

**VOTE**

**Tuesday,  
May 15**

**7 a.m. - 9 p.m.**



# CAPITAL education

**April 2007**  
Budget Issue

## Residents to vote May 15 on a \$189,535,737 school budget

### Proposed spending plan invests in programs centered on achievement

On May 15, voters will decide on the City School District of Albany's proposed \$189,535,737 budget, a spending plan that preserves and expands current academic offerings and funds new educational initiatives.

The proposed budget carries an estimated 6.89 percent tax levy increase and an 11.57 percent spending increase.

The budget includes funding to maintain small class sizes and programs such as full-day Prekindergarten and Kindergarten, elementary foreign language and summer school. It would allow the district to strengthen literacy supports and middle school guidance services and continue the National Urban Alliance professional development initiative.

"This budget preserves and strengthens academic programs that gives all students valuable educational experiences, support and services," Superintendent Eva Joseph said. "The Board of Education's adopted budget goals guided the way in developing this proposed budget, which calls for the district to provide students with academically supportive and challenging environments in which to grow as learners."

*For more information about how the proposed spending plan meets the district's budget goals, please see Page 2*

### Every day, the school budget is at work

Every minute of every day, the school budget is at work.

The budget is at work when students step off their bus and arrive to warm, clean school buildings. It is at work when kindergarten students are immersed in a full day of learning, and as elementary students begin to learn foreign languages and attend summer school for additional academic instruction. And, the budget is at work when high school students enter Albany High School's College Center to research scholarships and fill out applications.



*The Columbia Writer's Project, would be expanded to all elementary schools under the proposed budget.*

From academic initiatives to music to athletics, this proposed budget supports efforts to provide students with a challenging and supportive school experience. If approved, here are a few ways in which the proposed budget will be at work in 2007-2008.

### Small class sizes

Under the proposed budget, the average elementary class size will be 19 students. This satisfies the District's goal of small class sizes to allow for more teacher-student interaction and more student support. And, students are often working with highly qualified teachers – more than 96 percent of the District's teaching force falls into this category.

### Full-day Kindergarten and PreK

The proposed budget includes funding to continue the district's full-day Kindergarten program at each of its elementary schools. Educational research shows generally that students who attend full-day Kindergarten gain and retain more early math and literacy than students in half-day Kindergarten. The budget also includes funding to provide a full-day Prekindergarten program to more than 55 percent of Albany's children who are of PreK age.

### Afterschool programs

With the loss of a federal afterschool grant, the proposed budget includes funding to continue extended-day programs at five district elementary schools – Arbor Hill Community Elementary School, Giffen Memorial Elementary School,

#### ► In this issue:

- Proposed expenditures and revenues | Page 4
- Projected tax impact and STAR savings | Page 5
- What if the budget is defeated? | Page 6
- News and notes from around the district | Page 7

#### ► Budget Presentations

- May 1 at Albany High School, Washington Ave., 7 p.m. (Budget Hearing)
- May 8 at ASH Whitehall Rd., 7 p.m.
- May 9 at PLMA, Northern Blvd., 7 p.m.
- May 10 at AHS, Washington Ave, 7 p.m.

*Continued on Page 3*



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## Vision, goals and specific strategies drive budget development

At its meeting on Dec. 21, 2006, the Board of Education unanimously adopted six budget goals that guided the development of the proposed 2007-08 budget. Specific strategies to meet these goals were outlined in February, and preceded by the summary statement below. What follows are the programs and strategies, many of them new, designed to meet these goals, as well as the rationale and impact behind them.

*The City School District of Albany will continue its ongoing commitment to providing a sound basic education to all of its students to ensure their success by accomplishing the following:*

**Budget Goal 1: All schools will meet and exceed New York State educational standards**

**Budget Goal 2: The achievement gap will be eliminated while maintaining academic rigor for all students.**

### Improvement Initiatives

► **Implement a comprehensive elementary literacy program districtwide**

Based on a thorough review of its literacy programs, the district will be implementing a new program that will strengthen literacy development instruction, resources and professional development to increase student achievement.

► **Expand Columbia Writing Project**

This "best practice" program will be expanded to all elementary and middle schools to ensure consistent and quality instruction is provided to all students.

► **Provide literacy coaches and academic support for elementary literacy**

On-site literacy coaches will support literacy instruction and both teacher and student development in the classroom.

► **Expand Internationale Baccalaureate Programme at Albany High School**

Students will have access to more rigorous academic opportunities and an expansion in enrollment will be addressed.

► **Expand middle school guidance counselor staff**

Additional staff will provide essential guidance services and student supports for all middle school students.

► **Expand Harriet Gibbons High School program**

An expansion of faculty and course offerings will address anticipated enrollment increase and expand course offerings while supporting the academic success of incoming 9th grade students in a small learning environment.

► **Middle school-high school planning and program development**

The initial planning resources will be available to develop research-based school programs that enhance student opportunity and increase achievement.

► **Afterschool programs**

Afterschool programs for students at five elementary schools will continue despite the loss of a current federal grant.

**Budget Goal 3: Successfully integrate students with disabilities into the all academic areas, and improve student achievement**

### Improvement Initiatives:

► **Increase special education supports**

Additional services for students in special education classrooms at Philip Schuyler Achievement Academy, Stephen and Harriet Myers Middle School and Pine Hills Elementary School will be provided.

**Budget Goal 4: Safe schools and student health will remain a priority**

### Improvement Initiatives:

► **Additional security equipment and training**  
Detectors, wands, security and training will be augmented to increase the district's



*Hackett Middle School student Shanice Taylor works with Guidance Counselor Ellen Green. The proposed budget calls for expanding guidance services for middle school students.*

capacity to maintain safe schools.

► **Increase security personnel**

Additional faculty assistants (hall monitors) will be provided at Abrookyn Vocational Technical Center, North Albany Academy, William S. Hackett Middle School and Albany High School to supplement existing security personnel and provide a safe environment.

**Budget Goal 5: Continue to rebuild Albany Public Schools, including meeting facility plan targets**

► **Continue and complete reconstruction of Hackett Middle School; continue reconstruction of School 19; design, approval and bid of renovations of Arbor Hill, Giffen and TOAST**

The facilities project – fully modernizing the district's PreK through 8th grade school buildings – will continue.

**Budget Goal 6: Continue to seek additional state aid and reduce the impact of charter schools on the City School District of Albany**

► While this goal has no direct budget impact, district officials will continue to impress upon state leaders their belief that financial and legislative relief from the impact of charter schools is necessary.



## Every day, the budget is at work

*Continued from Page 1*

Philip Schuyler Achievement Academy, Sheridan Preparatory Academy and North Albany Academy – that were subject to potential elimination with the loss of the grant. In fact, nearly all of the district's schools offer opportunities for students to stay until 5 p.m. or later for activities ranging from extra academic instruction to recreation to arts and cultural programs.

### Writing Workshop

Already in practice at seven district elementary schools and all but one middle school program, the proposed budget calls for an expansion of this program to all elementary and middle schools. This program combines elements of professional development and student instruction by bringing staff developers from Teacher's College at Columbia University Columbia together



*Full-day Kindergarten at all elementary schools, including Eagle Point shown above, is included in the proposed spending plan.*

with Albany teachers and students to develop students' foundational skills of reading and writing through writing workshops and exploring different forms of literature and writing exercises. Students are expected to publish their work monthly, and write about things that really matter in their lives.

## Amid financial challenges, the proposed budget remains focused on students

The proposed budget does not eliminate any current academic programs in a year when the district faced elevated costs in many areas. An increase in state aid was countered by significant increases in areas such as charter school costs, benefits, and debt service.

The district received a state aid increase of \$9.6 million. However, more than half of that increase was consumed by a \$5.59 million increase in charter school costs. Debt service payments increased \$3.44 million, and benefits accounted for a \$1.52 million increase. In all, non-negotiable increases are projected to be more than \$14 million.

In light of the district's financial situation, the Board of Education made some reductions from the current budget, trimmed the first

draft of the 2007-08 budget, and arrived at a 6.89 percent tax levy increase in a proposed budget that does not eliminate any current academic offerings.

"Further reductions would likely have taken away from the improvements we are making to the academic program," Board of Education President Teneka Frost said. "The Board realizes there is financial pressure on the district and its taxpayers. At the same time, we believe it is important to give our community an opportunity to decide on a budget that is responsible to our students' needs and the needs of this community. We believe this budget, with its level of investment in programs for all students, maintains our commitment to moving forward in addressing the academic challenges we face."

## National Urban Alliance Partnership gaining momentum

When the district embarked on its partnership with The National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUA), its founder said it was a historic opportunity to transform a long-challenged school district into an example for other urban school systems. Indeed, Albany educators have embraced the opportunity.

By the end of the current year, about 200 Albany teachers will have participated in training sessions in the NUA's approach toward creating culturally competent classrooms and using strategies proven to help reach students from different backgrounds. The NUA encourages teachers to build on students' strengths, create relationships with students, and employ classroom strategies that allow students to build on their base of knowledge. The partnership is one significant district initiative that targets the elimination of the achievement gap.

The proposed budget includes funding for the second year of the NUA partnership, which will include summer training for teachers and administrators, large and small group training sessions throughout the year, in-classroom work with teachers, and continued community outreach. The second year of the partnership is when a customized course of action for each school takes shape. This course of action is based on in-depth instructional assessments of each school that have taken place this year.

Also in year two, the district plans for another 200 teachers to participate in the partnership and for Albany educators to develop the skills to train colleagues in the strategies.



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## About the budget increase

The proposed budget-to-budget increase of \$19.66 million reflects a change in New York State education law about how certain budget items are accounted for, and also includes the increase in mandated charter school costs.

Previously, Magnet Aid and early class size reduction costs were in the budget's Special Aid Fund – not in the general fund, which is the part of the budget that determines the tax levy. State law has been changed to dictate that this Magnet Aid and early class size reduction aid must be included in the general fund.

Therefore, 2.37 million in Magnet Aid and early class size reduction aid are included in the proposed budget – and the proposed increase – that are not part of the current general fund budget.

### Spending Increase

2006-07 Budget.....\$169,873,460  
 2007-08 Budget.....\$189,535,737  
 Increase.....\$19,662,277

#### Minus:

Magnet Aid/Early class size reduction.....\$2,366,530  
 Charter School cost increase.....\$5,588,769

► Adjusted Spending Increase.....\$11,706,978  
 (6.89 percent)

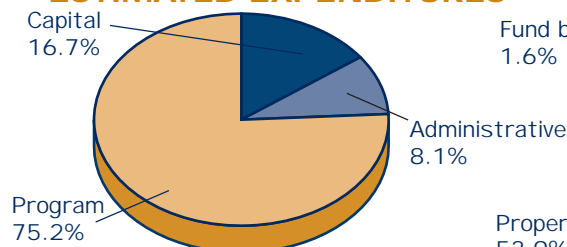
## PROPOSED EXPENDITURES: Where the money is spent

	2006-07 Budget	2007-08 Proposed	\$ Change
<b>Program budget</b>	<b>\$128,022,423</b>	<b>\$142,504,951</b>	<b>\$14,482,528</b>
Instruction	102,739,771	109,118,504	6,378,733
Magnet Aid/Class size reduction	0	2,366,530	2,366,530
Additional Magnet Aid	1,500,000	1,500,000	0
Charter school costs	16,551,776	22,140,545	5,588,769
Pupil transportation	6,323,143	6,435,390	112,247
Athletics	707,733	743,982	36,249
Lunch program assistance	200,000	200,000	0
<b>Capital budget</b>	<b>\$27,394,141</b>	<b>\$31,588,845</b>	<b>\$4,194,704</b>
Debt payments & borrowings	10,469,056	13,905,640	3,436,584
Building rentals	412,394	397,145	-15,249
Operations & maintenance	8,997,052	9,786,060	789,008
Utilities	5,603,639	5,200,000	-403,639
Tax refunds & judgements	1,912,000	2,300,000	388,000
<b>Administrative budget</b>	<b>\$14,456,896</b>	<b>\$15,441,941</b>	<b>\$985,045</b>
School supervision and support	12,819,084	13,707,623	888,539
Property & liability insurance	528,250	568,644	40,394
Printing, mailing & data processing	898,752	951,119	52,367
Legal & other services	210,810	214,555	3,745
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$169,873,460</b>	<b>\$189,535,737</b>	<b>\$19,662,277</b>

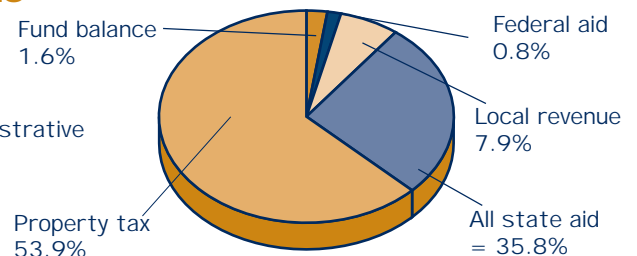
## ESTIMATED REVENUE: Where the money comes from

	2006-07	2007-08	\$ Change
Federal aid	\$1,942,500	\$1,550,000	-\$392,000
Fund balance	1,900,000	3,000,000	1,100,000
Local revenue	13,610,916	14,904,091	1,293,175
State building aid	4,302,527	5,364,641	1,062,114
Other state aid	51,044,065	58,692,973	7,648,908
Magnet Aid/Class size reduction	0	2,366,530	2,366,530
Additional Magnet Aid	1,500,000	1,500,000	0
Property tax	95,573,452	102,157,502	6,584,050
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$169,873,460</b>	<b>\$189,535,737</b>	<b>\$19,662,277</b>

### ESTIMATED EXPENDITURES



### ESTIMATED REVENUE





# CAPITAL education

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## Projected tax rate and tax savings under STAR program

### Estimated tax rates

The projected tax rates shown below are only estimates. The District will finalize tax rates when the city's assessments are finalized in the summer of 2007.

#### Estimated Tax Rates

##### Homestead:

**\$15.51 per \$1,000 of assessed property value**

##### Non-homestead:

**\$24.87 per \$1,000 of assessed property value**

### Reassessment

The City of Albany recently conducted a citywide property reassessment, which, when finalized, will help determine the final tax rates.

Property assessments are only one part of determining tax rates. Tax rates are determined by dividing the total amount that needs to be raised from property owners (the tax levy) by the total amount of taxable property value in the city.

While a property owner's assessment may change by a certain percentage, their taxes are in no way certain to increase by that amount.

It is important to understand the manner in which the school district creates its budget. The district develops a spending plan to support educational goals, and the tax levy is the amount that will not be covered by all other revenue sources. The district did not anticipate increased revenue due to the reassessment.

For example, because of the increase in assessed values, the

estimated tax rates for 2007-08 decreased from 2006-07.

### STAR Savings

New York State's STAR school property tax relief program is projected to continue this year both for qualifying senior citizens and other property owners. For senior citizens with incomes up to \$67,850 who qualify for the Enhanced STAR exemption, the state will pay school taxes on \$56,800 of their full-value assessment. For homeowners who qualify for the Basic STAR exemption, the state will pay \$30,000 of their full-value assessment.

STAR savings are not automatic. Homeowners must apply through the city assessor's office to be eligible for the tax break. Senior citizens who qualify for Enhanced STAR must reapply each year. If you have questions, contact the city assessor at 434-5155.

STAR does not provide the district any additional revenue, nor does it result in a loss of tax dollars. New York State reimburses

Albany dollar-for-dollar for the tax relief it provides district property owners.

The STAR and Enhanced STAR exemption amounts are subject to adjustment due to equalization rates set by the State Office of Real Property Services.

### Tax rebate

According to the New York State Division of Budget Web site, the average Basic STAR savings in upstate New York was \$640 in 2006-07. As a result of the Governor's Middle Class STAR program, the benefit for a family with an income of \$90,000 or less would grow by \$384 in 2007-08, to a total STAR benefit of \$1,024. This additional benefit will be provided in the form of a rebate check. By comparison, for the current year's budget, Albany taxpayers entitled to Basic STAR benefits received a \$192.33 rebate check. For more information, please visit [budget.state.ny.us/localities/star/star.html](http://budget.state.ny.us/localities/star/star.html).

### ESTIMATED TAX BILL

#### A property assessed at \$100,000

	2006-07	2007-08	Estimated Change
Without STAR exemption	\$2,447	\$1,551	-\$670
With Enhanced STAR for senior citizens	\$1,164	\$670	-\$494
With Basic STAR for other homeowners	\$1,769	\$1,086	-\$683

*\*Estimated calculation based on preliminary assessment information and adjusted tax base proportions. Estimated STAR benefits do not include tax rebate checks that have been announced by the New York State Division of Budget.*

### ► New this year: Calculate your tax bill online!

District officials understand that the above comparison on a \$100,000 home, while a requirement of School Budget Notice for districts statewide, may not give residents a clear picture of what the budget means to their tax bills for a year when there has been a property reassessment. To give residents more information about what this budget means for their tax bills, the district is developing a "school property tax calculator" for its Web site, [www.albanyschools.org](http://www.albanyschools.org).

**At [www.albanyschools.org](http://www.albanyschools.org) by May 7**



# CAPITAL education

## What happens if the budget is not approved?

If voters do not approve the proposed budget on May 15, under state law the Board of Education has three options:

- Put the same budget up for a re-vote
- Present a revised budget for voter consideration
- Adopt a contingency budget


If the Board presents a revised budget to voters for consideration and it is defeated, a contingency budget must be adopted. State law mandates that under a contingency budget, the spending increase cannot exceed 3.84 percent above the 2006-07 budget, after adjustments are made for specific expenses not subject to the cap.

Under a contingency budget, state law mandates that the district cannot spend money on the community use of school buildings, student supplies, equipment, and certain raises. The District would likely have to make these reductions and more to reduce the budget the necessary \$1.37 million to a contingency level. Cuts in areas such as staffing could be considered, which could lead to larger class sizes.

The estimated tax levy increase at a contingency level would be 5.45 percent.

## One proposition is on the May 15 ballot

On Tuesday, May 15, voters will be asked to consider the proposed \$189,535,737 school budget. Here is what will appear on the ballot.



Proposition #1

Shall the resolution adopted by the Board of Education on April 16, 2007, authorizing the City School District of Albany to expend the sum in the amount of \$189,535,737 during the 2007-08 school year and a levy tax therefore be approved?

YES 
NO

There will also be a vote for four open seats on the Albany Public Library Board of Trustees. This vote is unrelated to the school district. For more information about the library, please call Tim Burke at 427-4379.

## Charter school costs continue to impact Albany taxpayers

Payments and costs associated with charter schools in Albany continue to affect the city's taxpayers.

The proposed budget includes \$22.14 million for these payments and costs, an increase of \$5.59 million or 33.77 percent over the current year budget. Under New York State Education law, the district must pay a per pupil amount for each student who attends charter schools, as well as provide services such as special education, transportation and health services.

This year marks the first year that the

*Cost savings due to the loss of enrollment to charter schools do not keep pace with actual charter school costs.*

district will receive any state compensation for charter school costs. The state budget adopted in early April includes \$2.5 million in "charter school transitional aid."

Superintendent Eva Joseph said that the \$2.5 million in charter school transition aid does not adequately

compensate for the \$22.14 million in overall charter school costs included in the proposed budget.

The district can achieve some cost efficiencies due to charter schools. However, fixed costs such as operating buildings cannot be eliminated, and staff costs cannot be reduced proportionately with the enrollment changes.

A budget defeat does not impact the amount the district must pay to charter schools next year.



# CAPITAL education

## News and notes from around the District

- Congratulations to the Albany High School Robotics Team, which placed third in the United Technologies Corporation Regional Robotics Competition in Hartford, Conn., in March. The finish was the highest ever for the four-year-old team.
- The City School District of Albany in March joined President George W. Bush and Congress in saluting the Tuskegee Airmen, an elite corps of African-American fighter pilots in World War II. Among the Tuskegee Airmen honored in Washington D.C. was Saratoga Springs resident Clarence Dart, whose daughter is a speech and language therapist at Arbor Hill Community Elementary School.



Members of the Albany High School Big Band, including Arbor Hill Music Teacher Ian Golub, left, perform at the high school in February.

- More than 200 people attended Albany School of Humanities annual Mother-Daughter Dinner Dance in March to honor the influential women in their life.
- The Dual Language Program, now in its permanent home at Delaware Community School, was featured in the February issue of *Latino NY Magazine*. For more information, visit [latinonymagazine.com](http://latinonymagazine.com).
- Thirty-two Arbor Hill Elementary Community School students spent their spring recess in the nation's capital. The students visited several sights in the Washington D.C. area, including the White House, the Smithsonian Institute, and historically black colleges.
- The Albany High School Jazz Ensemble opened a concert for jazz guitarist Roni Ben-Hur at WAMC's Linda Norris Auditorium in late March. The Jazz and Wind ensembles also participated in musical workshops with Roni Ben-Hur while he was in town.
- Spring musical concerts at nearly all district schools with choral and instrumental groups will be held in May and June. Please check your school calendar or [www.albanyschools.org](http://www.albanyschools.org) for a complete schedule of events.

## Come Join Us

### PreK and Kindergarten registration are coming soon!

The City School District of Albany has excellent Prekindergarten and Kindergarten programs to ensure children build the skills, confidence and relationships they need to begin a lifetime of learning.

► Kindergarten registration  
May 1, 2007

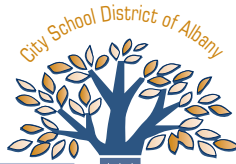
► Prekindergarten registration  
June 4, 2007

**All students must be registered at the District's Office of Central Registration in Lincoln Park. For more information, call the office at 462-7207**



## Special education requests for non-public school students

The City School District of Albany will offer special education services, as required, to students with disabilities enrolled by their parents in non-public schools. If you plan to enroll your child in a non-public school next year and may be requesting services, we must receive your request in writing no later than June 1, 2007. Send requests to: Mrs. Debby Sharpe-Defries, Director of Special Education, Sunshine Building, Lincoln Park, Albany, NY 12202.



# CAPITAL education

April 2007

## Voting will be held on May 15 from 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.

### Polling locations

Polling locations have not changed since the February 2007 referendum. If you do not know your ward or election district, contact the county Board of Elections at 487-5060 or the district clerk at 475-6010.

<b>1st Ward</b> Former Montessori School Building, 75 Park Ave. & Eagle St.	<b>9th Ward</b> School 19, 369 New Scotland Ave.
<b>2nd Ward</b> Giffen Memorial Elementary School, 274 South Pearl St.	<b>10th Ward</b> Albany High School, 700 Washington Ave.
<b>3rd Ward</b> Sheridan Preparatory Academy 400 Sheridan Ave.	<b>11th Ward</b> First Lutheran Church, 646 State St.
<b>4th Ward Election Districts 1-5 &amp; 12</b> North Albany Academy (former School 20) 570 No. Pearl St.	<b>12th Ward Election Districts 1, 3, 5 &amp; 11</b> Harriet Gibbons High School, 75 Watervliet Ave.
<b>4th Ward Election Districts 6-11</b> Arbor Hill Elementary School, Arbor Dr.	<b>12th Ward Election Districts 2, 4 &amp; 9</b> North Albany Academy (former School 20), 570 No. Pearl St.
<b>5th Ward</b> Philip Livingston Magnet Academy, 315 Northern Blvd.	<b>12th Ward Election Districts 6-8 &amp; 10</b> Montessori Magnet School (former School 26), 65 Tremont St.
<b>6th Ward</b> Thomas O'Brien Academy of Science & Technology Lincoln Park	<b>13th Ward</b> Pine Hills Elementary School (former School 16), 41 N. Allen St.
<b>7th Ward</b> Delaware Community School (former School 18) 43 Bertha St.	<b>14th Ward</b> Eagle Point Elementary School, 1044 Western & Russell Road
<b>8th Ward Election Districts 1-3, 9, 11 &amp; 12</b> Albany School of Humanities, 108 Whitehall Rd.	<b>15th Ward Election Districts 1-3, 5, 8 &amp; 9</b> Eagle Point Elementary School, 1044 Western & Russell Road
<b>8th Ward Election Districts 4-8 &amp; 10</b> St. Catherine of Siena School, 35 Hurst Ave.	<b>15th Ward Election Districts 4, 6 &amp; 7</b> Teresian House, Washington Ave. Ext.

### Voting requirements

To vote on the school district referendum, you must be:

- Registered to vote with either the county Board of Elections or the Albany City School District;
- At least 18 years old; and
- A citizen of the United States and a resident of the City of Albany for at least 30 days prior to the vote.

You must also provide identification at the time of registration and voting. For more information, please contact the District Clerk at 475-6010.

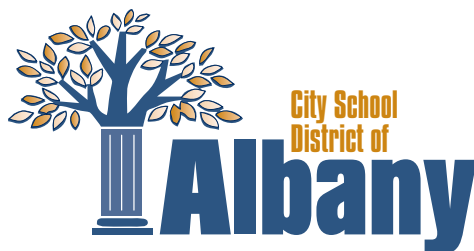
### Absentee ballots

The district will automatically send absentee ballots to individuals designated by the county Board of Elections as having a permanent disability. Others who require an absentee ballot because of illness, hospitalization, vacation, studies, business, or incarceration should contact the district at 475-6010. Unless you are permanently disabled, you must reapply for an absentee ballot prior to each vote.

### Board of Education

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