



THE STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT / THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK / ALBANY, NY 12234

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ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER  
OFFICE OF SCHOOL INNOVATION  
ROOM 475 EBA  
Tel. 518/474-4817  
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August 28, 2012

Raymond Colucciello, Superintendent  
City School District of Albany  
1 Academy Park  
Albany, NY 12207

RE: Notice of Award: Systemic Supports for District and School Turnaround Grant  
Award Amount: \$1,039,510  
Time Period: September 1, 2012 to August 31, 2014

Dear Superintendent Colucciello:

The New York State Education Department, School Turnaround Office (NYSED STO) is pleased to inform you that the City School District of Albany has been approved for the above referenced grant. As stated in the initial grant application, this award is contingent upon the submission and approval of the final Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the LEA and the partners no later than November 30, 2012.

The NYSED STO will serve as your lead program office for project oversight, assistance, monitoring, and reporting. Within the next several weeks you will be contacted by a representative from NYSED STO to set up an initial welcome and introduction telephone call.

We look forward to working with you and your leadership team on this innovative opportunity to improve student achievement in underperforming schools.

Sincerely,

Sally Bachofer

c: Owen Donovan

## I. Executive Summary

The City School District of Albany (CSDA) is comprised of 11 elementary schools, 1 Pre K-8 school, 2 middle schools, and 1 magnet high school with multiple alternative programs available. The current district enrollment is approximately 8,450 students.

The district has a student population where more than 70% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunch. The New York State Department of Education (NYSED) has designated the City School District of Albany as an urban school district with high student needs in relation to district resource capacity. Despite efforts on the part of district staff and collaborative agencies, students continue to perform below proficiency targets set by NYSED with two schools identified as Persistently Lowest Achieving (PLA), five other schools designated as Schools in Need of Improvement, two schools in Corrective Action and the district designated as a District in Need of Improvement for the 2011-12 academic year. As a result of the new accountability structure for the 2012-2013 school year, the following preliminary designations have been issued by NYSED:

- Focus District
- 3 Priority Schools (the high school, one middle school and one elementary school)
- 11 Focus Schools (one middle school, one Pre K-8 school, nine elementary schools)
- 1 School In Good Standing

The district and its identified schools have undergone the mandated Joint Intervention Team Reviews and School Quality Review Process. As a result of these reviews and subsequent recommendations, the district and each school has an articulated improvement plan that was operationalized during the 2011-2012 school year. With funding from the Race to the Top Grant, School Improvement Grants 1003 (g) and 1003 (a), Title funding and various other state and competitive grants, the district and its schools have worked to operationalize these plans amidst the ongoing mandates under the Race to the Top Regents Reform Agenda Initiatives. The district and each school have seen minimal increases in student achievement even with the implementation of their plans.

With the new preliminary accountability designations and minimal increases in student achievement, the district examined their local data sets, current initiatives, and requirements for development of new plans to address the new designations and determined the need for an updated comprehensive Strategic Plan. Through the development of a comprehensive Strategic Plan, the multiple NYSED mandates and required plans as well as the various funding sources that support the district's school turnaround efforts will be aligned into one integrated approach designed to close the achievement gap for all student subgroups not achieving adequate yearly progress and prepare every student for college and/or career readiness. Central to the Strategic Plan will be a Pre K- 12 systems model for implementing the Common Core Learning Standards and Data Driven Instruction/Inquiry.

The district has selected Capital Area School Development Association (CASDA) as the Lead Partner to facilitate the development of the Strategic Plan. CASDA will provide the support, facilitation, professional development and coaching necessary to build the capacity and inform

the redesign of the district central office to include an **Office of School Redesign** to support the implementation performance based school improvement plans at all low performing schools.

The district is well positioned to build upon current strengths for implementing the Common Core State Standards and a cycle of Data-Driven Inquiry. Through the Race to the Top (RTTT) funding, the district fully participated in the BOCES Network Team training for meeting the four RTTT assurances. Capital Region BOCES School Support Services and RTTT Network Team consultants have provided targeted technical assistance to all schools around the Common Core State Standards and Data-Driven Inquiry. District and school level leadership as well as teachers have been trained in the *Leadership and Learning Center's 90-90-90 School Improvement Model* for Rigorous Curriculum Development and Common Formative Assessments. CASDA, along with the BOCES Network Team and additional coaches and consultants, have facilitated and provided technical assistance with a curriculum development plan for aligning to the Common Core. Beginning in the fall of 2012, the PK-12 ELA and Math curricula will be aligned with the Common Core State Standards and assessments developed/adopted. Each building has a building level data team and has received training from the BOCES Network Team. State and local assessments have been selected for use with the Annual Professional Performance Review Plan (APPR). The district employs instructional supervisors in ELA and Math as well as data coaches who work with teacher teams to analyze data for the purpose of informing and improving instruction.