems," said Robert, who plans a career in engineering.

Tuesday, senior Samantha Cramer and Gay/Straight Alliance members discussed their success in getting 284 people to sign pledges affirming that schools should be safe places for all students.

The Speech and Debate Club – in its 140th year – met Wednesday.

"It's hard to get up and talk in front of people, and this definitely helps my public speaking and acting," said junior Lexi Athens, who plans to be a math teacher.

Thursday, the community-oriented Key Club got together to plan its Thanksgiving activities: "adopting" a needy family and providing dinner fixings for them, and helping Equinox prepare for the traditional community dinner that serves the homeless.

And on Friday, the Drama Club rehearsed its fall production of "The Laramie Project" (see related story page 3).

For some kids, the clubs are a way to pad their college applications. Others are purely interested in the subject matter. For many, an after-school club is a place where you can fit in and make a difference.

"There's really an opportunity for students to help each other, and for some, it gets them through the day," Dr. Gialanella said.



Robotics Club members (L-R) Gregory Macri, Jacob Van Alstyne and Robert Taylor work with advisor Brent Cady.

Flu guidance for families

H1N1 flu has been prevalent throughout the Capital Region this fall. The City School District of Albany continues to work closely with state and county health officials to help prevent the spread of flu in our schools and to help families manage the flu should symptoms occur.

You can help.

Stay home, or keep your child at home, if flu-like symptoms are present. These can include fever, cough, sore throat, a runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache and feeling very tired. It

is important to stay home until you or your child are fever-free for at least 24 hours without medication.

On our end, district custodians have increased cleaning in prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms. Teachers also will continue to stress to students the importance of hand-washing, covering their mouths after a sneeze or cough, and not sharing personal items like drinks or utensils.

Visit www.albanyschools.org for additional information and updates.

Student achievement

Senior seizes opportunity with both hands

To understand what motivates Bilal Turner, look no further than his forearms.

A tattoo snakes down each one. The Albany High School senior is quick to point out that the tattoos aren't gang-related. Rather, they are a tribute to his two biggest influences. His mother, Chanell Turner, is represented on the left arm, and his late grandmother, Mamie Maxwell, on the right.

"My mom has always been strong for her children. Education comes first for her," he said. And his grandmother taught him to seize opportunities that would take him far.

The advice hasn't fallen on deaf ears.

During the summer, Bilal became the first Albany High student ever elected to the highest position (governor) at Boys' State, an annual leadership program sponsored by the American Legion. Getting into Boys' State is competitive; being the first Albany High student elected leader by his peers from all over New York fueled Bilal's already-burning desire to run for office.

"I want to use my Boys' State experience to further my career in politics," he said. "Maybe I'll become a senator, then work my way to the White House."

It's no surprise to those who know Bilal that he's headed for great things.

"He's a success story already," said Mike Elliott, who taught Bilal eighth-grade social studies at North Albany Academy and was student government advisor when Bilal was class president there.

"He's always been a leader and a go-getter. He really has passion and is driven



Bilal Turner is the first student in Albany High history to be elected governor at the Boys' State leadership program.

to be successful."

This fall, Bilal has his sights set on college and is looking at SUNY Cortland or SUNY Brockport for a bachelor's degree in sports management.

West Point and the U.S. Naval Academy are under consideration, too, thanks to his experience at Boys' State.

After that? Law school.

Bilal would like to be a sports agent, negotiating contracts for professional athletes, before he launches into a career in public office. He's confident he'll thrive because he heeds the words of the women who inspired him most.

"It's not the color of your skin, it's not your background, it's not the people you know," Bilal said. "It's how you take the opportunities given to you."

His grandmother would be proud.

"Everyone's proud of him," said Mr. Elliott.

First Hall of Fame members inducted

Nominations welcome for Class of 2010

Artists and actors. Activists and athletes. Fourteen in all.

They are considered powerhouses in their diverse fields. They have strong ties to the community. And because of their accomplishments, they were the first members of the City School District of Albany's new Hall of Fame.

The members of the Class of 2009 were inducted on Homecoming Weekend in October:

- **Glen Barker '89**, former Major League Baseball player
- **Betty Barnette**, Albany City Treasurer
- **William Devane '57**, actor (Philip Schuyler High School)
- **Gerald D. Jennings**, Albany mayor, former Albany High vice principal
- **Stefon Harris '91**, jazz musician
- **Henry Landau '48**, labor leader (Philip Schuyler High School)

- **Charles Leigh Sr. '65**, former NFL player
- **Nona Richardson '78**, athletic administrator, former volleyball player and coach
- **Norman Shapiro '48**, community volunteer (Philip Schuyler High School)
- **Nate Sutin**, Albany High basketball coach, 1938-61
- **Tony Tirino**, youth soccer coordinator
- **Pheoris West '68**, scholar, athlete, artist
- **Charlayne Woodard '72**, actress, playwright
- **Robert Wygant '48**, athlete, educator, community volunteer

Visit www.albanyschools.org to read more about each member of the Class of 2009. **Nominations for the Class of 2010 are welcome and will be accepted until Feb. 1.** Forms and rules also are on the district Web site.

From the superintendent Academics, health and safety our top priorities



Interim Superintendent
Raymond Colucciello, Ed.D.

A school district's primary role, of course, is education. At the same time, to be effective schools also must assure students' health and safety at all times.

In light of all that is happening in the area of health and safety, I would like to review with you some of the recent actions we have taken.

Since the first outbreak of H1N1 last spring, our Health Services staff has worked closely with state and county health officials to monitor the disease and coordinate communication. We constantly are reviewing our procedures to be sure they are in line with the most current guidance, which can change frequently.

We will continue to keep you informed, and we ask that you do your part in helping to reduce the spread of flu. Stay in contact with your health-care provider, and visit www.albanyschools.org for updates and information about steps you can take at home.

Meanwhile, each school is planning and conducting lockdown drills this fall.

A lockdown secures each classroom and office if a threat or serious disruption is identified in the school. Our staff also are well-prepared to follow lockout procedures if a threat is identified outside of the school building.

At Albany High School, we have instituted coded student IDs, allowing us to employ technology to identify where each student is supposed to be at any time of the day. We also require district employees to have ID badges visible at all times.

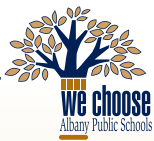
We also have been successful in deploying our staff in new ways, as well as continuing to partner with the police, mayor's office and community organizations, to ensure safe and orderly conduct after school. Where we have encountered unruly behavior we have been quick to respond together.

We are grateful for everyone's support.

Finally, we are in the first full year of a four-year, \$6 million federal grant to provide support, counseling and educational services for students and families in our middle schools and high schools. You can read more about one piece of this initiative, the Gang Resistance Education and Training program, on page 3.

Be assured that we will continue working hard to keep our families informed and to maintain our promise to provide safe, healthy learning environments where all students can succeed.

Should you see a situation at any of our schools that you believe poses a health or safety risk for our students or staff, please call the **Albany High Hotline at 459-1355**. All calls will remain anonymous.



**CAPITAL
education**

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Voices

Q: What was your favorite Halloween costume ever?



As I get my children ready for Halloween I see the excitement in my 4-year-old's eyes, and it reminds me of my costume when I was 4. My favorite costume ever would be when I dressed up as Strawberry Shortcake. There was nothing fancy about the costume. It was a plastic costume with a plastic mask. At that age, it isn't about how fancy your costume is or about how much money is spent on it. It is about dressing up and going through your neighborhood shouting "trick or treat." There was an innocence and an excitement to Halloween at that age. That is why Strawberry Shortcake would be my favorite costume.

— Kerri Barrington, fifth-grade teacher,
Philip J. Schuyler Achievement Academy



My favorite Halloween costume ever is when I dressed up as a geisha girl. My costume was a homemade costume that my mother had made for me. It was made from crushed velvet and it was all black. I remember that my face was painted all white with a hint of blue around my eyes and red lipstick. I had to be around 7 or 8, and I often look back at photos to enjoy my fond memories.

— Ashonte Burt, junior,
Albany High School



My favorite costume of all time was two years ago when I dressed up as a Spartan soldier. I had watched the movie "300" and began to do some research on their history and culture. I designed a helmet from scraps of thin cardboard and duct tape. I molded it to fit my head and spray-painted it a gold/metallic color. I bought some fabric and designed some of their uniforms from the various pictures that I had seen in the history books. It was a costume originally, but it turned out to be a fun history lesson for me.

— Dennis Corbitt, physical education teacher,
North Albany Academy



My favorite Halloween costume ever was Max Payne. It is my favorite because Max Payne is a comic book hero. He had all these weapons (no guns). He was like an angel trying to protect people from demons. I would like to be like him in real life because he is so cool. He stops at nothing to protect the humans on his world. He really is famous. No wonder he's cool — being an angel, protecting people from demons. How cool is that!

— Treyvon Ford, sixth grade,
William S. Hackett Middle School



My favorite Halloween costume ever was when I was Moaning Myrtle. It was my favorite because I got to use some of my parents' clothes. I had found a Hogwarts Gryffendor cloak. I wore my mom's white shirt that had buttons and my dad's red and gold neck tie. I also wore his gray long-sleeved shirt over the tie and shirt. Then I put on plain black pants. Then I put my Hogwarts robe on, and last I got a cloth that I could see through. It was white net. I looked just like a ghost.

— Chloe Lamb, fifth grade,
Montessori Magnet School



My favorite Halloween costume was being a dead cheerleader and nun at the same time. It was my first Halloween experience and I can gladly say that I was pleased with it. I borrowed the outfit from my cousin's friend. I thought it was odd because I was dressed up as a cheerleader who at the same time was apparently a zombie nun. My cousin, her friend and her friend's kids and I paraded the mall, collecting various candies. That was one of the most diverse Halloween costumes that I have ever worn.

— Keva Luke, senior,
Albany High School



My favorite Halloween costume was my angel costume because it had wings and a wand. It was made of white cotton but I had to wear a white turtleneck shirt because the costume was not warm. I was trick-or-treating with friends and a lady from Fox News interviewed us. Then at 10 p.m. when we were home, we were eating some of our candy and watching ourselves get interviewed. We had a blast! It was the best Halloween so far.

— Belen Marriaga, fourth grade,
Delaware Community School



My favorite Halloween costume that I have ever worn was Steve Urkel. The reason why he's my favorite is because it wasn't the traditional Halloween costume. It was unique. I also liked it because it made me feel good inside because I won the prize at the school dance last year. It also helped me make a lot of friends and get respect to show up as a "nerd," as some called it.

— James Willard, seventh grade,
Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School

At a Glance: Sheridan Preparatory Academy

The newly built Sheridan Preparatory Academy opened its doors in September 2004 and serves children from prekindergarten to fifth grade. Sheridan Prep's construction was one of the first projects in the City School District of Albany's comprehensive facilities plan to create smaller, more personal learning spaces where students have the technology to succeed. Graduating students attend Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School beginning in sixth grade.

Students: 351 | Teachers: 35 | Total employees: 56

Points of distinction:

- YMCA extended-day program
- Full-service neighborhood-school model
- Full-time home-school coordinator
- School-based health center

Partnerships:

- Charles Touhey Foundation
- Donors Choose
- National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA)
- Parsons Child and Family Center
- Police Athletic League (PAL)
- St. Peter's Hospital
- Whitney M. Young Jr. Health Services
- YMCA

What makes our school special?

Sheridan Preparatory Academy is a small urban school that used to be a part of Phillip Schuyler

Elementary School. We opened the doors to our brand new school on September 8, 2004.

We are proud to be a full-service neighborhood school. We work in conjunction with Parsons Child and Family Center to provide counseling and resources for our students and their families. We house a school-based health center in conjunction with Whitney M. Young Jr. Health Services, where students can receive a range of services from a nurse practitioner or physician.

Besides meeting the social and health needs of our students, we are a school that creates a safe and nurturing environment and promotes high expectations for all of our students. We encourage our students to do their best in everything by offering awards for effort, conduct, attendance and honor roll.

Did you know?

- Our teachers have received more than \$5,000 from Donors Choose for innovative grants.
- More than half our staff members have 10 or more years of teaching experience.

Giffen celebrates renovated facility

The City School District of Albany and Giffen Memorial Elementary School celebrated the start of the new year with a ribbon-cutting ceremony marking the completion of the latest project in the district's facilities plan.

Giffen is the 11th building completed in the sweeping



Giffen students joined Interim Superintendent Raymond Colucciello, Ed.D., Principal Maxine Fantroy-Ford and Board Vice President Melissa Mackey to cut the ribbon that officially opened the newly renovated school.

effort to renovate or rebuild every elementary and middle school this decade.

The September ribbon-cutting ceremony featured performances by the school's chorus. Mayor Gerald D. Jennings, Albany County Executive Michael G. Breslin and former Superintendent Lonnie Palmer were among the guest speakers.

Although the majority of Giffen's upgrades are "behind the scenes," the project has provided teachers and students a modern, comfortable learning environment with state-of-the-art technology.

Every renovation and update was with one goal in mind – to better support instructional delivery with the objective of raising student achievement and success.

Two buildings remain before the current facilities project is completed – Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science and Technology (TOAST), which will return to Lincoln Park on Jan. 4 and will hold its ribbon-cutting event Feb. 9, and Arbor Hill Elementary School, which will return to 1 Arbor Dr. at the start of the 2010-11 school year.

Albany High Theatre Ensemble presents 'Laramie Project'

Challenging conventional ideas is nothing new for Albany High School's award-winning Theatre Ensemble. This fall, teacher/director Ward Dales and his talented students took on perhaps their most thought-provoking performance yet.



Albany High students rehearse for "The Laramie Project," a provocative look at what happened in a Wyoming city after the murder of a gay college student in 1998.

The Theatre Ensemble performed "The Laramie Project" from Nov. 19-22, drawing wide attention to its powerful themes. The play focuses on the murder of gay University of Wyoming student Matthew Shephard in 1998. However, it transcends the persecution of a single minority group and examines the effects of violence, prejudice and intolerance on a community.

Though the fall play is a staple in the Theatre Ensemble's annual schedule, the students in this year's production felt part of something particularly meaningful.

"It's certainly an honor to be in this production," said senior Rosa Collins. "I've wanted to do this since I was a freshman. This is really going to change some things, I think."

Panel discussions with community leaders and experts followed each performance.

"This is not just a play anymore," said senior Aaron Moore. "We're more than actors participating in a performance. We're symbols of seeing injustice and saying, 'I'm not going to stand back and take it anymore.'"

Eating healthy at the game

Physical activity and good nutrition are equal partners in a healthy lifestyle. Thanks to the volunteer efforts of



Albany High parent Susan Kushner (right) donates her time to help fans and players eat healthy foods during JV football games.

Albany High School parent Susan Kushner, families attending JV football games the last two seasons have had the opportunity to emphasize both.

Ms. Kushner has provided a college-style hospitality tent at home and away games. The tent offers fruit, homemade trail mix and water instead of the usual hot dogs, potato chips, candy and soda.

Everything is free, thanks to the support of the Albany Booster Club and the Honest Weight Food Co-Op.

The effort promotes healthy eating as well as a sense of camaraderie at the games, Ms. Kushner says, and also fosters a positive environment that encourages supportive cheering by the school community.

"I know we are accomplishing those goals," she said.

GREAT program, better choices

Most parents lose sleep worrying about their kids' ability to steer clear of trouble under the influence of peer pressure. Albany parents can rest a little easier thanks to a new partnership between the City School District of Albany and the Albany Police Department.

The Gang Resistance Education and Training program (GREAT) teaches young people the skills they need to resist involvement in gangs, violence, drugs and crime. The program is the newest piece in a \$6 million federal grant the district received by partnering with several local public and private agencies.

"The GREAT program will give our kids tools to help them make good choices," said Interim Superintendent Raymond Colucciello, Ed.D. "Those lessons are every bit as important as the lessons in any other subject they'll learn in school."

The 13-week program began in October for sixth-graders at North Albany Academy, Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School and William S. Hackett Middle School. Albany police officers Evelyn Blackwell, Willie Hughes and Gordie McClean – school resource officers assigned to the district – teach the classes.

National recognition for Albany High, students

Albany High School has been recognized as one of the top 1,500 U.S. high schools, and second in the Capital Region, in the annual *Newsweek/Washington Post* measure of students taking advanced coursework.

The 2009 list includes Albany High at 1,112 nationally. Closer to home, only Voorheesville ranked higher at 500.

Schools are ranked according to a ratio of Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) or Cambridge tests taken by all students divided by the number of graduating seniors.

Albany High is one of only two high schools in the Capital Region offering the prestigious IB program. Albany High also is among the area's leaders in AP courses.

Four Albany High seniors also have been recognized in the annual National Merit Scholarship program. **Owen Daniels, Benjamin Miller, Lauren Schaefer** and **Matthew Wu** were recognized as Commended Students, ranking among the top 5 percent of more than 1.5 million students nationally.

Superintendent search update

Following the guidance of a leadership report compiled this fall with input from the community, the Board of Education is recruiting candidates to replace former Superintendent Eva C. Joseph, Ed.D., who retired in July.

The Leadership Profile Report the board received in October summarizes feedback gathered over the previous two months in a wide range of meetings with community groups and individuals in the district and throughout the city.

The board will begin reviewing applications in January, with a goal of having a new superintendent in place by the start of the 2010-11 fiscal year on July 1. The board also has extended the contract of Interim Superintendent Raymond Colucciello, Ed.D., through July 10 while the search is ongoing.

New day for board meetings

Starting in February, the Board of Education will hold its monthly business meeting on the first Thursday of the month instead of the first Tuesday.

The February business meeting will be held Thursday, Feb. 4. The monthly "roundtable" meetings will remain on the third Thursday unless otherwise noted.

Meanwhile, video of all board meetings now is available on the Web thanks to Albany Community Television. The Webcasts began with the Oct. 15 meeting. Visit the Board of Ed section at www.albanyschools.org to link to the Webcasts, and for a full schedule of board meetings and other information.



Delaware Community School celebrated the United Nations and math with a world tour during "Family Math Night" in October. The event emphasized fun, family, diversity and math skills tied to New York state standards. It is one example of similar events held at schools district-wide to help increase student achievement and build strong school communities.

Check us out online!

We have created an Online News Center to provide you as much news as possible about the great people and programs of the City School District of Albany. Visit www.albanyschools.org and click the Online News Center/Photo Gallery link in the right-hand column to read more about any of these stories and additional articles, including:

- Albany recycles
- Eagle Point display at Little Book House
- Half Moon sails again, Henry Hudson returns
- Important safety tips to review with children
- Legal Lives program expands
- League champs in soccer, swimming
- New Scotland AIDS memorial quilt
- Pine Hills students welcome new State Ed commissioner

You also can check out our District News section!