AAPA LIGHTHOUSE AWARDS
Illuminating Excellence in the Port Industry



Submitted by: Port of Albany – Rensselaer, NY – June 8, 2026

2026 AAPA Lighthouse Award Nomination for Public Relations/Communications

Excellence in Community/Educational Outreach - Small Port

PORT OF ALBANY

Executive Summary

The Port of Albany – Rensselaer, NY proudly nominates its partnership and sponsorship of the Hudson River Trading Game & Navigating the Seas program for the AAPA Lighthouse Award for Excellence in Community/Educational Outreach - Small Port.



Developed in partnership with Historic Cherry Hill, this experiential learning initiative brings the mechanics of global trade directly into regional classrooms. Through the Port of Albany's sponsorship, the program can welcome every 5th grader in the City of Albany School District.

Historic Cherry Hill is an historic house museum located immediately adjacent to the Port district and has a mission to invite diverse audiences to explore American history through the unique lens of one Albany household and, through intimate encounter with the past, including Revolutionary War military papers on display and encourages individuals toward new perspectives on their own stories and place in history. This historical site was built in 1787 for General Philip Van Rensselaer a prominent figure in the Revolutionary War and his wife Maria and reflects the nation in its early days. Their vision is to serve as a vibrant community anchor, a recognized research center and a focal point of heritage tourism. Their Hudson River Trading Game brings school age awareness to maritime industry, past and present and does so in a fun and interactive way.

When rising transportation costs and school staffing shortages threatened to eliminate traditional field trips, the Port responded by funding an innovative, fully portable floor board game. Students physically step onto the board, roleplaying as merchants navigating changing currents, weather patterns, supply logistics, and market variables.



Operating on a modest annual allocation, this scalable initiative demystifies deepwater commerce, illustrates local economic dependencies, and highlights workforce development pathways. The curriculum prioritizes equity by integrating diverse historical contexts, detailing the contributions of women and people of

African descent to early trade. Lauded by regional educators as their highest-rated enrichment activity, this partnership serves as a high-impact, replicable model demonstrating how small-to-medium ports can bypass systemic geographic barriers to foster lasting community connections.

Section 1: Background, Purpose and Goals

The Port of Albany – Rensselaer, NY is an active industrial deepwater port seeking to foster lasting connections with its surrounding community, including school age community members. Located immediately adjacent to the Albany Port district is Historic Cherry Hill, a historic house museum built in 1787 for General Philip Van Rensselaer, a prominent Revolutionary War figure and his wife Maria. The long continuous occupation of the home makes it one of Albany's most recognizable landmarks and a rare, intact example of a colonial-era Albany household. Historic Cherry Hill's mission is to invite diverse audiences to explore American history through the lens of a single Albany household, serving as a vibrant community anchor and a focal point of heritage tourism. In collaboration with the Albany Visitors Center (Discover Albany), these entities joined forces to create the Hudson River Trading Game & Navigating the Seas program. The overall purpose of this initiative is to provide hands-on, maritime-focused macroeconomic education to school-age children and in a fun game setting to invite more interest. The primary goal is to foster school-age awareness of the maritime industry's past, present, and future career pathways in an interactive environment. The specific goals are to demystify deepwater commerce, illustrate local economic dependencies, and highlight workforce development pathways by linking students to a better understanding of cargo movement and waterway navigation as well as highlight the nearby Hudson River.



Section 2: Implementation & Resources

The program was designed as an adaptable solution to counter unprecedented staffing constraints and skyrocketing student transportation costs that made traditional off-site field trips nearly impossible for regional public schools. Implementation occurs through

two primary methods: interactive school programs held at the Albany Visitors Center and a fully mobile version delivered directly into local classrooms.

At the Visitors Center, children experience 18th-century trade on a custom-fabricated 34-foot floor board game and learn celestial navigation inside a planetarium. For classroom delivery, the program utilizes a portable version of the floor board game where students physically step onto the board to roleplay as merchants navigating shifting logistics variables. The students can actively step into the mind set of historic and modern day Maritimers with the game, thinking through trading and other matters related to the industry. It is a unique way to introduce students to the thought of supply chain, workforce, shipping and future employment and career considerations they may not have had access to in traditional classrooms.



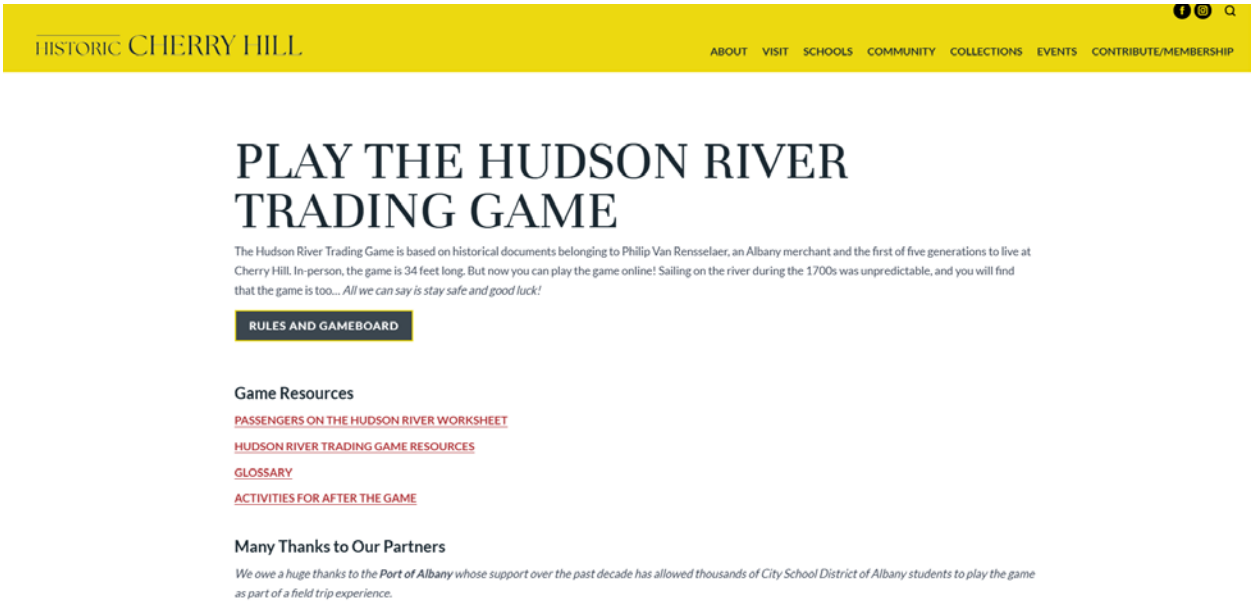
This initiative operates efficiently on a modest annual allocation provided through the Port of Albany's sponsorship funding. Over the years the Port has sponsored the initiative so that every 5th grader in the Albany City School District could be sure to experience the game and interactive lessons. In recent years, the sponsorships focus has been to enable the mobile interactive sessions. These financial resources cover mobile assistance and/or field trip support to eliminate transport fees for schools and fund vital, long-term technical maintenance to ensure the integrity of the physical game boards and interactive ship props.

Section 3: Innovation & Relevance

The innovation centers on a couple aspects of the program. The fact that it is a game makes the lessons more accessible and entertaining for students while learning and thinking about the industry that they would not normally have exposure to in a classroom setting. The large, custom-fabricated portable floor board game successfully transforms standard classrooms into live logistics simulations giving the participants a fun and thoughtful way to interact with maritime and trade. Students actively step onto the board as historic and

modern traders to manage cargo, balance economic realities, and navigate real-world constraints. This interactive approach introduces macroeconomics and marine logistics concepts in a highly engaging, non-traditional format that bypasses institutional travel barriers. The curriculum is highly relevant to current industry needs as it introduces early career considerations and connects historical trading routes directly to modern deepwater seaport management.

Historic Cherry Hill Hosts more information about the game, including resources to support the educational approach and if students want to go online to play with their family outside of the school setting. The website with resources can be found here [Play the Hudson River Trading Game – Historic Cherry Hill]



The game and lessons make students think about how their location is connected to the broader world, through the connections of Ports including the Port of New York and the Port of Albany. The lessons include thinking about geography, trade, managing time and movement, commerce, employment and so much more.

Lighthouse Awards - Excellence in Community/Educational Outreach



Play the Hudson River Trading Game at Home!

For 1 or more players, Ages 8+

Materials you will need:

One die (or game spinner)

Pencil & paper to keep track of "delays"

Optional: Passengers on the Hudson River questions

Note: You can play this game by keeping track on the scrap paper, or you can print out the *Hudson River Game Board* and use pawns from another game or something else to keep your place. You can also use a tablet like a gameboard.

RULES OF THE GAME:

Step 1: Choose a Passenger from the "Passenger Profiles." If you are playing with other people, don't tell anyone who you are— they will guess later in the game.

Step 2: The youngest player goes first. All players start in the *Port of Albany* space.

Step 3: Roll the die. Count or move the pawn or marker the correct number of spaces "down the river." Keep track of each players' "delays" on the scrap paper, then pass the die to the next player.

Step 4: You do not need an exact roll to reach the *New York City* space. Before passing the die to the next player, all passengers must act out their passenger's experience. (See *Act Out Your Passenger Experience* on the gameboard for rules on this). The turn ends with the passenger in the *Upriver to Albany* space.

Step 5: Continue to take turns rolling the die and moving up river to Albany, "checking delays" (mark a checkmark for each delay) on the log.

Step 6: Once all passengers have reached the Albany Market space, add up the total number of delays for each player. **How long did it take you to travel down and back up the Hudson River?** The passenger with the least amount of delays wins! If you are 1 player, play again to see if you can beat your score.

REMEMBER: This is a game of LUCK!

Optional: Answer the questions on the *Passengers on the Hudson River* sheet (take turns if you are more than 1 player).

PASSENGER PROFILES:

Upper class *passengers traveled for free & slept by themselves in a large stateroom.*

John Maude: An Englishman who explored the country. He was on his way to Niagara Falls.

Mrs. Philip Van Rensselaer: Maria (pronounced Mariah), a lady, mother, and wife of sloop owner, Philip Van Rensselaer of Cherry Hill.

Mr. Robert Sanders Van Rensselaer: A gentleman and son of the sloop owner, Philip Van Rensselaer of Cherry Hill.

Middle Class *passengers slept in a cabin crowded with as little as 4 or up to 23 other people.*

Mrs. Bartlett: A new bride, she was traveling to NY with her husband on their honeymoon.

Mr. Isaac Weld: A traveler from Ireland who wrote about his adventures.

Mrs. LeRoy: The wife of a New York merchant, she was traveling home to her husband & 2 children.

Sloop Captain: He was in charge of the sloop crew, passengers and cargo. The captain knew the Hudson River like the back of his hand, but like all sailors, he used stars and other tools to navigate. Other middle class passengers slept in a crowded cabin, but he had his own cabin which he sometimes gave to or shared with upper class passengers when the sloop was full.

Working class & enslaved passengers *slept out on the open deck.*

Andrew: An enslaved person and a cooper who made wooden barrels. He was owned by Philip Van Rensselaer at Cherry Hill. Mr Van Rensselaer sent Andrew to NY to work for another man who "rented" his services.

Peg: An Irish-American servant who worked for a Mrs. Dekker of Kinderhook. She was sent to New York City to cook and care for children of Mrs. Dekker's sister.

Sloophand: A Sailor who usually worked with 3 to 5 other men. In Albany, sloophands could have been free or enslaved, and were most often Dutch-American, African-American or African-born.

About the Passengers in this Game

The Hudson River Trading Game is based on the experiences of real people who lived in or traveled through Albany during the late 1700s. The things that happen in the game actually happened to those people!

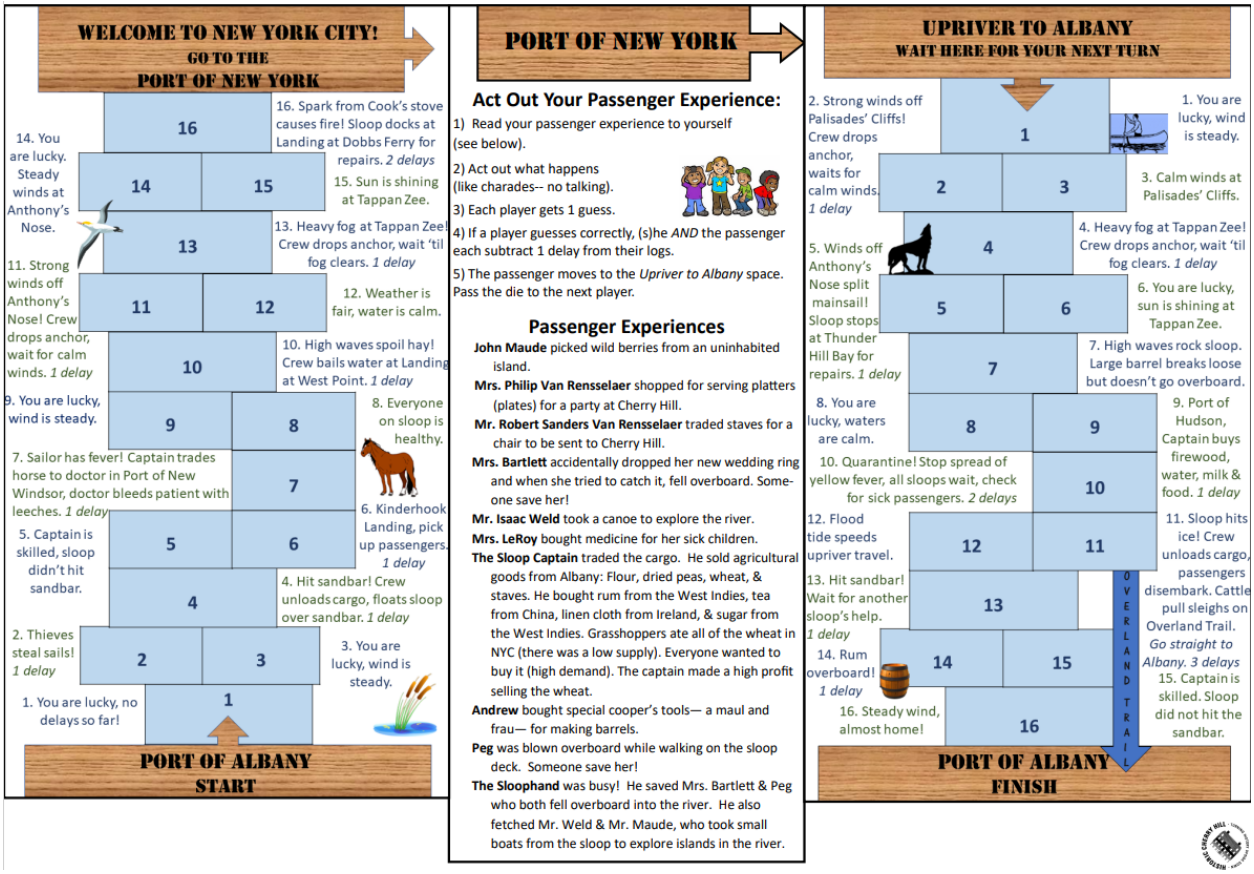
How do we know?

Historians at Cherry Hill investigated primary sources— like diaries and captain's logs— to find out why people traveled, what it was like, and what kinds of cargo was traded and brought back to Albany. Some information comes from Philip Van Rensselaer's papers, saved at Cherry Hill for more than 200 years!

Why are there "upper," "middle," "working class & enslaved" passengers in the game?

The 1700s was a time of slavery and servitude in New York State. The slave trade from Africa was not abolished until 1808, and slavery in N.Y. was slowly phased out, finally ending on July 4, 1827. At the time that Cherry Hill was built (1787), there were about 1,500 enslaved people in Albany County. Indentured servitude was also very common. During the 1600 and 1700s, more than 50% of the immigrants who came to Colonial America were indentured servants— they had to pay their way from Europe by working for years. After the American Revolution, most indentured servants were American born orphaned children. We know that passengers and crew in different social classes were treated differently, because people like John Maude wrote about it in their diaries: "...the same sum [as mine] six dollars and fifty cents was charged for my servant, though neither his bed nor board were so good as mine."

For more information, open the ***Hudson River Trading Game Resources*** pdf on our website: www.historiccherryhill.org.



Section 4: Results, Evidence & Impact

The initiative delivers clear quantitative and qualitative results, reaching up to 25 local classrooms in targeted, underserved sectors annually and engaging hundreds of students per school term. As well as outreach to broader groups through their "Community Day". In recognition of its excellence and innovation, the program won an Award of Merit from the Museum Association of New York.



Through simulated gameplay, students demonstrate a measurable grasp of supply chain management, marine navigation, and regional economic interdependence. Regional educators consistently rate this partnership as their highest-ranked enrichment activity, describing it as "absolutely the best interactive, hands-on, experiential learning around!". To expand its social impact, the program includes a dedicated public outreach component featuring an annual, sponsored "Community Day" that provides free admission to bring maritime heritage to hundreds of local families.

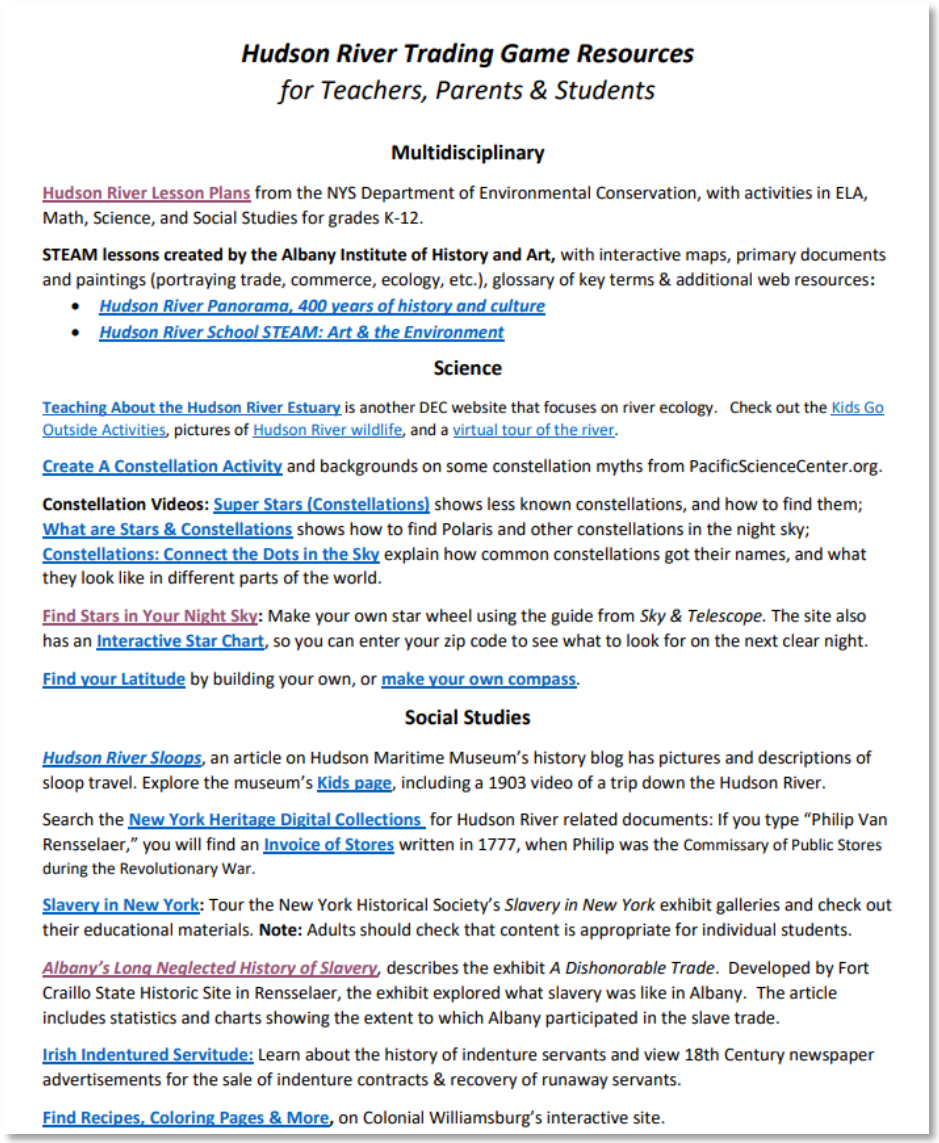
"We are extremely grateful to the Port for providing field trip support that makes it possible for all fifth graders in the City School District of Albany to have this exceptional learning experience!"

Historic Cherry Hill Education Director

Section 5: Integration, Adaptability & Scalability

The program demonstrates strategic integration by seamlessly bridging elementary classroom learning with real-world port infrastructure and operations. It exhibits exceptional adaptability by transforming changing regional school conditions—such as transportation funding shortages—into an opportunity to deliver mobile, elite enrichment directly to students and families – including those who are in the surrounding communities of the Albany Port District neighborhoods. Because the initiative functions effectively on a modest annual allocation, it stands as a highly scalable model for the maritime industry. It demonstrates how small-to-medium ports can successfully bypass systemic geographic and institutional barriers to foster lasting community connections without requiring

massive capital investments but still enjoying lasting, meaningful positive impact. The program outlines resources associated with the game for teachers, parents and students that really extend the thoughtfulness of the lessons and industry. Some of that is clipped here for awareness.



Hudson River Trading Game Resources

for Teachers, Parents & Students

Multidisciplinary

Hudson River Lesson Plans from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, with activities in ELA, Math, Science, and Social Studies for grades K-12.

STEAM lessons created by the Albany Institute of History and Art, with interactive maps, primary documents and paintings (portraying trade, commerce, ecology, etc.), glossary of key terms & additional web resources:

- ***Hudson River Panorama, 400 years of history and culture***
- ***Hudson River School STEAM: Art & the Environment***

Science

Teaching About the Hudson River Estuary is another DEC website that focuses on river ecology. Check out the Kids Go Outside Activities, pictures of Hudson River wildlife, and a virtual tour of the river.

Create A Constellation Activity and backgrounds on some constellation myths from PacificScienceCenter.org.

Constellation Videos: Super Stars (Constellations) shows less known constellations, and how to find them; What are Stars & Constellations shows how to find Polaris and other constellations in the night sky; Constellations: Connect the Dots in the Sky explain how common constellations got their names, and what they look like in different parts of the world.

Find Stars in Your Night Sky: Make your own star wheel using the guide from *Sky & Telescope*. The site also has an Interactive Star Chart, so you can enter your zip code to see what to look for on the next clear night.

Find your Latitude by building your own, or make your own compass.

Social Studies

Hudson River Sloops, an article on Hudson Maritime Museum's history blog has pictures and descriptions of sloop travel. Explore the museum's Kids page, including a 1903 video of a trip down the Hudson River.

Search the New York Heritage Digital Collections for Hudson River related documents: If you type "Philip Van Rensselaer," you will find an Invoice of Stores written in 1777, when Philip was the Commissary of Public Stores during the Revolutionary War.

Slavery in New York: Tour the New York Historical Society's *Slavery in New York* exhibit galleries and check out their educational materials. **Note:** Adults should check that content is appropriate for individual students.

Albany's Long Neglected History of Slavery, describes the exhibit *A Dishonorable Trade*. Developed by Fort Crailo State Historic Site in Rensselaer, the exhibit explored what slavery was like in Albany. The article includes statistics and charts showing the extent to which Albany participated in the slave trade.

Irish Indentured Servitude: Learn about the history of indenture servants and view 18th Century newspaper advertisements for the sale of indenture contracts & recovery of runaway servants.

Find Recipes, Coloring Pages & More, on Colonial Williamsburg's interactive site.

Section 6: Stakeholder Engagement & Collaboration

This program represents a highly effective collaborative community investment combining an industrial port, an educational non-profit, a regional visitors center, and surrounding public schools. The Port of Albany partners directly with Historic Cherry Hill and Discover Albany to coordinate logistics and curriculum delivery. Through the Port's targeted sponsorship, the initiative actively engages the City of Albany School District, specifically prioritizing under-resourced neighborhoods that have close geographic proximity to the Port district. This sponsorship funding ensures equity across the district by enabling every single fifth-grade student to participate in the program, while the program is targeted for 4-7th graders more broadly. Engagement is further extended to internal and external community stakeholders during the annual free-admission "Community Day" event where students can show off to their family members and others can participate and experience the program as well.



Section 7: Conclusion

The Hudson River Trading Game & Navigating the Seas program exemplifies the spirit of the AAPA Lighthouse Awards and Excellence in Community/Educational Outreach. Regional teachers consistently rank it as their highest-rated enrichment program, stating in evaluations that it is:

"Absolutely the best interactive, hands-on, experiential learning around!"

It provides an excellent template for how an active industrial port can generate high-impact social investments through strategic community partnerships and collaboration that directly benefits school age children in the surrounding communities. Supporting more educational experiences that interact with the maritime industry and the nearby Hudson River is a short and long term benefit to the Port and community. By cultivating an early, inclusive interest in marine logistics, navigation, and regional economics among school-age children, the Port of Albany is investing directly in the development of its future workforce and adjacent community awareness. Ultimately, this program ensures that the local community remains deeply and meaningfully anchored to its maritime identity.