



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Ron Lesko
City School District of Albany
(518) 475-6065
rlesko@albany.k12.ny.us

**\$3.3 million state grant for Albany High, Hackett
boosts City School District of Albany efforts to raise achievement**

ALBANY, N.Y. – The City School District of Albany’s ongoing work to raise achievement for all students received a significant boost Thursday with the announcement of a \$3.3 million State Education Department grant to assist with improvements at Albany High School and William S. Hackett Middle School.

The School Improvement Grant is for the 2011-12 school year and will support staffing and programmatic enhancements at both schools that are in line with State Ed’s review of each school as well as the district’s strategic plan, “A Vision for Tomorrow.”

“These much-needed funds will enable us to transform these schools,” said Superintendent Raymond Colucciello, Ed.D. “The State Education Department has given us the resources that we knew we needed. Our vision to transform Albany High and Hackett is rigorous and well thought-out, and it addresses State Ed’s concerns at these schools and our vision for the future of secondary education in Albany’s public schools.”

State Ed has identified both Albany High and Hackett as persistently lowest-achieving schools because of their consistently subpar performance on state exams. The grant provides \$1.6 million to Albany High for 2011-12, \$1.4 million to Hackett and \$289,000 at the district level. The district also can apply for School Improvement Grants in 2012-13 and 2013-14.

Efforts to restructure Albany High have been underway since September 2010, when the U.S. Department of Education awarded the district a \$7.5 million magnet grant. Those funds, covering a three-year period, are being used to divide the school into four new academies beginning with the upcoming school year.

The federal grant also is providing more training for teachers and staff in line with the classroom needs State Ed identified in its July 2010 recommendations for Albany High.

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At Albany High, the state grant will:

- Continue the position for overseeing school-improvement efforts, held by Dale Getto since the start of the 2010-11 school year.
- Raise academic rigor by increasing chances for all students to take advanced coursework such as Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate classes, as well as project- and inquiry-based learning.
- Provide more supports and training for teachers who work with students with disabilities and students for whom English is not a first language.
- Support the expanded use of instructional technology.
- Support transition camps for incoming freshmen, new this summer.
- Expand programs for students to make up credits, such as the Saturday Academies that Albany High launched last winter.
- Help get families and the community more involved in school activities.

At Hackett, the district's plan to raise achievement includes many of the same strategies that will be implemented at Albany High. Hackett's improvement plan also includes:

- A new position to oversee the improvement efforts. North Albany Academy Assistant Principal David Amodeo will fill that role.
- Summer transition camps in 2012 for students who will enter in sixth or seventh grades (depending on their feeder elementary school).
- More learning time through extended-day programs, apprenticeships, longer English classes and math seminars, among other strategies.

At the district level, the grant will support two positions: a transformation officer responsible for oversight of the full school-improvement program for Albany High and Hackett, and a technology specialist to help both schools better integrate instructional technology.

The grant also will help support a new teacher evaluation system, identify and reward teachers improving student achievement and high-school graduation rates, put in place a system for measuring changes in instructional practices resulting from professional development, and use data to identify and implement instructional programs that meet the needs of all students.

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. The district serves more than 8,500 students in 15 elementary, middle and high schools. In addition to neighborhood schools, the district includes three magnet elementary schools and other innovative academic opportunities for all students.