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## School District celebrates start of school with passion and high expectation

Superintendent Eva Joseph, joined by leaders from the school district and the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education, celebrated the beginning of the 2006-07 school year on Tuesday by encouraging district faculty and staff to stay hopeful and courageous as they make a difference in the lives of students.

"Our students can and will meet the high expectations we have for them," Dr. Joseph said at the faculty and staff convocation on Tuesday, a day before students return to classes. "Learning is the order of the day."

The district has engaged the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education (NUEA), a nationally known education nonprofit, to help it reach its goal of closing the achievement gap and ensuring success for all students. The 2006-07 school year marks the first full year that the district and the NUEA will work together on professional development strategies that the NUEA has successfully implemented in urban districts across the country.

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— Superintendent Eva Joseph

Dr. Eric Cooper, the NUEA's president and founder, gave the keynote address at the annual Superintendent's Conference Day event on Tuesday, and said he was asked by several districts to speak at their convocation, but chose Albany because it is "the most important city in the most important state" of the country.

He challenged teachers to build upon students' real world knowledge to help them learn, give them the hope they need to realize their dreams, and never to set low expectations. He reiterated his deep belief in the capacity of all children to learn and excel.

"As individuals working on a team, we can succeed in ways that you have no idea," Dr. Cooper said.

Dr. Joseph said the district begins the year with much enthusiasm after a summer of planning for success. She said district staff should focus on three major areas this year: strong leadership, quality teaching and being accountable for results.

Dr. Joseph introduced several staff members recently appointed to key leadership positions, and cited numerous exciting initiatives underway in the district. These include the NUEA partnership, a restructured program for 9<sup>th</sup> grade students at Harriet Gibbons High School, and a recently completed, first-ever 3-day orientation program for new teachers.

Also this year, the Superintendent has asked every school to craft a Respect Campaign in its building.

"Our schools must be safe and orderly," she said. "Working collaboratively, we're going to firmly establish our schools as respectful, orderly institutions of learning for all who walk through the doors."

Both Dr. Joseph and Board of Education President Edward H. Brown Jr. said they were excited about the promise held by the start of the year, as well as the NUEA partnership. Brown said his goal is for the district to close the achievement gap by the end of the decade.

"Let's declare today to be the official lift-off toward that trajectory," Mr. Brown said.

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