



REACHING OUT

In our continuing effort to inform and reach out to the families of students with special needs, the City School District of Albany, Albany High School and the Department of Special Education have created the *Transition News* newsletter to be published three times a year (fall, winter and spring).

Secondary transition is a vitally important part of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that all schools are required to address. Transition is a coordinated set of activities that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of a student with a disability, and to facilitate the students movement from school to post-school activities, in-

cluding competitive employment, supported employment, vocational education, college, adult education, adult services, independent living and community participation.

“The City School District of Albany is committed to improving the educational opportunities available to our special-needs students,” said Special Education Director Deborah Sharpe-Defries. “This newsletter will be a great resource for both families and students, and an excellent way to showcase some of the exciting programs we have available.”

This introductory issue features sto-

ries on the Albany High Community Work Experience Program (beginning its 15th year); new assistive technology being introduced to Albany High; travel training for students with the help of CDTA; upcoming events for special-needs students and their families; and recent speakers who addressed issues with students on job readiness skills needed to be successful in the 21st century.



COMMUNITY WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM FEATURED BY CORNELL

Through a grant from the New York State Education Department, Cornell University is providing technical assistance to transition specialists from across the state.

As part of the grant, Cornell and Regional Special

Education-Technical Assistance Support Center specialists are creating training videos for districts highlighting strong transition programs that use evidence-based practices.

Since research has shown that work-based learning is

a key element to success, Cornell and RSE-TASC are profiling successful programs that utilize best practices. Albany High School’s Community Internship Program has been selected to be a featured school in the video.

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ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM FEATURED

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“Due to its history of success with training students and working cooperatively with local employers, and key connections with state and local agencies, Albany’s Community Internship Program is being featured,” said Joey DiPiazza, Special Education transition coordinator and district liaison to the project.

The Community Internship Program, in cooperation with the New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities Employment Training Program (OPWDD-ETP), is in its 15th year at Albany High and has trained hundreds of special-needs students in jobs and careers. Student participants are placed into part-time on-the-job training positions



paid through the state and are supervised by both district personnel and OPWDD supervisors. In the classroom, students focus on functional and life-skills academics, and a job-readiness curriculum.

As part of the Cornell project, both current and former students who participated in the Albany Community Internship

Program were interviewed and filmed as well parents of the students. Also interviewed and filmed were City School District of Albany Superintendent Raymond Colucciello, Ed.D., and Albany Mayor Gerald D. Jennings. Both discussed the close collaboration between the city and the district in providing support to special-needs students who participate each summer in Summer

Youth Employment and then go on to participate in the Albany High work program.

Department of Special Education Director Deborah Sharpe-Defries plans to share the film with the entire Albany school community.

KURZWEIL 3000 TECHNOLOGY COMING TO CLASS

For many students struggling with reading issues, school often can be a frustrating place.

In an effort to assist such students, Albany High School and the City School District of Albany’s Department of Special Education are rolling out assistive technology software in resource room classes this fall. Kurzweil 3000 is a comprehensive reading, writing and learning soft-

ware solution specifically designed to assist individuals with learning difficulties.

According to Director of Special Education Director Deborah Sharpe-Defries, “this technology is utilized on many college campuses and has helped

learning-disabled students struggling with reading and writing issues.”

The software is designed to increase reading fluency, provide decoding support, help with writing and self-editing, improve study skills, and allow for independent test-taking.

“This technology is utilized on many college campuses.”

*—Special Education Director
Deborah Sharpe-Defries*

STRIVING FOR INDEPENDENCE — TRAVEL TRAINING

The goal of many special-needs students is to live as independently as possible in their community and to maintain an active lifestyle. Travel is often an impediment to achieving such goals.

For many students, traveling by CDTA bus is a daunting and overwhelming task. To address such issues, special-education teachers from Abrookin Vocational-Technical Center and the CDTA travel-

training staff are currently working with a number of students who expressed a desire to gain these skills.

Each student receives one-on-one attention, and student safety is of the highest priority.

The focus of the training includes trip planning, reading and understanding route maps, getting to and from bus stops, recognizing bus numbers and landmarks,

paying fares and purchasing passes, getting on and off the bus safely, and safely crossing streets.

If anyone would like further information on the program, please contact Special Education Transition Coordinator Joey DiPiazza at 438-2501 or Onicela Cedeno at CDTA at 462-4300.

THE ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL STORE

A NEW LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

Coming in December, the Albany High School Store will be re-opening to serve the school community.

As part of a long-term project-based learning activity in Albany High rooms 100 and 106, special-needs students with multiple disabilities, under the guidance of their teachers Carol Connelly and Nancy Dignum, will be involved in the day-to-day running and operation of the school store.

Initially, the store will be open twice a week (Tuesdays and Thursdays) during all four lunch shifts, with the goal of expanding to three days a week in the 2012-2013 school year.

Special Education Transition Coordinator Jay Arnold sees the project as a

“win-win” for the entire high school. He commended Albany High Principal David C. McCalla, Ph.D., and Innovation Academy House Principal Julie Barber for helping get the project started.

“Being involved in the school store will allow the students in rooms 100 and 106

to be even more fully integrated into our school community,” Arnold said. “I thank Dr. McCalla and Ms. Barber for giving these students a genuine opportunity for ‘hands-on’ vocational activities.

“Students will be working on both functional academic skills and important social skills,” Arnold continued. “What is great is that all students in our high school will benefit from the store re-opening, as students will have a place to purchase school supplies and Falcon products promoting school spirit.”

Math teacher Jeff Yeager and school psychologist Liz Gialanella will be assisting students and teachers with the project. Barber will be the supervising administrator.



SPEAKERS ADDRESS ABROOKIN STUDENTS ON WORK

In early October students from Abrookin Vocational-Technical Center were treated to guest speakers from the Freihofer’s Corporation to address what employers are looking for in the 21st century.

Eric Frutchet, Albany plant manager, and Raymond Mooney, human relations manager, spoke to students about the importance of a positive attitude toward work.

“A positive attitude will have more influence on your career than anything else,” Mooney said.

“I get asked all the time if there is one single thing that someone can do to be successful and my answer is simple — have a positive attitude going

“A positive attitude will have more influence on your career than anything else.”

*—Raymond Mooney,
Freihofer’s human relations manager*

to work each day. The biggest factor in your success is YOU.”

Frutchet told students that “the more you care about your job, your work and your company the more you will be valued.

“And why? Because you are contributing to the success of the company.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

SAVE THE DATES:

NOVEMBER 16

ACCES-VR COLLEGE NIGHT, ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL NORTH CAFETERIA, 6:45PM TO 7:45PM

DECEMBER 14

SCHENECTADY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE INSTANT-ADMIT DAY, ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL, 9 A.M.-3PM

DECEMBER 22

HUDSON VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE INSTANT-ADMIT DAY, ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL, 8:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

MARCH 20

“RECIPE FOR SUCCESS” CONFERENCE FOR SPECIAL-NEEDS STUDENTS HEADING TO COLLEGE, HUDSON VALLEY COMMUNITY

COLLEGE, TROY, ALL-DAY EVENT.



City School District of Albany

- Raymond Colucciello, Ed.D., Superintendent
- Tresa Diggs, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent for Secondary Education
- David C. McCalla, Ph.D., Principal, Albany High School
- Deborah Sharpe-Defries, Director, Department of Special Education
- Michelle Bridgewater, Assistant Director, Department of Special Education
- Darlene King, Chairperson, Committee on Special Education

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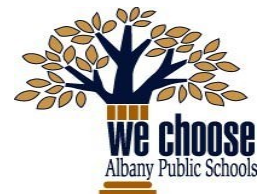
If you are a parent who has an idea for a story in Transition News, or a general question about transition for a student, please feel free to contact one of our Special Education transition coordinators:

John Arnold
*Special Education Transition Coordinator
Albany High School
454-3987, ext. 993*

Joey DiPiazza
*Special Education Transition Coordinator
Abrookin Vocational-Technical Center
438-2501*

You also can contact:

Donna Holmes
*Albany High School
Sub-CSE chairperson
454-3987, ext. 942*



New names, same services for two important state agencies

Two important state agencies that provide direct services to our students have within the past year had a name change.

VESID — Vocational and Educational Services for Individuals with a Disability — now is called :

“ACCES-VR” — Office of Adult Career and Continuing Education Services-Vocational Rehabilitation.

ACCES-VR provides employment assistance to individuals with disabilities. Students may access such services in 11th and 12th grade.

Contact John Arnold at Albany High School (454-3987, ext. 993) or Joey DiPiazza at Abrookin Vocational-Technical Center (438-2501) if you are interested in pursuing such services.

The ACCES-VR counselor assigned to work with Albany High and Abrookin students is Deb Gabrione. You can contact her at 485-5553.

The New York state agency formerly know as OMRDD — Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities — now is known as:

“OPWDD” — Office for People with

Developmental Disabilities.

OPWDD provides an array of services for children and adults with developmental disabilities.

If you have a question about eligibility for services for your son or daughter, please contact Arnold or DiPiazza, or contact the social worker at your child’s school.

