

NUA Partnership Fuels Progress in Albany, NY, Schools



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Before the Albany Public School District adopted the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education's program in 2006, a staggering 81 percent of the eighth-graders at Philip Livingston Magnet Academy failed English. An occasional handgun, a few student assaults on teachers and sidewalk brawls were a challenge for the school, which prompted random searches, two youth safety committees and landed unruly students in alternative programs.

After just three years of NUA partnerships in each elementary and middle school, the district, for the first time in its history, saw the majority of its students – 61 percent of students in grades 3 through 8 – score at proficient or above proficient on the New York State English Language standardized test. In 2008, just 49 percent of students scored at or above proficiency.

There were gains at all grade levels districtwide in both English and math – including double-digit increases in math for grades 3, 7 and 8, and in ELA (English Language Acquisition) in grades 3 and 5.

“The emphasis of the NUA is one of school turnaround. Essential in that process is the belief system that exists among all stakeholders -- teachers in particular, who through the partnership with the NUA enabled unprecedented achievement gains in our school district.”

*~Dr. Eva Joseph,
former Albany superintendent*

Today, the Albany City School District serves nearly 8,700 students in 15 schools: 11 elementary schools, two middle schools, one prekindergarten-grade 8 school and one comprehensive high school.

The City School District of Albany formed a collaborative partnership with the National Urban Alliance to create, design and implement a systemic, long-range, rigorous instructional leadership and professional development program to close the gap between the achievement of Albany students and their innate potential for much higher performance, resulting in the elimination of the achievement gaps that are manifested among economic groups.

NUA's goal is to build the instructional capacity of teachers to build meaningful relationships with their students and equip students with the skills and cognitive processes that strengthen their competence and confidence necessary to perform at the highest levels. In addition, the goal is to build capacity within the district to sustain the processes and practices. All schools Pre K – 12 participated in the initiative.

To achieve this success, Albany City School District changed the ways teachers and students learn, using a strategy designed by the National Urban Alliance, an organization that works with urban school districts across the country implementing teaching strategies, administrative and organizational arrangements that accelerate learning and improve achievement levels.

“What we're doing is working to change the beliefs of teachers about students' ability to achieve,” said Eric Cooper, the President and Founder of National Urban Alliance, former program officer with The College Board, Columbia University professor and one-time teacher and counselor.

“Children can reach high levels of learning and thinking. It takes dedication and a knowledge of how to reach students who depend on the school for learning,” he added. “Maintaining high expectations when guided by highly skilled educators determines outcomes.”

Transforming Schools | Transforming Lives