

REVIEW



an education and advocacy resource



Stacy Yanko

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I AM NJEA

Montclair EA President Petal Robertson (l) and Piscataway Township EA member and NJEA Organizing Consultant Jennifer Johnson lead a discussion at a Members of Color conversation in Union County.



NJEA Urban Education Committee member Lizandaa Alburg at registration for the NJEA Equity Alliance Weekend on Jan. 10.



NJEA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee members Amy Moran (r) and Kenneth Bassett deliver Friday evening's invocation at the NJEA Equity Alliance Weekend on Jan. 10.

NJREA's officers and the NJREA Executive Committee came donned in #RedForEd at a Wednesday meeting in December.



Check the events calendar for upcoming events and conferences you can attend.

+ PHOTO GALLERY ONLINE
[flickr.com/NJEA/sets](https://www.flickr.com/photos/NJEA/sets)

FEATURES



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20 | ESP OF THE YEAR

Stacy Yanko leaves a metaphorical—and sometimes literal—trail of glitter wherever she goes. She is a warm presence whose smile is matched by her enthusiasm for the task at hand, no matter what that task may be. Meet 2020 NJEA ESP of the Year Stacy Yanko.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



30

30 | FREA BRINGS DOWN THE HEAT

When temperatures regularly soared above 90 degrees in district classrooms and a mold outbreak plagued the schools, FREA, the Hunterdon County Education Association, the Flemington-Raritan Board of Education and the superintendent joined forces to pass referenda that would permanently control the climate issues in the buildings.

BY BRIAN ROCK



24

24 | PLAYING IT FORWARD

Gently used plastic toys get a second life and avoid the landfill when Second Chance Toys partners with schools around the state. Students lead toy drives before the holiday season and prior to Earth Month, collecting these toys to be redistributed to families that have a tough time affording great toys for their children.

BY BRONNA LIPTON, MICHELA PICCOLINE, KRISTEN LINDSTROM, JAMIE DRUCKER, SARAH SAMUELS AND KATHERINE SANTOS



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34 | A CRY FOR HELP: SUPPORTING SPECIAL EDUCATORS

Despite her status as the 2010-11 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year, Danielle Kovach finds that the stress of being a special education teacher gets to her every single day. She writes about the pressure she puts on herself to meet all the academic and emotional needs of her students. The New Jersey Council for Exceptional Children is a lifeline for Kovach and her fellow special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and others in schools who work to serve students with special needs.

BY DANIELLE KOVACH



38

38 | BACK TO NATURE IN GALLOWAY

With popular nature programs focusing on other parts of the world, students often know more about giraffes, lions and tigers than they know about the animals in their own backyard. Enter Mr. B's Backyard Classroom in Galloway Township. Named for a beloved teacher, the local nature program, and the Nature Fest associated with it, teach students, educators and the community about the natural world around them.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY

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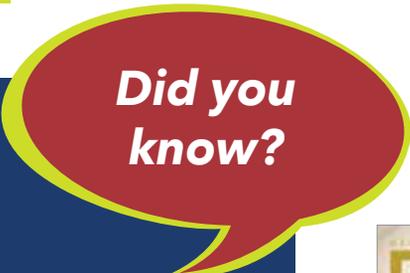
The number
13

Number of school districts receiving Emergency Aid for 2019-20, out of 34 districts requesting such aid.

Source: New Jersey Department of Education



GOOD NEWS!



New Jersey public school students have the highest average AP scores in the nation.

Source: College Board. 2018 AP New Jersey Summary Report.

On the Cover



Hopatcong guidance secretary Stacy Yanko is the 2020 NJEA ESP of the Year. Read more about her, starting on Page 20.

PHOTO BY
KATHRYN COULIBALY

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Annual membership dues are: Active professional: \$950 (full time); \$475 (part time) \$475 (on leave). Active supportive \$475 (full time) \$237.50 (part time) \$237.50 (on leave). Retired: \$86; \$1,065 (retired life). Retired ESP: \$60; \$675 (retired ESP life); Preservice \$32. General professional (outside N.J. public education employment): \$250. Subscribing \$250. Only those in education positions in N.J. public schools and colleges are eligible for active membership. Payment of annual dues entitles a member to receive the *Review* for one year, from January through December. Dues include \$5 for the *NJEA Review*.



CELEBRATING EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

No one who works in public education receives the respect and recognition they deserve, but that is especially true for our educational support professional (ESP) colleagues. They provide essential services, without which our schools would not function, and they go above and beyond their job descriptions every day to ensure that New Jersey's public school children are able to learn in a safe, secure and nurturing environment.

They are essential to our union, as well, and NJEA would not be the strongest public school employee union in the nation without them and their tireless efforts to advocate on behalf of their colleagues, their students and their communities. Yet time and time again, people erroneously refer to NJEA as the "teachers' union" or to the NJEA Convention as the "teachers' convention." We are one union, working toward a common goal that we can only achieve through all of our united efforts.

We as an association have made great strides toward our goals, thanks to the work of people like this month's cover star, Stacy Yanko, a secretary in the guidance office at Hopatcong High School who has served as

the Sussex County Education Association President and the president of her local association. Yanko happily shares the spotlight with her colleagues and urges people to stop using job descriptions as a means of dividing what is—and must remain—a powerhouse team.

Make no mistake about it: NJEA is a powerhouse team. We have achieved many legislative and advocacy goals, and we continue to work toward Job Justice for ESPs and Ch. 78 relief, as well as fighting—and winning—privatization battles.

As always, the work continues, and I, for one, could not be prouder to be part of the NJEA team. Thank you for all that you do to advocate for your students and your colleagues.

Marie Blistan



Gov. Phil Murphy and NJEA's officers visit ESP Committee members and NJEA staff at the ESP booth at the 2019 NJEA Convention.

OFFICERS ONLINE

MARIE BLISTAN

Facebook

@Marie.Blistan: State of the State Address by Governor Murphy was highly energized and packed! Among the many laws signed that make life for New Jersey residents better, he highlighted the #1 public schools in the nation! More importantly, he spotlighted the staff members who provide the services to our students: ALL educators, emphasizing the essential role of our ESPs!

NJEA President Marie Blistan and her fellow officers attended Gov. Phil Murphy's State of the State address on Jan. 14 at the Statehouse in Trenton. During that speech, Murphy said, "Today our public schools are ranked as the very best in the entire country. Let's thank our public school educators and educational support professionals, who do this outstanding work every day." See Page 62 for more.

SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

@SpillerForNJEA: Great start to the NJEA Equity Alliance Weekend!

NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller posted photos from the NJEA Equity Alliance Weekend. The weekend included workshops on issues of equity planned by the five NJEA committees that comprise the Equity Alliance. The weekend concluded with an awards ceremony honoring those who forward the cause of equity and civil rights. See Page 16 for more.

STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: Strong showing by our members over the weekend and continuing into today as we push back against another feeble attempt by Sweeney to repackage his PtP committee. 15,000 members took action this weekend, over 65 showed up to lobby. Tell them to stop messing around and do the right thing. Reject Sweeney's failed politics and pass the bills that provide #chapter78relief & #espjobjustice.

As the 2018-19 legislative session ended on Jan. 13, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty joined his fellow officers and members lobbying for legislation that provides due-process rights and protection from subcontracting for educational support professionals (ESPs) and Ch. 78 relief for all members. They also lobbied against Sen. Steve Sweeney's Path to Progress (PtP) legislation, dubbed "Path to Poverty" by those who know what its impact will be on the middle- and working-class families.

KNOW. LEAD. ACT.

DA APPROVES DEEP INVESTMENT IN MEMBER ORGANIZING CAMPAIGN



Edison Township EA member Dan Cummings addresses the DA, advocating for the divestment of public pension funds from investment in the fossil fuel industry.

The NJEA Delegate Assembly (DA), the association's policy-making body met on Jan. 4 at the Hyatt Regency Princeton. The DA meets five times a year, typically in September, November, January, March and May. The agenda is published in advance of the meeting for all members at njea.org/da. Minutes of the proceedings are also published there. What follows is a summary of the meeting. Detailed minutes are published in the *NJEA Review* when they become available.

With continued attacks from the state Legislature on members' hard-earned pensions and benefits as well as ongoing anti-public education policy at the national level under U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, DA members approved a \$25 million dollar budget transfer into NJEA's strategic organizing and organizational projects accounts. With the infusion of funds, NJEA will be better positioned to launch an extraordinary level of member organizing. The funding will also provide resources for external coalition building with other unions and stakeholder groups and advertising.

Officer reports

NJEA President Marie Blistan began her report speaking about Micah Tennant, a 10-year-old African American child who died from gunshot wounds he suffered while watching a high school football game in Pleasantville in November. She also spoke about the victims of the Dec. 10 shooting in Jersey City at a kosher supermarket and a nearby cemetery that claimed the lives of store owner Mindy Ferencz, employee Douglas Michael Rodriguez, customer Moshe Deutsch, and Jersey City Police Detective Joseph Seals. Blistan asked for a moment of silence in their memory, urging delegates and observers to "think individual and collectively as a body about what we can do to make this world and better place for our children and grandchildren."

In addition to other state and federal issues, Blistan discussed the status of legislation that would enact due-process rights and protection from subcontracting for educational support professionals (ESPs) and Ch. 78 relief for all members as the 2018-19 legislative session was coming to an end on Jan. 13 and a new legislative session beginning on Jan. 14.

NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller updated members on proposed testing regulations under consideration by the New Jersey State Board of Education. The issues at play can be reviewed at njea.org/more-testing-does-not-equal-higher-standards.

NJEA members address delegates

A portion of every DA meeting is set aside for NJEA members who are not delegates to address DA members. A record total of 26 members addressed the DA at this meeting.

Nine members raised concerns about NJEA's support for legislation that would have removed the religious objection to mandatory vaccinations from existing law, a move recently taken in the state of New York in response to a series of measles outbreaks affecting hundreds of students in New York City and Rockland County. Five NJEA members who are school nurses spoke in favor of NJEA's support of the legislation and the value of compliance to vaccination requirements.

Seven members addressed delegates urging them to support the divestment of public employee pension funds from fossil fuel companies. Two members discussed political endorsements at the local and county association level and two members raised concerns over provisions Ch. 78 relief legislation.

Audit presented

NJEA's audit is presented annually at the January DA meeting. The audit was conducted by certified public accountants at Novak Francella, which found NJEA's accounts to be in order.

NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty discussed the association's careful stewardship of its revenues and expenditures in terms of its value to NJEA members

The audit is published in the April edition of the *NJEA Review*.

Other business

Delegates adopted the report of the NJEA PAC Operating Committee and approved a recommendation from the NJEA Affiliations Committee, leading to the affiliation of the Northern Valley Teachers Assistants Association, the East Orange Community Charter Education Association, the Academy Urban Leadership Education Association, and the North Brunswick Buildings/Grounds Managers Association.

Delegates also considered two New Business Items (NBI).

NBI #1, which was proposed by Esther Fletcher of Bergen County moved that NJEA make a statement denouncing acts of violence against people of diverse religious beliefs, especially in light of the rise in anti-Semitic hate crimes. The NBI further directed the NJEA Equity Alliance to explore ways to raise awareness of acts of violence against individuals and groups based on their religion. The motion carried. The resulting statement can be found at njea.org and on Page 14 of this edition of the *NJEA Review*.

NBI #2, which was proposed by Melissa Tomlinson of Atlantic County called for NJEA to create a letter urge the N.J. State Investment Council to take action to divest from the top 200 fossil fuel companies in order to safeguard and protect NJEA member financial interests and maximize pension growth. Blistan ruled the NBI out-of-order because is conflicted with current policy on the methods by which pension investments are determined. New language was drafted and adopted to refer the concern for divestment of fossil fuel investments to the Pension Policy Committee for review. The committee report back to the D.A. at its March 2020 meeting.

DA TO HOLD NEA DIRECTOR ELECTION

Elections for three of New Jersey's representatives on the NEA Board of Directors and for three alternates will be held at the March 28 Delegate Assembly (DA) meeting. The elected board members will serve three-year terms from Sept. 1, 2020 to Aug. 31, 2023. Elected alternates will serve one-year terms beginning Sept. 1, 2020.

The NJEA Executive Committee will be conducting nominations at its Feb. 12 meeting. Additional nominations may come from the floor at the March 28 DA meeting prior to the vote. All nominees will have an opportunity to speak for two minutes prior to balloting.

The NEA Board of Directors is responsible for setting general policies between annual NEA Representative Assembly (NEA RA) meetings. It consists of at least one director from each state affiliate, at-large directors to meet representational guarantees, and representatives for students and retired members. Each state is entitled to an additional director per 20,000 active and life members.

The DA meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. at the Hyatt Regency Princeton, which is located at 102 Carnegie Center in Princeton.

Anyone interested in seeking a position as an NEA state director or alternate should contact a member of the DA. Interested members may request a list of names and addresses of the NJEA Executive Committee, Delegate Assembly, DA alternates, and New Jersey members of the NEA Board of Directors.

The DA list includes county association presidents.

For more information call the NJEA Executive Office at 609-599-4561, ext. 2293.

PRESERVICE CONFERENCE SET FOR APRIL 18

Activate Your Activism

If you are a college or university student preparing to become a teacher, you won't want to miss the NJEA Preservice Conference on April 18. It will take place at the Heldrich Hotel and Conference Center in New Brunswick. The day starts at 8 a.m. with registration and a continental breakfast. Lunch is also provided. The day concludes at 3 p.m.

Come hear from New Jersey State Teacher of the Year Kimberly Dickstein Hughes and your NJEA Preservice officers. Learn how to "activate your activism" around issues that matter to you and your future, including racial and social justice, student loan debt, LGBTQ+ curriculum and immigration rights.

Workshops include:

- EdTPA Q&A
- Landing Your First Job
- LGBTQ+ Curriculum Inclusion
- Technology: Motivating Responsible Use and Preventing Digital Abuse
- Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Part 1 and Part 2

Nominations for NJEA Preservice officers for the 2020-21 school year will also take place.

If you are a cooperating teacher working with preservice educators in your school, or a college/university faculty member preparing future teachers, make sure to let them know about NJEA Preservice and this conference.

Registration and more details will be forthcoming at njea.org/preservice.

2020 LEGISLATIVE DINNERS

County legislative dinners are an excellent way to learn about hot educational issues, meet your state lawmakers face-to-face and share your thoughts about making public education even better.

For further details, contact your county education association office, county association president or county government relations chairperson.

Atlantic	March 26	The Carriage House, Galloway
Bergen	April 1	The Venetian, Garfield
Burlington	April 29	The Merion, Cinnaminson
Camden	March 31	CCCEA office, Voorhees
Cape May	March 25	Grand Hotel, Cape May
Cumberland	April 30	Eastlyn Golf Course, Vineland
Essex	March 11	Nanina's in the Park, Belleville
Gloucester/Salem	March 11	Holiday Inn, Bridgeport
Hudson	May 13	Waterside, North Bergen
Hunterdon/Somerset	April 21	Basking Ridge Country Club, Basking Ridge
Mercer	March 25	Mercer Oaks, West Windsor
Middlesex	May 13	Grand Marquis, Old Bridge
Monmouth	April 29	Jumping Brook Country Club, Neptune
Morris	May 5	Birchwood Manor, Whippany
Ocean	May 14	Ramada Inn, Toms River
Passaic	March 3	The Brownstone, Paterson
Salem/Gloucester	March 11	Holiday Inn, Bridgeport
Somerset/Hunterdon	April 21	Basking Ridge Country Club, Basking Ridge
Sussex	April 28	Perona Farms, Andover
Union	April 2	The Westwood, Garwood
Warren	May 14	Hawk Pointe, Washington

SAVE THE DATE: APRIL 25 COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS WORKSHOP

A strong local or county association uses effective communications strategies to engage and organize its members and the community. Learn ways to keep your members informed and ready for action by attending the NJEA Communications Tools Workshop on Saturday, April 25 at NJEA's headquarters in Trenton.

The NJEA Communications Tools Workshop is the perfect place for local and county association editors, social media teams and public relations committee members to strengthen their message development and delivery skills.

The NJEA Awards for Excellence in Communications will be presented during lunch at the workshop. See contest details on Page 10.

Look for registration information and details in the March *Review*.

HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 17-18



NJEA members at the 2019 Higher Education Conference.

Standing Together

The NJEA Higher Education Conference will be held on April 17-18, at the Princeton Marriott at Forrestal. The conference begins with registration at 1 p.m. on Friday followed by workshops and dinner. After dinner the keynote speaker is Aaron Fichtner, President, NJ Council of Community Colleges. On Saturday, the conference continues with more workshop sessions and concludes with lunch.

Workshops will address:

- Campus Safety
- Contract Enforcement
- Energizing Your Members
- Managing Conflict Effectively
- Minority Male Initiative
- NJEA: Your Union
- Opioid Crisis and Member Impact
- Political Action with Your Union
- Successes and Challenges in Negotiations
- Title IX in Higher Ed: More than Athletics
- Treasurers Training

Higher education members will soon receive a registration form in the mail. You may also register by sending your name, address, cell/work/home phone numbers, and local association to:

NJEA Higher Ed Conference
c/o WSFS
PO Box 13661
Philadelphia, PA 19101-3661

Registration is required by March 23. The cost to attend is \$98-resident (per person, double occupancy); \$148-resident (per person, single occupancy); or \$68-commuter. The conference fee includes accommodations, meals, and materials. For additional information or if you have a disability-related need that may require assistance to facilitate your participation in the conference, contact the NJEA UniServ Region 29/Higher Education office at 609-689-9580 or kperry@njea.org.

WIN AN AWARD FOR YOUR ASSOCIATION'S COMMUNICATIONS EFFORTS

Entry deadline is Feb. 28

A strong local or county association uses effective communications stEntry deadline is Feb. 28

At the NJEA Communications Tools Workshop on April 25, local and county associations will be recognized for excellence in three award categories:

- Most Effective Use of Communications Tools to Achieve a Goal
- Best Website
- Best Newsletter (print or electronic)

To be eligible for consideration, entries must come from local or county associations affiliated with NJEA or N.J. Retirees' Education Association (NJREA) or NJEA Preservice.

Associations may submit for each award category within one of the following six divisions based on size and association type:

1. Local associations (500 or fewer members)
2. Local associations (501 or more members)
3. County associations (8,000 or fewer members)
4. County associations (8,001 or more members)
5. County NJREA organizations
6. NJEA Preservice campus-level associations

Local associations representing members working at institutions of higher education would compete in the appropriate local association division based on size. Preservice organization entries must be submitted by campus-level NJEA Preservice chapters that are recognized by their respective New Jersey institutions of higher education and are affiliated with NJEA.

In all instances, submitted materials must have been developed and created by members of the association entering the awards program during the 2018-19 or 2019-20 school years.

How to enter:

Visit njea.org/commawards for details entry forms.

The deadline to enter is Feb. 28.



Ocean County REA member Rae Saulino at the 2018 NJEA Communications Tools Workshop.

YOUR TURN – *Readers respond*

CARTERET IS DOING SOMETHING RIGHT

In response to “An Educator Comes Full Circle in Carteret” (*NJEA Review*, January 2020), let me tell you that Carteret Schools must be doing something right. Commissioner of Education Lamont Repollet graduated from Carteret and, like Milken winner Nikki Silva who also graduated from Carteret, became a teacher there. From there he went on to become principal and from there he went on to become a superintendent in Asbury Park and from there he went on to become the first and only-ever African American commissioner of education in the state of New Jersey.

Joyce Spears, NJREA, Mercer County

SELFIE OF THE MONTH



From left: Monroe Township Education Association (Gloucester County) members Lydia Williams, Valencia Nichols and Joyce Farr were among the hundreds of members who attended the NJEA Equity Alliance Weekend on Jan. 10-11 in Woodbridge.

Participating in a local, county or state meeting or other association activity? Staffing a PRIDE event? Send your selfies to njeareview@njea.org. Be sure to identify where the picture was taken and the members who appear in the photo.

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ENTER THE NEW JERSEY HALL OF FAME ESSAY CONTEST

New Jersey public school students are invited to participate in the New Jersey Hall of Fame essay contest. Students may nominate potential Hall of Fame inductees—living or deceased. Nominations may include famous people as well as ordinary citizens who do extraordinary things. Students should research or interview, if possible, the person they wish to nominate and write an essay no longer than 500 words.

Essays must be typed and double-spaced. The student must include his/her name, age, grade level as of April 1, 2020, address, phone number, parent/guardian's name, school name, and school district. If the essay is a school project, the student should also include the name of the teacher who assigned the activity.

Nominations must be postmarked by April 1, 2020. Send entries to N.J. Hall of Fame Contest, Dawn Hiltner, NJEA, PO Box 1211, Trenton, NJ 08607-1211. Or send them via email to dhiltner@njea.org with "NJHOF Essay Contest" in the subject line.

Entries will be divided into two age categories: intermediate (Grades 4-8) and high school (Grades 9-12). Entries will be judged by a panel of NJEA and New Jersey Hall of Fame representatives. Winners will be announced on May 15, 2020. The winning students will be invited to the New Jersey Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in October 2020.

The winning students' nominations will be forwarded to the New Jersey Hall of Fame Academy for consideration in 2021. This ethnically and culturally diverse body, composed of 100 of New Jersey's most prominent organizations and media outlets, will review nominees and ultimately select Hall of Fame nominees to be put forth for the public vote in the fall. NJEA serves on the Voting Academy.

For more information about the New Jersey Hall of Fame, visit www.njhalloffame.org.



BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP GAMES AT AN NJEA DISCOUNT

NJEA members can save 20% per ticket on select seats for the 2020 Metro Atlantic Men's and Women's Basketball Championships at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City. To purchase individual tickets, visit BoardwalkHall.com and click on "our events." When ordering tickets online or at the Jim Whelan Boardwalk Hall Box Office, use the offer code: **NJEA20**.

The discount is not valid on premium seating and may not be combined with other offers—there are no double discounts. Discount tickets are subject to availability. Service charges and handling fees may apply. Special ticket pricing is also available for students, scouts and youth.

For more information, hospitality options, and to purchase tickets for groups of 10 or more, call 609-348-7022 or email Kate.Bielunas@spectramp.com.

\$ NJHOF ARÊTE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION DEADLINE IS APRIL 1

A \$5,000 New Jersey Hall of Fame (NJHOF) Arête Scholarship will be awarded to a male and female student graduating in 2020 from a New Jersey high school.

The January *Review* reported the scholarship deadline later in the school year. The deadline has been moved up to April 1.

Arête is a concept from Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle that refers to achieving one's highest sense of self with a moral excellence of character. Arête means that the individual should strive to pursue their passions in life and realize their dreams regardless of their circumstances and adversity.

Arête scholarship recipients are young people who demonstrate pride in New Jersey and a willingness to go above and beyond the call of duty. Successful applicants must demonstrate qualities such as academic engagement, moral character and a commitment to their communities. Recipients do not have to be at the very top of their class from an academic standpoint, but should demonstrate a focus in school and life, and have a well-thought-out plan on how they intend to realize their highest sense of self: their Arête.

Each student will be recognized at the NJHOF's annual induction ceremony.

Find the application njhalloffame.org/Arête. **The application deadline is April 1.** Winners will be announced on May 15.

EDUCATIONAL SHOWS AT WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY

To reserve seats for your students and for additional information on most of the shows below, email boxoffice@wpunj.edu or call 973-720-2371. For the WP Opera event, see special contact information under that listing.

All performances take place at William Paterson University, Shea Center for Performing Arts, 300 Pompton Road in Wayne.

Literature to Life Stage Presentation of "If Beale Street Could Talk"
March 4, 2020 at 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Admission: \$8

RSVP by Feb. 11

Appropriate for Grades 5 – 12

James Baldwin's *If Beale Street Could Talk* is a story of abiding love in the face of injustice. Young lovers, Tish and Fonny, discover they are going to have a baby after Fonny is arrested for a crime he did not commit. Racing against time and injustice, their families come together to bring Fonny home before the baby is born. This story of one family's fight for justice in a society where institutional discrimination has the power to destroy lives will resonate with audiences from all walks of life. This 55-minute solo performance is told through Tish's point of view as well as Fonny's. The content is very explicit with mature scenes.

Virginia Repertory Theatre's "Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad"

Note from William Paterson University College of Arts and Communication: This play includes offensive language for the purpose of historical accuracy. Offense is never an objective for any of our shows. It is our hope that this will inspire an educational and enlightening discussion among students, teachers and parents.

March 11, 2020 at 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.

RSVP by Feb. 11

Admission: \$8

Appropriate for Grades 3 – 12

This stirring drama with music shares in the joys, sorrows, and challenges Harriet Tubman faced while courageously freeing herself and hundreds of others from the bonds of slavery. As Harriet and her friend, Sarah Bradford, narrate her adventurous life, we get a closer look at this brave woman whose determination changed the world.

Sons of Mystro

March 26, 2020 at 12:30 p.m.

RSVP by Feb. 26

Admission: \$10

Appropriate for Grades 3 – 12

Sons of Mystro is the violin duo of two brothers, Malcolm and Umoja. They use their violins to interpret reggae classics, American pop songs and their own creations accompanied by a DJ and a drummer. They are winners of the Best Emerging Artist under 21 Award at the International Reggae and World Music Awards. Their music reflects their Caribbean roots, American upbringing and classical music training.

WP Opera: Orpheus in the Underworld by Jacques Offenbach

April 23, 2020, 12:30 – 1:45 p.m.

RSVP by March 26 to gassl1@wpunj.edu

Admission: FREE

Appropriate for Grades 4 – 12

WP Voice presents the classic underground hit first performed in Paris in 1858. This timeless comedy takes the Greek myth of Orpheus and turns it upside down, finishing with the famous can-can! Please note: The first act will be performed.

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NJEA Report

There is no place for hate in New Jersey

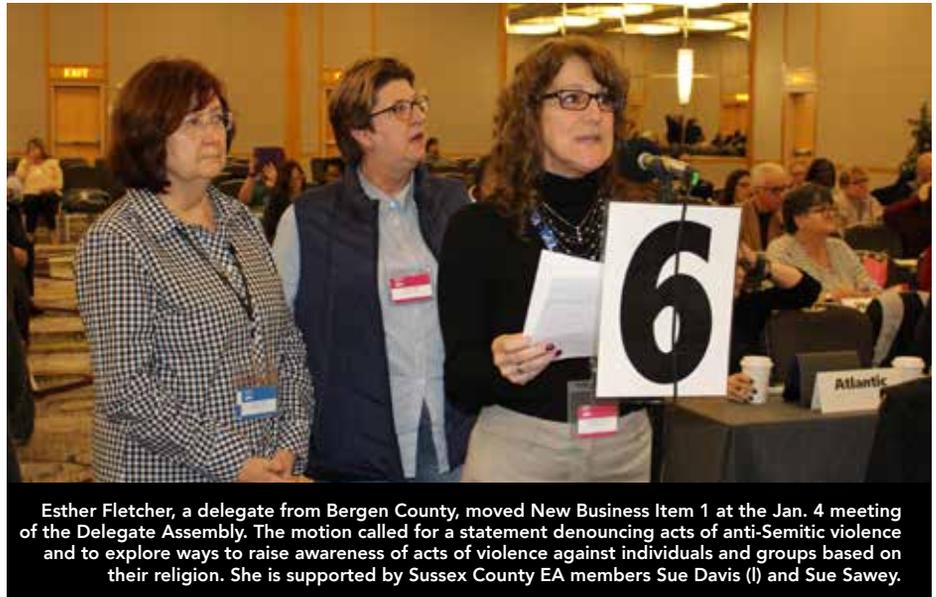
NJEA's Delegate Assembly (DA) stands in solidarity with Jewish Americans and all persons of diverse religious beliefs in light of recent anti-Semitic violence and murders in Jersey City, New Jersey and Monsey, New York. Sadly, these are not isolated incidents. Reports of violence against individuals and groups based on their religion have been steadily increasing in recent years. As NJEA's policy-making body consisting of representatives from throughout the state, the DA voted on Jan. 4 to make a formal statement denouncing such acts of violence and to explore ways to raise awareness of these crimes.

NJEA President Marie Blistan, NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller and NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty released the following statement:

There is no place in New Jersey for hatred and violence, and no one should fear for their safety because of who they are, what they believe, and where or whether they pray. Since before its founding, the United States has stood as a beacon of religious freedom. America has become a nation to which those persecuted for their beliefs around the world seek refuge.

Residents of New Jersey can be proud to live in one of the most religiously diverse states in the nation, but according to the FBI's Hate Crimes Statistics Report in 2018, there were 561 violent attacks classified as hate crimes in New Jersey. Of those, 198 were people targeted because of their religion. There is much work to do to make every school and every community free from violence motivated by hatred based upon religion, race and ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation and all manifestations of irrational hatred.

As educators, NJEA members take seriously the responsibility to instill in their students an appreciation for religious diversity and to empower them to stand up against anti-Semitism and other forms of religious bigotry. At right are several resources for educators and parents to assist them in the that mission.



Esther Fletcher, a delegate from Bergen County, moved New Business Item 1 at the Jan. 4 meeting of the Delegate Assembly. The motion called for a statement denouncing acts of anti-Semitic violence and to explore ways to raise awareness of acts of violence against individuals and groups based on their religion. She is supported by Sussex County EA members Sue Davis (l) and Sue Sawey.

New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education

Resources for the Classroom

<https://www.nj.gov/education/holocaust/resources/>

Teaching Tolerance

Southern Poverty Law Center – Includes resources to address all forms of religious discrimination.

<https://www.splcenter.org/teaching-tolerance>

National Education Association

Unite Against Hate!

<http://www.nea.org/home/71339.htm>

Classroom Close-up NJ

NJEA's "Classroom Close-up NJ" video library contains dozens of segments on educators teaching about anti-Semitism and Holocaust and Genocide Education.

<https://classroomcloseup.org/>

NJEA Review

"American Muslim Students Need Understanding and Support"

<https://www.njea.org/american-muslim-students-need-understanding-support/>

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Teaching About Anti-Semitism

<https://www.ushmm.org/antisemitism/teaching-about-antisemitism>

Facing History

Holocaust and Human Behavior

<https://www.facinghistory.org/holocaust-and-human-behavior/table-contents>

Gov. Murphy pocket vetoes Path to “Progress” legislation

Bill would have been a path to poverty for public employees

Legislative leaders used the chaos of the last few days of the recent lame duck session to push through a bill on the last day of the session, Jan. 13, intended to create a permanent Path to “Progress” panel. The panel would have been charged, among other things, with investigating and making recommendations about the cost of public employee benefits. That bill was part of the larger Path to “Progress” legislation introduced and pushed by Senate President Steve Sweeney last spring.

By not signing the legislation to create the panel by Jan 21, the governor vetoed the bill. Any bills passed between the 10th and last day of a voting session become law only if the governor signs them. He has seven days after the end of the session to act on the bills, otherwise they are “pocket vetoed.” A pocket veto cannot be put up for an override vote in the Legislature.

NJEA opposed the bill and was pleased with the governor’s veto. In addition to issuing a position statement, NJEA members and elected association leaders lobbied legislators at the Statehouse in

the weeks and days leading up to Jan. 13, the day of the last votes of the 2018-19 legislative session. In addition, NJEA members across the state sent over 15,000 emails to each legislator in just under 72 hours, making it clear that the bill was an unacceptable attack on public employees.

Calling the Path to “Progress” bill a “return to Chris Christie’s approach of finger-pointing and blame,” NJEA’s statement contended that the legislation “would create another costly, permanent, bureaucratic panel, filled with political appointees, for the express purpose of promoting the same failed agenda that has been used to unfairly scapegoat public employees for the state’s many fiscal failures.”

NJEA urged the governor to veto the bill, in accordance with his publicly stated position in favor of working with public employees to achieve solutions rather than imposing harmful changes.

The pressure applied by NJEA members created tension in the Legislature. In the final tally, eight senators refused to vote on the bill, along with two “no” votes from Sen. Shirley Turner, D-Mercer, and

“

NJEA urged the governor to veto the bill, in accordance with his publicly stated position in favor of working with public employees to achieve solutions rather than imposing harmful changes.

Sen. Ron Rice, D-Essex, a strong act of defiance in the face of pressure from their leadership to support the bill. In the Assembly, 13 members did not vote, while seven voted against the bill.

NJEA will continue to oppose all elements of the Path to “Progress” bill that target public employees.

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Equity Alliance Weekend builds collaboration for social justice

Six NJEA committees that play key roles in the association's efforts to create a more just and equitable climate in public education—and in our union—collaborated to host the second annual NJEA Equity Alliance Weekend: the Human and Civil Rights Committee, the Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee, the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee, the Urban Education Committee, the Women in Education Committee, and the Exceptional Children Committee.

Held over the weekend of Jan. 10 in Woodbridge at the Delta by Marriott Hotel, the conference opened with a keynote address from Alisha DeLorenzo, an educational and mental health consultant who founded Living YES. She is also interim deputy director of Garden State Equality. The weekend continued with nine workshops covering the Amistad Curriculum,

trauma and adverse childhood experiences, LGBTQ+ inclusive curricula, multicultural literature, and TeachRock's arts-centered curriculum. Another workshop, titled "Black Girls," addressed the disparate treatment of African American girls and teenagers in schools. Staff from the NJEA Government Relations Division offered a workshop on how to run for political office.

The weekend concluded with the 46th annual NJEA Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Human and Civil Rights Celebration. Keron Blair, the director of the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools, delivered a keynote address, Tony!, Toni! Toné!, provided musical entertainment, and the late Rep. Elijah Cummings and four NJEA members were honored for their work in social justice and human and civil rights.



Rep. Elijah Cummings

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Legacy Award

NJEA Human and Civil Rights Committee

Elijah Cummings was a U.S. representative from Maryland. After graduating from Howard University and the University of Maryland, he worked in private practice for 19 years. He served as chief judge of the Maryland Moot Court Board. He was a member of the Maryland House of Delegates and speaker pro tempore before being elected to the 104th Congress in a special election in 1996. He held that position until his death last October.

He sponsored and supported many bills that made government more transparent and accessible to citizens. He was chair of the Committee on Oversight and Reform until his death.

Cumming's family members were unable to attend the NJEA Human and Civil Rights Celebration to accept the award in person.



From left: NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty, Camden Education Association President Keith Benson, NJEA Human and Civil Rights Committee Chair Kimberly Scott-Hayden and NJEA President Marie Blistan.

Dr. Keith Eric Benson

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Award

NJEA Human and Civil Rights Committee

Dr. Keith Benson is the president of the Camden Education Association (CEA). When Camden Public Schools planned to close two of its schools last year, Benson organized the community to protest the closures at district headquarters and at board meetings, demanding better for Camden's children.

Benson gained national attention when he walked 40 miles from Camden to Trenton to lobby Commissioner of Education Lamont Repollet and the State Board of Education to provide the necessary funds to save the schools. That activism prevented the closure of Veterans Memorial Family School in Camden.

Camden parent Ronsha Dickerson, a national organizer for the Journey 4 Justice Alliance, summed up Benson's fight saying, "We're standing in solidarity, no more silo-ing. We're working as one full coalition toward one ultimate goal: for us to be able to save our schools and also give our children equitable opportunities in the city of Camden and throughout the state of New Jersey."

"This award is a positive reflection of all the great work of our CEA leadership team and the rest of our CEA family had done over the years," Benson said in his brief remarks upon accepting the award.



From left: NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty, NJEA President Marie Blistan, Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee Chair Tiffanie ThrBak, and David Farrow.

David Farrow

Judith Owens Spirit Award Recipient

NJEA Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee

Judith Owens was the first, and so far, only, African American president of NJEA. She was elected in 1975. The Judith Owens Spirit Award recognizes members who are trailblazers for social justice.

David Farrow a middle school math teacher in Middle Township, Cape May County, was this year's recipient of the award. Farrow works with students of color and those from economically disadvantaged households to strengthen their academics and build community connections through the SUCCESS program. SUCCESS is an acronym for Students Utilizing Community and Character to Exceed Socially and Scholastically. The group works with the local police, recreations centers, food pantries and churches.

Farrow has also used the NJEA Pride in Public Education Program to establish community conversation circles that focus on diversity. He has established workshops to engage his colleagues on discussions of cultural differences.

"Ethnic diversity, tolerance and acceptance are issues that are important to me," Farrow said. "My mother and father instilled our family two principles: first to love God—that is to say, to love that which is good, that which is honest, that which is just. And second, but just as important, to love my fellow man as myself. I know if we will do this, bigotry, hatred, racism, and all the other isms and schisms that seek to destroy unity would cease."



From left: NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty, Rumson-Fair Haven Regional Education Association President Kate Okeson, NJEA President Marie Blistan, and Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee Chair Thomas Tamburello.

Kathryn Okeson

Equality Champion Award Recipient

NJEA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee

Kate Okeson is president of the Rumson-Fair Haven Regional Education Association. She is the founding adviser to Spectrum, the gender and sexuality alliance at Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School. In coordination with Make it Better for Youth (MIB4Y), Okeson and her students organize events such as GAYLA, an inclusive prom held annually at area high schools in Monmouth County. She also hosts "A Day Without Art" to commemorate World AIDS Day on Dec. 1.

Okeson's role in MIB4Y has enabled her to plan author forums, musical performances, film nights and other events that promote acceptance and empowerment. Her advocacy has resulted in more inclusive bathroom facilities at school, trainings for families, students, and staff. Okeson advocated for legislation that mandates the inclusion of curricula that recognizes the history and contributions of LGBTQ+ persons and persons with disabilities. She currently plays a central role in the development of that curricula.

"We don't always see the outcome of what we do, but if we focused our efforts and our energies on those things that are invisible, marginalized or misrepresented, our impacts are exponential,"

Okeson said. I'm not the first in any of this and there are thousands of educators in New Jersey who teach with equity, who get up every single day and center their practice on inclusion."



From left: NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty, Wayne Education Association President Eda Ferrante, Women in Education Committee Chair Fatimah Hayes, and NJEA President Marie Blistan.

Eda Ferrante

Elizabeth Allen Award

NJEA Women in Education Committee

In 1914, Elizabeth Allen became NJEA's first female president. Allen was instrumental in the creation of the Teachers Pension and Annuity Fund and the state's first tenure laws.

Eda Ferrante is the president of the Wayne Education Association and a high school social studies teacher. She's been an activist all her life, promoting women in leadership roles in education and serving as a role model for new members. She recruits and mentors women to take roles on NJEA committees and in state, county, and local association leadership. She also pays attention to the needs of parents who may wish to participate in the union by, among other things, providing child care at association meetings. *continued on next page*

When her district tried to remove her full-time release status as association president, Ferrante fought back. She knew that her large local needed a president who could be available to support them regardless of the time of day. She fought hard on behalf of her members and sent a clear message to her board, community, and members that the Wayne Education Association is strong.

“Elizabeth Allen’s story is one of determination and persistence,” Ferrante said. “It is one of high moral character and emotional strength. She fought when the climate was not so accepting of women taking leadership positions. I believe Elizabeth Allen had a vision of equality through education, and we stand on her shoulders high enough to see the road forward and the journey’s long sought conclusion.”

Ferrante credited the “giants” on whose shoulders she stands, including family members such as her mother, her aunts, and her father; political leaders such as Hillary Clinton who have made it possible that “women seeking the highest office in the land are no longer the exception, but the rule;” and association leaders such as Passaic County Education Association President Susan Butterfield, NJEA President Marie Blistan, and NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller, whom she succeeded as president of the Wayne Education Association.

“Let’s leave here tonight clear and determined in the spirit of Elizabeth Allen,” Ferrante concluded. “Be clear in her example that we must do more. Clear in the vision that our work is far from completed. But clear that the path to equality is righteous, that though the road is long, with the inspiration of leaders like Elizabeth Allen and with leaders like so many of you here today in this room, that the path is one to a better tomorrow.”



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Ch. 78 and ESP Job Justice campaigns move into new legislative session

The new legislative session that opened on Jan. 14 in New Jersey marked the start of the next phase of NJEA's fight for job justice for educational support professionals (ESPs) and Ch. 78 relief.

"When the campaign began nearly 17 months ago, two things were certain: it would be a long, difficult fight, and it would be won through the power of collective member action," NJEA's officers, President Marie Blistan, Vice President Sean M. Spiller and Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty wrote in an all-member email on the first day of the new legislative session.

Both of those things have been proven true.

When association members worked together to gather over 116,000 members' signatures on petitions, it demonstrated that NJEA members are passionate about Ch. 78 relief and ESP Job Justice. It was demonstrated further through the thousands of phone calls, the tens of thousands of postcards and emails, the hundreds of meetings with legislators in Trenton and their home offices, and the hundreds of public demonstrations of support in which members engaged over those 17 months.

Members got results. At the start of the campaign, the ESP Job Justice and Ch. 78 relief bills had just one or two sponsors each, but member action built support until the Ch. 78 bill had 47 co-sponsors in Assembly—more than the number needed for passage. The same bill in the Senate had 17 sponsors, just short of the number needed to pass that chamber. The subcontracting and due-process ESP bills passed the Assembly in May with overwhelming bipartisan support, while those bills had 18 and 17 Senate sponsors, respectively. That level of support is the result of ceaseless member engagement and action.

Through all of this, Gov. Phil Murphy has been a steadfast supporter, including the release of television and online advertising explaining his support for ESP Job Justice and Ch. 78 relief. They can be viewed at bit.ly/jobjustice and bit.ly/ch78murphy.

The beginning of a new session means that NJEA members will rebuild sponsor support as Ch. 78 and ESP Job Justice legislation is re-introduced. NJEA leaders will push for these bills to be introduced quickly, and the association will waste no time in making sure that every former

sponsor signs on again as NJEA members continue to push every other legislator to become a sponsor as well.

NJEA's momentum remains strong and our determination continues to grow as the new legislative session gets underway. On Jan. 4, NJEA's Delegate Assembly approved up to \$25 million in the current association budget to fund the ESP Job Justice and Ch. 78 relief campaign, along with other efforts to advance NJEA members' interests from now through the 2021 election. Those resources will cover member and public organizing, advertising, independent expenditure campaigns and other efforts needed to achieve victory.

TAKE ACTION

The new Legislature needs to hear from NJEA members. Please take a few minutes now to remind your legislators that these issues are still our top priority. Ask them to support and sponsor our bills to achieve the job justice and Ch. 78 relief that you deserve through these links:

- ESP Job Justice: njea.org/jj4esp
- Ch. 78 relief: njea.org/ch78relief



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NJEA ESP of the Year Stacy Yanko
at her desk in the guidance office
at Hopatcong High School

MEET

Stacy Yanko

THE NJEA 2020 EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROFESSIONAL OF THE YEAR

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY

Stacy Yanko leaves a metaphorical—and sometimes literal—trail of glitter wherever she goes. She is a warm presence whose smile is matched by her enthusiasm for the task at hand, no matter what that task may be. Ask any of the students she assists as a guidance secretary at Hopatcong High School, which serves students in grades eight through 12, or her colleagues in the district, and they will echo the sentiment that her friend and co-worker Brittany Huling shared: “Stacy sparkles in everything she does. She’s shown me how to be a great employee, a great secretary and a great NJEA member.”

Yanko greets students and staff as soon as they walk into the guidance office, a cheerful space full of college banners, Naviance posters, and many photos of Yanko with students and her colleagues. Naviance posters provide motivation and inspiration for aspiring college students. And, yes, there is a little bit of sparkle in the form of a pink rhinestone computer mouse. But Yanko’s warm smile and obvious love for her work far outshine the rhinestones.

“I get to do a little bit of everything,” Yanko said. “I primarily support our school counselors. I take care of all the registrations and withdrawals of students here at the high school. I help our students and staff every day by printing things out, making copies, working on the grade report, transcripts, transcript requests, HIB reporting and student of the month awards with the main office.”

FROM MIDDLESEX COUNTY COLLEGE TO WILLIAM PATERSON

Yanko grew up in Middlesex County and graduated from John P. Stevens High School in Edison before attending Middlesex County College for two years and earning her associate’s degree, a move that she recommends to many students.

“I really enjoyed Middlesex County College,” Yanko said. “They had smaller class sizes, I was able to work, and there were still so many opportunities to get involved in campus activities. I was a member of the choir, a girls’ ensemble, and I got a job working in the student activities department, so I always knew what was happening. When I was ready to move on to a four-year institution, all my credits transferred.”

Yanko went on to William Paterson University and was a double major in early childhood education and psychology. She had completed all the coursework for her early childhood degree and its first practicum, but her desire to finish school quickly and begin working led her to drop that degree and focus on completing her psychology degree. She then began working with chronically mentally ill adults.

GETTING INVOLVED IN THE UNION

After Yanko married and had children, she stayed home to care for them until an opportunity arose to work at Tulsa Trail Elementary School, a position she gained by being a fierce advocate for children.

“I was the vice president of the parent-teacher organization at my children’s school,” Yanko recalled. “Due to financial issues, the district cut all the staffing in the libraries. I really believe that children need the resources and expertise that librarians offer, so I made sure the principal knew how I felt about this decision. When the district decided to hire staff for the library, the principal told me to apply.”

Yanko’s first experience with her union came shortly after she began working as a library aide in March 2006. (She later worked with the district and her union to change the word “aide” to “paraprofessional.”) Yanko was upset about something that was going on in the district. She was alone, crying in the library about the issue, when her union president at the time, Anita Feliciano, approached her. Feliciano listened to Yanko and then gave her advice that would change her life.

“She said, ‘Stacy, you have to get involved. You have to learn how things work so that you can change them.’ I’d only been employed by the district for two years at that point, but Anita encouraged me and said that the association would pay to send me to NJEA conferences. I went to my first NJEA ESP [Educational Support

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Yanko says the best part of her job is helping students and her colleagues.



Spend a day with Yanko and her colleagues with this Review video at njea.org/2020ESPOY.

“

Making a difference in the lives of our students is what being an educator is all about.

Professional] Conference that year, and I’ve never missed one since then.”

Since then, Yanko has held many positions in her local association, at NJEA, and at the national level.

A LEADER WHO MOTIVATES OTHERS

Yanko is the president of the Hopatcong Office Personnel Association (HOPA) and previously served as the Sussex County Education Association president. In addition, she has served on numerous NJEA committees, such as Leadership, Public Relations, and the ESP Committee. From 2010 through 2016, she served as a delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly.

One of Yanko’s strengths is her willingness to push others forward. Yanko gave up her position on the NJEA ESP Committee in order to provide another member with the opportunity to serve at the statewide level. That member, Gillian Raye, is now the chair of the NJEA Member Benefits Committee.

“I take pride in helping others find their place and giving them leadership opportunities.”

Yanko doesn’t shrink from doing the hard work, either. Her union, HOPA, is separate from the larger Hopatcong Education Association. With 11 members, Yanko has taken on extra responsibilities, in addition to serving as president, while she helps her fellow union members learn the process and begin to take on new roles.

One of Yanko’s proudest achievements is her advocacy on behalf of ESPs at the national level. Thanks in part to her efforts, and the coalition she helped build with delegates from California, every NEA committee except one for aspiring teachers, is mandated to include at least one classroom teacher and one ESP. It took years of effort to accomplish, but now ESP members have a confirmed seat at the table.

A DOUBLE HONOR FOR HOPATCONG

Hopatcong has a lot to be proud of. In addition to Stacy’s honor, Danielle Kovach, a teacher at Tulsa Trail Elementary School, was named the New Jersey State Teacher of the Year in 2011. This double-honor comes as no surprise to Stacy’s supervisor, Jeff Hallenbeck, the co-principal of Hopatcong High School.

“Having Stacy as the ESP of the Year and Dani Kovach as the Teacher of the Year really validates

them and introduces other people across the state to the wonderful things that are going on in our schools,” Hallenbeck said. “Dani and Stacy really reflect our Hopatcong values of honor, hard work, and dedication.”

“Recognition is important, even though school employees don’t do it for that,” Yanko said. “But when you’re recognized for doing what you think is right every day, it makes you feel supported and encouraged and it makes others feel elevated. It showcases what’s good about our public schools and what’s good about education in New Jersey.”

Earning the distinction of NJEA ESP of the Year is something Yanko had hoped for but didn’t believe possible.

“I had dreamed about being named NJEA ESP of the Year, but I didn’t think that it would happen because I know the amazing members we have and the incredible things they do in their communities, in their associations and in their careers.”

Yanko’s co-workers were much more confident that she would be recognized. In fact, two of her colleagues, Huling and school counselor Linda Padula, worked together to nominate her for the Hopatcong ESP of the Year and the Sussex County ESP of the Year.

“Stacy is not only an exceptional colleague, but she is also tireless in her community service activities,” Padula said. “She applied for grants from NJEA and got gifts and supplies to help support our Family Appreciation Night. She is always available and enthusiastic about participating in activities with the students like chaperoning events and judging contests. On top of that, she is involved in her union at the local, county, state and national levels.”

“ I hope to inspire education support professionals to become active, confident, involved members of our association at all levels. ”

As a measure of the respect and admiration her community holds her in, this is actually Yanko’s second time being named the Hopatcong and Sussex County ESP of the Year. In 2011, she was afforded this honor after only working in the district for five years.

SERVICE TO SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

Yanko takes a great deal of pride in her community. In addition to serving on the parent-teacher organization, Yanko has been a book fair volunteer, team mom for the Hopatcong Warriors Pee Wee Football Team, coach of the Hopatcong Warriors cheer team, teacher assistant for religious education classes at Our Lady of the Lake Church, and president of the Hopatcong High School Football Parents Association.

This commitment to guiding and supporting children makes her an excellent resource for the students she serves. Yanko does a lot of work helping them and their families navigate the college application process and assisting them with scholarship applications. It’s a process she is very familiar with after guiding her two children, Jonathan and Alexa, through it alongside her husband, Michael, who is a police officer and a member of his union, the Police Benevolent Association (PBA).

“Graduation day is one of the best days of

the year,” Yanko said. “Seeing the smiles on the faces of the graduating students as they receive their diplomas makes my heart happy. Making a difference in the lives of our students is what being an educator is all about.”

Yanko does not minimize the hard work and effort that has brought her here. It has meant sacrifices and the nearly impossible task of juggling family, friends, work, volunteering and union activism.

“This award helped my family understand why I am so involved in my union,” Yanko said. “My family would sometimes question the nights and weekends I spent on association or school activities. I would try to explain that not every union is like ours. We are an education association. We not only advocate, we educate, and we do a lot to promote our members in many different ways. Now my family is seeing the impact of all that work and they are so proud and happy. My children even shared the news of the award on their social media!”

A MEANINGFUL RECOGNITION

Being named ESP of the Year means a lot to Yanko.

“It means I’m a role model; that I’m looked upon as someone who can be counted on to get the job done,” she said. “I work with such amazing people and to receive their respect means more to me than I can put into words. The opportunity to represent our members and our state is an amazing honor. I’m very humbled and grateful.”

Yanko believes that each day brings a new opportunity to advocate for members, educate members, and provide them with the opportunities to lead the way.

“I am passionate about our association and the work that our members do each day,” she said. “I hope to inspire education support professionals to become active, confident, involved members of our association at all levels. I am proud of each of the roles that I have had the opportunity to fill at each association level. I look forward to what lies ahead, and I look forward to continuing my journey inspiring others to believe in themselves and our association.”

As the 2020 NJEA ESP of the Year, Yanko has already been nominated for the NEA ESP of the Year award. She will attend the NEA ESP Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana and will receive a Disney vacation, funded by NJEA. Yanko will also receive an ESP of the Year ring, she will be a featured speaker at the NJEA ESP Conference and will be honored at the 2020 NJEA Convention. 🏠



Yanko with Hopatcong High School substitute nurse, Maureen Warden, and school counselor Linda Padula, the 2019-20 Governor’s Educational Services.

Playing it forward

for Earth Month

STUDENTS REAP ENDURING LIFE LESSONS

BY BRONNA LIPTON,
MICHELA PICCOLINE,
KRISTEN LINDSTROM,
JAMIE DRUCKER,
SARAH SAMUELS AND
KATHERINE SANTOS





The holiday toy collection at Evergreen Elementary School in Scotch Plains.

How does a collection of gently used plastic toys bring schools, students, teachers and parents together? New Jersey schools are discovering the answer by partnering with Second Chance Toys, a charitable nonprofit that promotes collections of these toys and donates them to local organizations serving children in need.

Besides being loads of fun for students of all ages, the benefits of a gently used plastic toy collection and cleaning include:

- Students learn firsthand the life lessons of giving and reuse.
- Students are empowered by giving something of their own.
- Children learn that there are others less fortunate.
- Parents and community have a responsible way to unload unwanted plastic toys.
- Teachers can use the collection as a springboard for discussions on the environment.
- Sustainable Jersey awards points to schools for participation.

Below are examples of collections coordinated by elementary and high school teachers, who offer their insights, their students' experiences and why they and reasons their students keep collecting year after year.

PASCACK VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

Environmental Club Co-Advisers: Michela Piccoline and Kristen Lindstrom

When we discovered Second Chance Toys many years ago, and saw how our goals aligned, we joined forces, and have been conducting gently used plastic toy collections ever since.

The goal of the Environmental Club at Pascack Valley High School is to educate all students, involve them in activities that have a quantifiable impact, and inspire them to continue being stewards of environmental change beyond their years in school and into the community. As advisers, we work with the students to find activities that are timed for the season and bring solutions to local environmental problems. There is no shortage of meaningful programs in which to get involved.

We wanted the students in the club, and ultimately the entire student body, to recognize how reuse is an important part of sustainability. What better way to put this into action than with donations of used plastic toys? They are ubiquitous, and the students could easily find them in their own homes, or their friends', neighbors' or relatives' homes. Giving plastic toys a second chance through collection, cleaning and donation has given all participating students a sense of accomplishment, a feeling that they have contributed something tangible and that they helped pay it forward with their efforts.

Our school has been participating with Second Chance Toys since 2016 in their end-of-year holiday collection in November and December. The students gear up for upcoming toy drives by holding a club meeting. All members carefully review the types of toys that are accepted and prepare to publicize the collection with school announcements, emails and fliers. Then they place collection boxes throughout the school. Every year, we receive a number of donations from the staff and faculty, which is a wonderful

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Most teenagers don't believe they can make a difference. But it is possible that getting involved in a project such as this, helps both the environment and people's lives.

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Pascack Valley High School Environmental Club members hold some of the 200 toys collected for the 2019 holiday season.

way to unite us for a great cause. And best of all, the students enjoy coming together to see the fruits of their labor when all the toys are laid out in one room, and where they inspect, count and clean them.

Students learn best when they are performing a hands-on task. It is one thing to educate the students through information, invited speakers and videos. However, the message really lands when the students are able to physically partake, give back and see directly the impact of their involvement.

“Most teenagers don't believe they can make a difference,” Environmental Club President Shaina Julis shared. “But it is possible that getting involved in a project such as this, helps both the environment and people's lives.”

Over the years, the club has honed its collection process and learned more about the organizations and children we are serving. As the environmental club membership continues to grow and the outreach becomes more widespread, our collections have grown exponentially. Having recently just finished a collection, the students were excited to top their previous year's effort and we, as teachers and advisers for the club, were thrilled to see our students integrate reuse into their learning and prepare themselves to become good stewards of the Earth.



Student Council members from Bogert Elementary School in Upper Saddle River show off one of the plastic games they collected.

EDITH A. BOGERT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, UPPER SADDLE RIVER

Student Council Co-Advisers: Jamie Drucker and Sarah Samuels

When our principal approached us with the opportunity for the student council to initiate a collection of gently used plastic toys for the school and support the town's effort, we immediately saw this as a great opportunity. After all, where are most of the toys in town? In the homes of our elementary school kids! This challenge was going to be fun for all!

The Upper Saddle River Department of Public Works (DPW) had been participating in the Second Chance Toys NJ Recycling Center Program to collect toys all year long and keep plastics out of landfills. Second Chance Toys arranges for the toys at the DPW facility to be cleaned and donated. The DPW knew it could grow its collection by partnering with our elementary school, which happens to be located across the street.

We were excited for our students to participate not only because they would easily relate to colorful plastic toys, but because the effort could be completely student-driven. At our twice monthly student council meetings, members created posters and announcements to encourage all students to bring in their used plastic toys. They decorated the collection boxes that were located at the front of the school, they monitored the boxes as they filled up, and the students were responsible for alerting us when it was time to have a DPW pickup.

Second Chance Toys would normally match a school directly with a local organization and arrange for a pickup. Since we were acting as a "feeder" to the town collection, Second Chance Toys let us know when and where the town's toys were donated, so we could share that information with the students.

This program resonates with students, parents and the community because it drives home the importance of giving back and caring for others. Upon learning of the program, several students remarked on how they immediately went through their toys with their parents when they got home, and truly enjoyed the experience. They realized how donating toys they outgrew or were no longer interested in could change the life of another child. What better way to sensitize our children at an early age than through a hands-on program like this?

Bogert School Principal Dave Kaplan has been encouraged by the outcomes of taking on this program at the school.

"I am thrilled to support this type of program in Bogert because it teaches students two important lessons: the importance of supporting those who are less fortunate and the importance of reusing unwanted items before simply disposing of them into a landfill," Kaplan noted. "The social and environmental lessons students learn from working with Second Chance Toys are invaluable."



Students at the Harmony House Early Learning Center in Newark are among the recipients of the toys.

The reaction to the program continues to be extraordinarily positive and endearing. Isla Griswold, a fourth-grade student who donated a toy said, "It felt really good to go through my toys because I knew it was going to make someone else smile." Jack Foye, a student who donated toys as well, commented, "I felt helpful knowing I was giving toys to someone who needed them."

This year, Bogert School is excited to be collaborating twice with Second Chance Toys: once in the winter for the holidays, and once in the spring for Earth Month. The support for the holiday drive was once again overwhelming. Not only did the student council take the lead in its promotion, but it also played a special role in the cleaning of the toys and writing notes to their future owners. We are looking forward to emphasizing Earth Month themes during our spring collection and challenging our student council and student body to bring the learning into their everyday lives.

EVERGREEN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, SCOTCH PLAINS

Fourth Grade Teacher: Katherine Santos

Since 2009, Evergreen School has been partnering with Second Chance Toys twice a year to collect used plastic toys. Evergreen is a very close-knit community of students, parents, and school staff. When a need surfaces, everyone rallies together and rises to the occasion. The formula for the collection is unique at this prekindergarten through fourth grade

school. Each of our collections, once in the winter for the holidays and once in the spring for Earth Month, lasts only one hour, yet nearly 1,000 toys are collected per year at this elementary school. Toys that would have been dumped in landfills wind up in the hands of children who can enjoy them.

In order to collect so many toys, word of the Second Chance Toy drive begins to spread at the beginning of the school year. The weekly PTA email blast to families and the message board in front of the school include reminders about the collection. Additionally, teachers discuss the upcoming event with their students and make the connection to the school's motto: Kind Words, Kind Hands, Kind Hearts. What better way to demonstrate this message than through kids helping kids? Students are inspired to donate their own toys, knowing they will have a positive impact on the life of another child.





A truckload of toys destined for re-use rather than the landfill. For more than 11 years, 1-800-Got-JUNK? has donated its services to transport Evergreen Elementary School's collected toys, as well as other large collections throughout New Jersey, to designated organizations.



“Our students are being supported by their families and teachers to develop a sense of service to our community,” Evergreen School Principal Colleen Haubert remarked. “The Second Chance Toy drive is a relevant opportunity for our students to connect their lives with the lives of other children in different communities. We hope our students continue to grow in their desire to contribute to their communities in meaningful ways that help them to see their impact in the larger world.”

So how do all those toys donated at Evergreen School get organized, cleaned and ready for their new owners on collection day? By our fourth grade students! They work with parent volunteers to sort through the toys, which pile up on Evergreen’s front lawn the morning of the toy collection. The fourth grade volunteers also write messages of hope and good cheer to attach to the toys. Then the toys are loaded up in 1-800-GOT-JUNK? trucks and taken to designated organizations!

“We liked helping out because we know the toys will make other kids happy!” fourth-grader Kathleen Lepkowski exclaimed. “And that made us all feel good.”

Fourth-graders are well versed in philanthropy, thanks to their grade-level service-learning project that varies year to year, but its message remains the same: Make a positive difference in your community. Being a part of Second Chance Toys is a valuable opportunity for these students to demonstrate what they have learned about giving to others.

Second Chance Toys is an integral part of Evergreen School’s giving spirit. Year after year this school community looks forward to the opportunity to give back in such a simple, yet meaningful way. 🏠



GETTING YOUR COLLECTION STARTED

A used plastic toy collection and cleaning is loads of fun, can be used to promote leadership, reward students, teach life lessons and is easy to get started.

- Decide the dates of your collection.
- Activate your collection by signing up at secondchancetoys.org. Registration begins March 1 for Earth Month collections and November 1 for holiday collections.
- Once registered, Second Chance Toys (SCT) will match you with a local organization that serves children in need and arrange for transport of the toys.
- SCT offers free downloadable resources and collection tips at bit.ly/SCTResources
- Read about other schools’ collections on the blog for more ideas at bit.ly/SCTBlog

Note: Bit.ly links are case sensitive.

For questions email info@secondchancetoys.org.



FLEMINGTON- RARITAN EA BRINGS DOWN THE HEAT

**A LOCAL ASSOCIATION BUILDS MEMBER
AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR CLIMATE
CONTROL IN DISTRICT SCHOOLS**

BY BRIAN ROCK

“

No other white-collar profession is forced to work in such unhealthy and unsafe conditions.

In September, the temperature in Marie Corfield's classroom went above 90 degrees.

“My room is oppressively hot in the warm weather,” said Corfield, who serves as Legislative Action Team chair for the Flemington-Raritan Education Association. (FREA) “After our mold outbreak, I purchased a thermometer to track the heat and humidity. When I saw that number, 91.9 F, I was shocked. No other white-collar profession is forced to work in such unhealthy and unsafe conditions.”

If, like Corfield, you work in one of the many New Jersey schools without air conditioning you're familiar with this scenario. Students are lethargic, and it's impossible to get work done. But there's not much that you can do about it.

There are no statewide regulations about temperature control. It's up to each district to decide how to handle the issue. Given the budgetary constraints of the Chris Christie era, that means that most districts simply decide that they can't afford it.

Brian Rock is an NJEA UniServ field representative in the Region 13 office in Flemington. He can be reached at brock@njea.org.

But luckily for Corfield, there was something the educators in the Flemington-Raritan School District could do.

A new superintendent, Kari McGann, had just come on board in July 2018. She understood the importance of safe and healthy schools, and she enjoined the board of education to propose two bond referenda. The proposals included air conditioning and dehumidification systems, along with security upgrades and other critical repairs.

FREA made a bold decision to support the referenda, and on election night last November they waited anxiously to see if their hard work would pay off.

MASSIVE MOLD OUTBREAK DELAYS SCHOOL OPENING

The story of this campaign starts in the summer of 2018. The incoming superintendent had been

on the job for just over month when she received a phone call about mold in one of the buildings. A teacher had noticed mold growing on the wall in her classroom.

When the district's leadership team visited the school to investigate, the problem was widespread. The school libraries were hit hard, and many of the books had to be thrown out. Teachers lost supplies that had been stored in their classrooms for the summer.

“FREA has an office in the basement of the Reading-Fleming Intermediate School,” said FREA President Sue Vala. “The entire basement was sealed off to remediate the mold, and the maintenance department threw away everything that had been stored in our office.”

It wasn't long before mold was reported in another school, and the district embarked on a comprehensive remediation plan.

Kristin Yandrick-Tomlinson, FREA Secretary
Stacey Caganello, FREA member
Cori Lango, FREA Vice President
Anabela Tavares and FREA building rep Marie Corfield.



NJEA UniServ Field Rep Brian Rock, Kristin Yandrick-Tomlinson, FREA Secretary Stacey Caganello, FREA member Cori Lango, FREA building rep Marie Corfield and FREA Vice President Anabela Tavares.



All told, the remediation would cost the district \$1.4 million.

But in addition to that, teachers lost supplies that they had accumulated throughout their careers. The libraries needed to be restocked. And the school district ended up delaying the first day of school because the buildings weren't ready in time.

"Last year, I was hugely affected by the mold," said kindergarten teacher Pam Minch. "I spent September in another room, and when I was returned to my original room I found out that the majority of my classroom supplies, books and manipulatives had been disposed of. A year later, I'm still discovering things that I've lost."

The solution had also been temporary. In order to prevent future mold outbreaks, the district purchased industrial strength dehumidifiers and placed them in the halls of the school. Smaller units were placed in classrooms. There were other issues, as well, such as roofs that consistently leaked.

To permanently solve the problem, the superintendent and the board put forth two proposals. These would allow the district to fully repair each

school building, install air conditioning and dehumidification systems, and upgrade security.

This solution wasn't going to be cheap. It came with a \$42 million price tag, and it had to be voted on by the residents in November.

THE ASSOCIATION TAKES A POSITION OF SUPPORT

In August, Anabela Tavares was sitting in a booth at the Flemington Diner mapping out priorities for the 2019-20 school year.

As FREA vice president, Tavares was acutely aware of the district's problems with facilities and maintenance. She had heard about the superintendent's proposal, and there was no question that one of FREA's priorities for the year would be to make sure the referenda passed.

"I knew that with the support of NJEA our local could play a major role in passing these referenda," Tavares said. "Our field rep, Brian, steered us in a positive direction from the very beginning, and I felt that winning was our only option."

The association's first Representative Council

meeting in September focused on the issue. The superintendent was invited to make a presentation about the two proposals. As FREA's UniServ field rep, I made a presentation about the politics of the issue and gave an overview of what steps the association could take to campaign for the referenda.

When Vala asked for a motion to support the referenda, it passed unanimously.

Later in September, Tavares and Corfield sat down with me to map out their campaign. Approximately 800 NJEA members lived in the district. In a low turnout election, that could go a long way toward ensuring victory. They set about figuring out what tools they could use to reach those members, talk with them about the referenda, and urge them to vote on Nov. 5.

BREAKING OUT THE TOOLBOX

Ultimately, they used a lot of tools from their toolbox. They pulled together staff support from throughout NJEA's many divisions, but the success or failure of the campaign relied on their members' willingness to do the hard work.

First on the list was an NJEA Pride in Public Education Grant, which is an excellent way to engage the community. FREA had a large Pride event scheduled for the end of September on Raritan Township Community Day.

Volunteers from FREA spent that Saturday morning staffing a table at the event. They gave away some great swag from the Pride store, including earbuds and hair chalk. They also spoke with community members about the referenda and explained its importance. Photographs illustrated the conditions inside the schools.

Many parents were there with their children. Vala was working at the booth when a child came up with his dad and pointed to one of the boards, saying “Look Dad, that’s MY school!” The pictures spoke for themselves.

“I still get goose bumps thinking about that,” Vala said.

Next up was phone-banking. It can be frustrating to call a list of people, because most of the calls go unanswered. But there is value in leaving a message, and if volunteers make enough calls, they ultimately speak directly with a considerable number of people. Of course, it helps if the phone numbers are accurate. This is why it’s important for NJEA members to keep their information up to date in their NJEA profiles.

The FREA brought phone lists and flip phones to their October and November Rep Council meetings. After they heard an update on the campaign, the reps volunteered to call these lists of other NJEA members in town. In November, the night before the election, they were able to connect with over 50 members. Almost every one of them said they would vote for the referenda.

The next tactic was canvassing neighborhoods.

A small team of volunteers met at the Hunterdon County Education Association office in Flemington on Saturday mornings in October and November. They split up the map and set out to knock on the doors of their fellow NJEA members.

As luck would have it, that also meant visiting some of their students’ homes. Corfield’s turf included her own neighborhood, and her neighbors were happy to come to the door and speak with her. At one house, a little girl came to the door, looked through the window, and cried out, “Mommy! Mommy! My teacher’s at the door!” The girl’s mother came to the door, and it wasn’t hard to convince her to vote for the referenda.

Phone-banking and canvassing are great ways to reach outside of your local association and connect with other NJEA members in town. But there’s another tried-and-true method of talking with members: worksite conversations. FREA took a list of their own members who lived in Flemington, split it up by building, and assigned building reps to have a conversation with each member about the referenda.

They also enlisted some of the other nearby locals. Volunteers from the Hunterdon Central Education Association were a huge help, speaking with dozens of their own members who also lived in Flemington. Several other local associations pitched in to do the same. Taken as a whole, the 800 NJEA members living in town seemed too large to reach. But shared among many volunteers, they were easy to contact.

The week before the election, they used a final tool to reach out to members—a mobile app called Hustle. Hustle makes it easy to send text messages to hundreds of people. Four volunteers were able to text over 400 members in a matter of minutes.

To support their campaign on the ground, the local asked the NJEA Government Relations Division to develop a mailer that went out to every member in town. Corfield also wrote a letter to the editor, published in local media, explaining why the referenda were good for students. The NJEA Communications Division shared that letter from its NJEA Facebook page to increase its reach in the community.

All of this was tied together with a database called VAN—the Voter Activation Network. This database helped track the outcomes of conversations, create phone lists, sort members into locals for worksite conversations and map out members by neighborhood for canvassing. It’s a sophisticated piece of software, and it’s humming along behind the scenes of every modern campaign.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

By Election Day, FREA had made numerous attempts to reach NJEA members living in town. They had tracked conversations with well over 200 of them and confirmed them as supporters. Their campaign combined hard work by their member volunteers with staff and resources from NJEA.

Each piece was critical to the outcome of the campaign. And as the polls closed at 8 p.m. on Nov. 5, Vala, Tavares, and Corfield sat in a conference room waiting to see if that outcome would be a success. They were joined by other FREA members, school board members, the district business administrator, and the superintendent.

“I knew we had worked hard,” said Vala. “But I kept thinking of what we could have done differently or better. I just kept hoping that it was enough.”

An hour went by. Results started to trickle in. Finally, just before 10 p.m., the results were clear: both proposals had passed.

They spent the rest of the night celebrating their victory, but the passage of the two referenda wasn’t their only success. FREA had put together a plan, executed it, and grown its power in the process. The next time a campaign comes around, they’ll be familiar with every tool in their toolbox, from canvassing to “Hustling” to worksite conversations.

That’s not to say that everything went according to plan. It was difficult at times to find volunteers willing to do the work. But those who did the work remained optimistic and they persevered. Now they know who they can count on and who needs to be supported or encouraged.

Every local association can do this work. Whether it’s a referendum or a school board campaign, you know what’s best for your schools. Leverage that expertise, along with the power of the NJEA members living in your community and go build your own victory. 🗳️



FREA members talked with community residents at their table during Raritan Township Community Day. From left: Samantha Sladky, Kelley Ellenberg, and FREA Pride Chair Mindy Pacholick.



A cry for SUPPORT

How professional associations like CEC can help special educators succeed

By Danielle Kovach

I did it. I didn't want to, but I did.

While my students were at lunch, I closed my classroom door, turned off the lights, and cried.

I felt the weight of the world come crashing down on my already burdened heart.

Through my tears, I mentally calculated my days to retirement and realized the road is way longer than I thought.

Even after 22 years of teaching, the stress of being a special educator still gets to me every single day. There are individualized education programs (IEPs), quarterly reports, behavior plans, goals and objectives to attend to. State testing, district initiatives, teacher evaluations, professional development plans and lesson planning add to the mix.

Dr. Danielle Kovach is a special education teacher at Tulsa Trail Elementary School in Hopatcong, an adjunct professor at Centenary University, and an NJEA PDII Consultant. She is also a member of the CEC Board of Directors. Kovach can be reached at dkovach@njea.org.

Above all, there's the constant, self-imposed pressure I put on myself to meet all the academic and emotional needs of my students, combined with the fear of failing them as their teacher.

This alone seems to be more than one person can bear, but when combined with the stress of my other jobs—taking care of my family and three boys, (two with exceptionalities)—the pressure is bound to break even the most tenacious personalities.

Just thinking about it brings on my ever-present eye twitch. But behind the facade of having it all together, I'm in my classroom, behind closed doors, crying by myself.

In spite of the stress, I still love teaching. My classroom door reads, "no challenge too big, no victory too small." I love the challenge each day brings and the joy of helping my students reach their goals.

But I am led to wonder that if I, an accomplished, experienced teacher, am affected by stress in the teaching profession, how do novice teachers handle it? I also think about our future teachers

and my own son who is studying to be a special educator. What stresses will they encounter? It doesn't surprise me that new teachers in the field are not staying in what should be a rewarding and noble profession.

Education Week analyzed federal data and found the number of special education teachers nationally dropped by more than 17 percent during the past decade, which it called "a worrisome trend in a career path that has seen chronic shortages for years."

ISSUES FACING TEACHERS

The 2019 State of the Special Education Profession Survey Report, published by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and authored by Susan A. Fowler, Ph.D., Mary Ruth B. Coleman, Ph.D., and William K. Bogdan, Ph.D., identifies some of the issues we must confront.

The 1,500 special education teachers who responded to the survey said the top three factors influencing their success are:

- Adequate resources to meet IEP requirements.
- Smaller class size/caseloads.
- Administrators who support the IEP process.

Teachers were asked to self-evaluate their competence levels for a range of practices using a rating scale of 1 (not competent) to 5 (extremely competent).

Most respondents rated themselves as very to extremely competent in the use of most practices used in specialized instruction. Respondents' rating of competence with assessments, instruction and classroom management shows solid self-efficacy for teaching students with exceptionalities. Respondents also reported high levels of competence in the use of discipline strategies, perhaps as a result of increased use of evidence-based practices and positive behavioral supports.

This demonstrates that teachers have self-confidence—a critical component to succeed as a special educator.

Teachers were less likely to rate themselves as highly confident around family engagement, especially in meeting the needs of families who differed from them demographically. Only one in five respondents indicated high levels of confidence in meeting the needs of families who spoke a different language and about one-third rated themselves as highly confident in meeting the needs of families who differed from them in terms of ethnicity or culture.

Respondents paint a mixed picture of district support for using recommended practices for collaboration and enhancing their instructional skills. Nearly half of respondents reported frequent use of collaborative approaches by their school for teaching students with exceptionalities.

Fewer respondents rated their general education district administrators or building principals as being very prepared to support them in their work in comparison to their special education supervisors and administrators.

SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS

We need to support our special educators to keep our best educators in the field for our students who need them most.

Professional organizations—national and local—are integral to this process. They provide the professional development, networking support, and resources to help teachers succeed.

NATIONAL-LEVEL RESOURCES

The CEC is the largest international professional association of educators dedicated to advancing the success of children with exceptionalities. The CEC accomplishes its mission through advocacy, standards and professional development. Core values reflect visionary thinking, integrity and



During a “Classroom Close-up NJ” segment titled “Front Stage,” special education students from Tulsa Trail Elementary School work with Hopatcong High School students as they learn about theater production. The goal is to build confidence and self-esteem while fostering social and emotional growth. Teacher Danielle Kovach helps students with their scripts.





Sandra Peart (r), a Buena Regional Middle School reading specialist works with general education and special education students in a small group reading lab. To build student confidence in reading, Peart invites families to a Reading Recognition event, which was featured on "Classroom Close-up NJ" in 2015.



Reading Specialist Sandra Peart and a student discuss class journals during an episode of "Classroom Closeup NJ" in 2015.

inclusiveness.

Founded in 1922, CEC is represented in 49 states, with provincial units in Canada. There are also 18 Special Interest Divisions that bring together CEC members based on their professional role, practice setting or interest in a specific exceptionality.

Teacher retention is at the forefront of the CEC strategic plan. By promoting best practices and advocating for policies favorable to keeping special education teachers in the field, teachers will be equipped with the tools they need to aid them in the classroom and prevent burnout, which causes them to leave the profession.

For novice teachers, CEC offers publications such as "The Survival Guide for New Special Education Teachers" and "What Every Special Educator Must Know." These books offer practical guidance on such topics as roles and responsibilities, school environment and culture, classroom organization and management, collaboration with other professionals, and individual professional development.

CEC also offers webinars on hot topics in the field of special education such as co-teaching, working with administration and building effective family involvement.

“

There's the constant, self-imposed pressure I put on myself to meet all the academic and emotional needs of my students, combined with the fear of failing them as their teacher.

LOCAL RESOURCES

The New Jersey Council for Exceptional Children (NJCEC) is the state unit of the Council for Exceptional Children. NJCEC offers an annual conference, professional publications, and newsletters that keep members aware of national issues and current teaching strategies, professional and student recognition programs including scholarships for high school seniors with special needs.

The NJCEC 2020 Annual Spring Conference, “Embracing the Whole Child: Promoting Social Emotional Learning,” will be held on Monday, March 16, 2020, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Ramapo College. Participants can choose from over 40 sessions that support special educators, both new to the field as well as those with years of experience.

This year's keynote speaker, Haley Moss, is a South Florida native who was diagnosed with autism at age three. Upon receiving her autism diagnosis, her family was told that she would be fortunate to make a friend, graduate high school or obtain her driver's license.

Haley has defied the expectations set forth in her initial diagnosis. Today, she is an attorney, author, artist, and autism advocate who writes and speaks publicly about her journey and gives hope for other people with autism, their families, and their friends. Her powerful story will uplift and inspire you. For more information on joining NJCEC or the 2020 Annual Spring conference, visit njcec.org or contact NJCEC President Julie Good, jandgood@msn.com.

WHY PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS MATTER

I hope the information in this article demonstrates the value of professional associations.

For me personally, my involvement in CEC and NJCEC has been rich and rewarding. Beyond the many services and resources mentioned above, some of the strongest value has come from the relationships I developed. I now have a strong network of people I can turn to in any number of situations where I need help.

To build these relationships, you must engage in organizations like these. I encourage all of you to do so and take advantage of the many opportunities that will flow from them. 🍷



Why Join the Council for Exceptional Children

The Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) is a professional association of educators dedicated to advancing the success of children with exceptionalities. It can be your professional home. Visit cec.sped.org/membership to learn more or contact CEC at service@cec.sped.org or 888-232-7733.

CONNECT

Join professional discussion forums through the CECCommunity and share ideas, post content, get answers to questions about your practice, find classroom tips, and more. Join a CEC special interest division and/or state unit.

GROW

Tap into CEC webinars for online professional development tailored to your needs. The CEC Convention & Expo will further your professional growth, keep you up-to-date in the field, and provide local and international networking opportunities. You have access hundreds of publications and professional development products.

LEARN

Get professional development and professional development hours (PDHs) to meet recertification requirements. Read research articles in the Exceptional Children journal and research-to-practice articles in the Teaching Exceptional Children journal.

SUCCEED

Strengthen your expertise with access to CEC's research-based collaborative process that ensures its standards are current and fully address the knowledge and skills special educators must master.

GETTING BACK TO *nature* IN GALLOWAY

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY

The path to environmental education led underneath a fence surrounding a retention pond between Galloway Township Middle School (GTMS) and Reeds Road Elementary School.

A workshop led by Dave Crawford, a teacher from nearby Egg Harbor Township, inspired eighth grade science teacher Debra Sommers and sixth grade teacher Guy Buckelew, affectionally known as Mr. B, to explore their school's backyard. They crawled under an opening in the fence surrounding the retention pond to do reconnaissance on the site as a possible outdoor classroom that the students in three nearby schools could enjoy.

They saw a great blue heron, a red-tailed hawk, and macroinvertebrates. They knew they had a winning idea. They pitched the idea, but at that time, it did not go any further.

Reeds Road was devastated when Buckelew passed away in January 2010. He was a beloved

Kathryn Coulibaly is the associate editor of the NJEA Review and provides content and support to njea.org. She can be reached at kcoulibaly@njea.org.

teacher, and his colleagues were trying to think of a way to honor his memory. Sommers kept thinking about that visit to the pond and pitched the idea to fifth grade teacher Kathy Warren.

Warren took the idea to her principal, Dr. Bill Zipparo, who enthusiastically supported the idea. With the necessary administrative support to proceed, they were joined by sixth grade teachers Greg Lick from Reeds Road and Jacqueline Baltozer from Galloway's Roland Rogers Elementary School.

The timing could not have been better as budget cuts had eliminated all field trips. This freed up some money for the schools, but also provided a powerful incentive to give the three schools access to Mr. B's for environmental education.

MR. B'S BACKYARD CLASSROOM

In Buckelew's honor, the project was officially named Mr. B's Backyard Classroom. The team applied for and received two grants: one from the Galloway Township Education Foundation and another from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. With those two grants, they purchased picnic tables and supplies used for hands-on labs in the field.

The classroom grew slowly over time, beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, but it had motivated supporters right from the beginning. In addition to the support of professors from nearby Stockton University, which is well-known for its environmental programs, they also have

the AmeriCorps Watershed Ambassadors present two lessons every year on the local Mullica River Watershed and on macroinvertebrates.

Reeds Road Elementary School donated a shed for supplies. U.S. Fish and Wildlife employee Eric Schradling built a dock and bird houses. Schradling's expertise was essential to the team; he advised them on habitat management. Two former Galloway students volunteered to help, earning an Eagle Scout designation by doing various projects that enhanced Mr. B's Backyard Classroom.

THE ECOSYSTEM NEXT DOOR

Guiding the students through the outdoor classroom gave teachers and staff an opportunity to educate students about the amazing ecosystem that was literally in their backyard.

"It's my pet peeve that kids know about giraffes, lions and tigers but they don't know about the animals in their own backyard," Sommers said.

Staff takes students through Mr. B's Backyard Classroom at least seasonally. They can observe the changes in the plants and different behaviors among the many animals that call the classroom home, from frogs to turtles to snakes to birds, and macroinvertebrates.

Students bring iPads with them to take pictures and post them on the Mr. B's Backyard Classroom blog and Instagram.



Sommers observes wildlife with some of her students.



Seventh-graders at Galloway Township Middle School enjoy the outdoor classroom.

NATURE FEST

The team also started Nature Fest, an annual event launched in 2011, in which students select a topic that interests them. The topics must be about South Jersey ecosystems or organisms that would be found in those ecosystems, or important environmental issues. Students then conduct research and put together a lesson to be taught to the visitors. Students use backboards to display facts, provide hands-on materials or actual organisms, play games, and other activities to teach their information to the visitors.

They also invite professional organizations to teach and display facts from their organization. Some of the organizations that have participated over the years are the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Edwin B. Forsythe Wildlife Refuge, Go Green Galloway, N.J. Forest Fire, Atlantic County Utilities Authority, Stockton University, and others.

More than 800 visitors, including kindergarten through eighth-grade students, parents and invited guests, rotate through the presentations. These presentations are anything but dull.

GTMS students Rilyn and Vivian set up a “battle” between the gray squirrel and the Eastern chipmunk to educate people about their strengths and differences.

“Kids don’t want to hear a boring presentation of facts,” Rilyn said. “We turned it into a battle because kids like roasting and teasing each other.”

Warren and her students at Reeds Road Elementary School.



“

Guiding the students through the outdoor classroom gave teachers and staff an opportunity to educate students about the amazing ecosystem that was literally in their backyard.

“A lot of kids liked it so much, they wanted to see the presentation again,” Vivian said. “We’re teenagers, so we know what kids want. We use their weaknesses to persuade them to participate.”

For two weeks leading up to Nature Fest, Sommers’ class invades the library to research their topic and work on their projects and presentations. Sommers has used the grant money to obtain New Jersey-specific books to help her students research their area. She also obtained heavy duty poster board, and the school supplies needed to decorate them. Students conduct research, write field guides, type up facts in easy-to-digest bullets, decorate and organize their presentation boards, develop games or hands-on activities, and practice their actual lesson.

Nature Fest has become an eagerly anticipated event at the schools and in the community. Sommers and Warren agree that it’s the perfect culminating activity.

“By the end of the year, students need these kinds of collaborative projects,” Warren said. “They can’t just sit still and listen anymore. This gets them engaged, active, and developing a sense of pride in their area. We are lucky to live in such a beautiful environment. It’s important for children to recognize the natural beauty that is around them. That gives them a sense of pride.”



Fifth-graders work on Nature Fest projects.

“

***It's my pet peeve
that kids know about
giraffes, lions and tigers
but they don't know
about the animals in
their own backyard.***

“We are fortunate to have an administration that supports our program and every year our Galloway Township Education Foundation Grant allows us to add supplies and fund the costs of Nature Fest,” Sommers said.

AN AWARD-WINING PROGRAM

In 2015, they were awarded the New Jersey Governor's Environmental Excellence Award and Honorable Mention from the New Jersey School Boards Association. This program also contributed to their earning the Silver Certification from Sustainable Jersey for Schools.

Warren and Sommers agree that the outdoor classroom and Nature Fest are projects that educators across the state can replicate.

“We have so many resources in New Jersey,” Sommers said. “Regardless of where you live, there's a retention pond or natural area nearby that can be used to teach students about our ecosystem. We were inspired by a teacher to begin our project eight years ago; we would love to see some educators take our ideas and build off them even more.”

To learn more about Mr. B's Classroom, go to mrbsbackyardclassroom.org/gtms-blog

You can also contact Sommers, Warren, and Lick for more information on how to start an outdoor classroom of your own:

- Debra A. Sommers, just retired after 31 years as Galloway Township Middle School science educator: dasommers55@gmail.com
- Kathy Warren, Reeds Road Elementary School 5th grade science teacher: WarrenK@gtps.k12.nj.us
- Greg Lick, Reeds Road Elementary School 6th grade science teacher: LickG@gtps.k12.nj.us

STUDENTS AGREE!

“I learned that by interacting with nature, you can change the world to make it a better place. My favorite is just being able to go outside and see all the beautiful sights of nature and life. My final wishes and thoughts are that Mr. B's Backyard Classroom will change everyone's thoughts on nature to change the world itself.”
Jonathan

“Mr. B's has taught me so much about our ecosystem and all the little things that make our world what it is. They all make a big impact, from the tadpoles to the birds, they have made me want to go back to Mr. B's more and more. Mr. B's has made a huge impact on my view in science and it will stay with me forever.”
Priya

“My most favorite part about Mr. B's Backyard Classroom was the Nature Fest. In that, I got to share my knowledge with several different kids. It was amazing to see all the kids come out and learn hands-on, just the same way I did! Overall, Mr. B's Backyard Classroom is a wonderful place where learning can come alive, literally!” Alex

The students' candid and honest blogs validate the value of our program. See for yourself by going to the Mr. B's Backyard Classroom at mrbsbackyardclassroom.org/gtms-blog



PRIVATIZE, OUTSOURCE, CONTRACT OUT.

WHATEVER IT'S CALLED, IT DOESN'T WORK

BY DOROTHY WIGMORE



“

Privatization often involves the systematic elimination of human rights protections and further marginalization of the interests of low-income earners and those living in poverty.

Who cleans your school? Who drives the buses in your district? Who's preparing and serving meals in the cafeteria? Why does it matter?

In schools, it's about in-house staff preventing or dealing quickly with hazards such as indoor air and mold problems. It's about quality education that depends on the often hidden and under-valued work performed by educational support professionals (ESPs). And it's about decent jobs and equity, say those worried about the effects of privatizing jobs in the public sector and those who have studied the results.

WHAT'S PRIVATIZATION? HOW DOES IT REALLY WORK?

Privatization is a spectrum; from contracting-out or "outsourcing" specific jobs, to "public-private partnerships (P3s), to losing a public "asset" (e.g., a school) and all the work associated with it. Promoted by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, among others— outsourcing common global practice in which jobs go to private, for-profit companies to "save money" and for "efficiency."

Yet, many studies show privatization does not live up to these

Dorothy Wigmore is a long-time health and safety specialist, trained in occupational hygiene, ergonomics, work organization/ stress and education. A Canadian, she has also worked in the U.S. and Mozambique, and been involved in efforts to prevent and deal with job-related hazards for many years.

promises. This "race to the bottom" punishes the middle class, rewards corporations, and is a driving factor of income inequality.

This inequality is the theme of the 2018 report by an independent expert commissioned by the United Nations titled "Extreme Poverty and Human Rights." The report holds that privatization is not a technical topic, as proponents often claim. Instead, it "...often involves the systematic elimination of human rights protections and further marginalization of the interests of low-income earners and those living in poverty..." and "...The privatization of public projects and services often yields significant short-term cost savings, but at the expense of imposing major burdens on future generations."

This is just one of the many reasons that NJEA is concerned about the subcontracting of ESP jobs. What corners will be cut? What about the turnover and inattention that results from substandard pay and working conditions in nonunionized jobs? What's the effect of losing quality trained people? Will costs increase once a subcontractor has its foot in the door? Will infection and communicable diseases increase, as they have in hospitals that contracted out cleaning jobs?

WHAT ABOUT HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES?

"Privatization doesn't work," says Bob Antonelli, an NJEA Organizational Development field representative. "It's a quick fix, and you get what you pay for."

“They’ll do what’s in the contract,” says Mike Rollins, another field representative. “If it doesn’t say ‘clean the toilet,’ they’re not going to do that. If it’s indoor air quality, they may not be changing the filters or doing other routine maintenance.”

Those kinds of health and safety issues can affect the workers themselves, other school staff, students and visitors.

“They’re also not spending money on professional development training,” Antonelli adds. “One thing our members look for is more professional training. We provide that to them; they, and their employers, get the benefit of quality training.”

Health and safety committees are one answer.

“We’re organizing them to be the watchdog, to make sure the right chemicals are used, the right training is done, to improve the quality of work,” Antonelli says.

“We want to have health and safety committees, so custodians can approach the district about chemicals not being safe, so they’re not doing it just as one person,” Rollins adds. “It reduces the likelihood of retaliation for ‘complaining’ and increases the chance of getting things fixed.”

“The people doing the job know what’s not getting done, like inspections or how often things are cleaned, all the different standards,” Antonelli says. “When we sit with management, they get our members educating them, saying ‘We can’t use these chemicals, and this is why.’”

WORKERS IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Workers’ stories are effective. At Brookdale Community College, privatization was averted after custodial workers met the college’s president, telling him about the work they do that goes unrecognized but benefits the faculty and students. Elsewhere, the NJEA member-driven South Jersey Anti-Privatization Coalition (see resources) has won every one of its 23 privatization battles, saving members’ jobs and protecting the health and safety of everyone in the affected schools.

In a school district in Passaic County, the union fought off privatization of school busing.

“Those bus drivers, because they’d been so involved in their neighborhood, they know how

the roads are plowed and where to pick kids up,” Rollins said. “When you privatize, you get a bus riding right by students, or not knowing the roads.”

Subcontracted busing can also cost more. A 2016 study at the University of Mississippi titled “Outsourcing and the Pupil Transportation Industry In Minnesota: An Economic Evaluation” found outsourcing Minnesota school busing to private contractors increased total transportation costs by about 21%.

Privatization can undermine relationships, Antonelli and Rollins say. ESPs often live in the community where they work. Some are former students at the school where they now work as paraprofessionals, cleaners, bus drivers or security staff. Their local long-term knowledge makes a difference in how schools work.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Privatization affects everyone. It lowers income for workers, decreases the quality of services offered at schools for students, and ultimately allows private corporations to rob communities for the gain of a few wealthy executives and investors. What can you do about it?

- NJEA members can support one another within the local association, through union health and safety committees and by staying on top of school district plans.
- Union health and safety committees can document the need for in-house custodial and maintenance staff to fix hazards, and support the staff trying to do that.
- If you are facing—or anticipate facing—a threat of privatization, contact your UniServ field rep.
- Get involved in WEC’s Public Need campaign that organizes trainings to educate membership on the ramifications of unchecked corporate greed, and campaigns to fight against it. Contact Brandon Castro at bcastro@njwec.org.
- Support NJEA’s ongoing fight for job justice for ESPs: visit njea.org/justice to learn more.

Resources

- NJEA: Fight for job justice for ESPs (njea.org/justice)
- “The Future is Public”: A 2019 report from The Transnational Institute (TNI): that provides case studies about privatization failures that led municipalities and other public institutions around the world to bring outsourced activities in-house. (tni.org/en/publication/the-future-is-public)
- “Extreme Poverty and Human Rights,“: A United Nations 2018 report of the Special Rapporteur on privatization and human rights. (undocs.org/A/73/396)
- WEC’s Public Need Campaign: njwec.org/take-action/campaigns/publicneed
- Facebook group: South Jersey Anti-Privatization Coalition (facebook.com/groups/1487458047951601)



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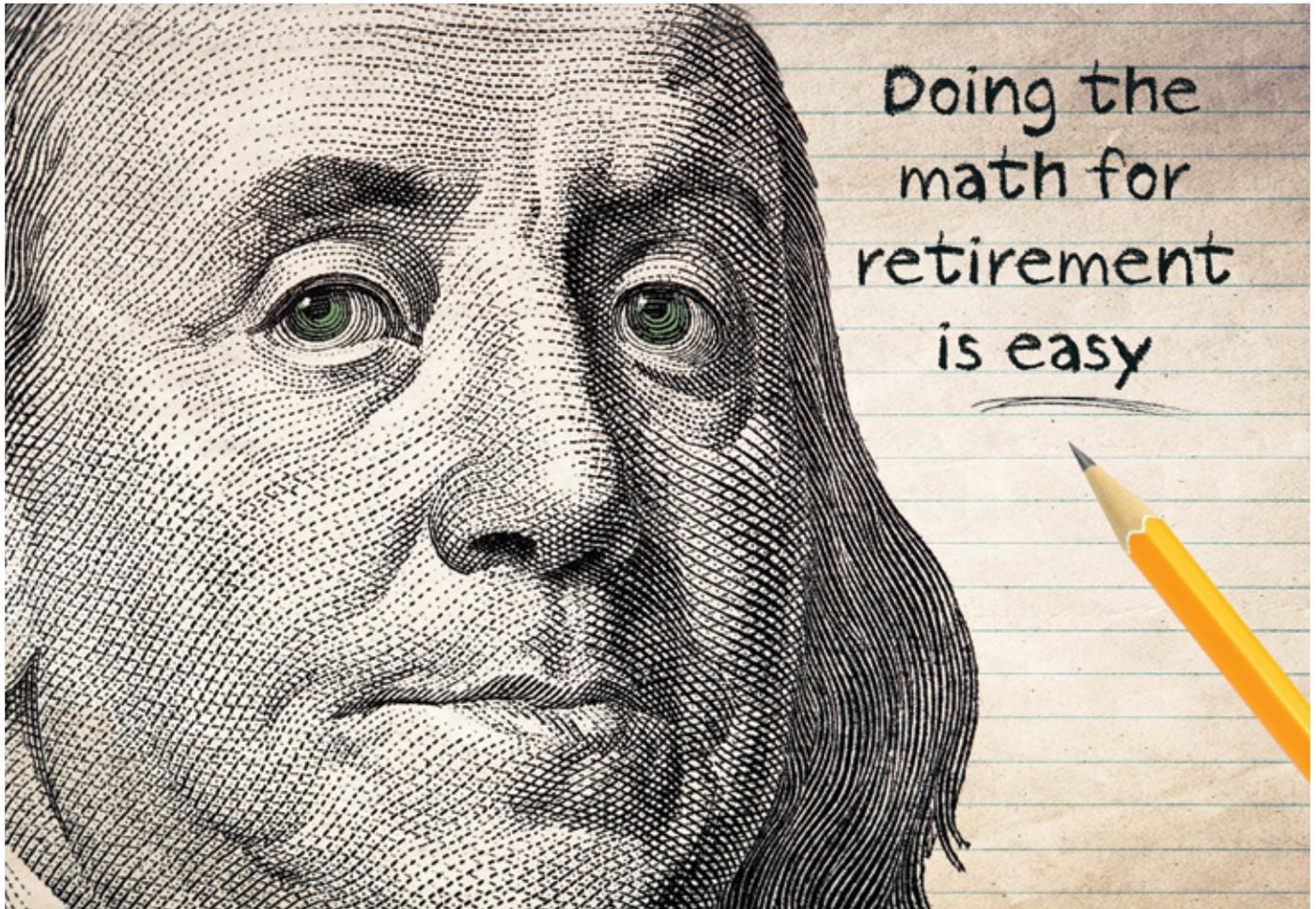
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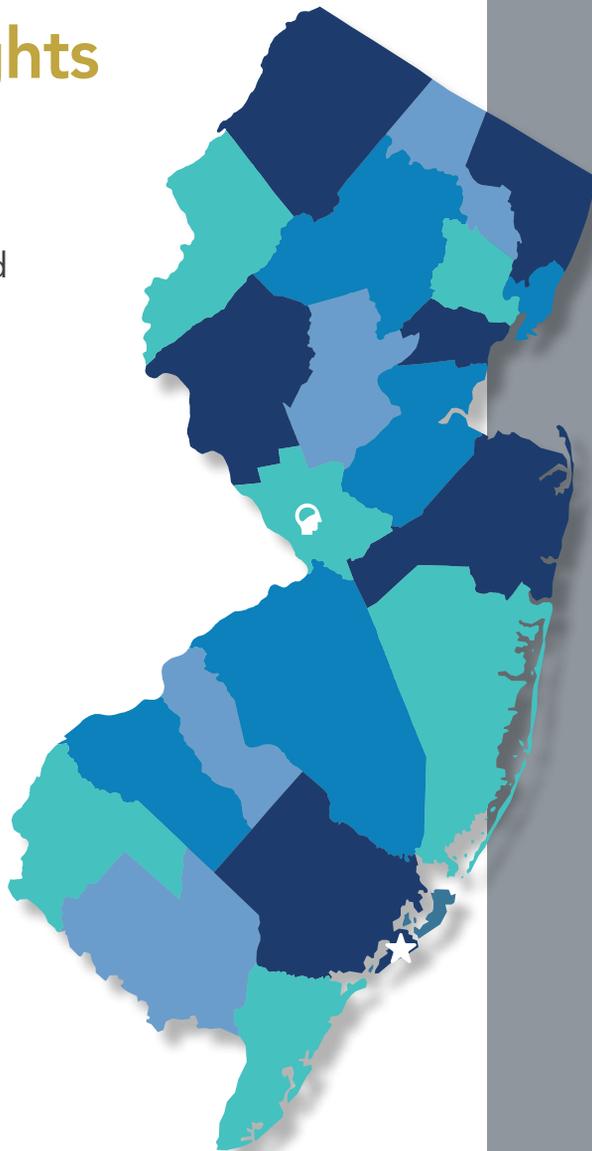


SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

Workshops and
conferences

highlights

Mindfulness,
gifted
education and
personalized
learning



This workshop has been endorsed by NJEA's Professional Development Institute and is also posted on njea.org. Those seeking endorsement of a professional development experience that they will provide should call NJEA's Professional Development Division at 609-599-4561.

NJAGC 2020 CONFERENCE: A CLEAR VISION OF EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE IN GIFTED EDUCATION

The annual conference of the New Jersey Association for Gifted Children (NJAGC), "A Clear Vision of Equity and Excellence in Gifted Education," will be held Friday, March 20 at the Conference Center at Mercer. The program is open to educators, curriculum supervisors and administrators.

Participants will hear the keynote from Dr. Joy Lawson Davis and attend one breakout session in the morning and two in the afternoon. Davis' keynote is titled "Identifying, Engaging, and Supporting Gifted Learners from Underrepresented Populations." Her workshop is titled "Using Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in the Gifted Education Classroom." Other workshops will address the educational and social/emotional needs of minority students, strategies for increasing equity in gifted programs, and other topics relating to broadening diverse representation in gifted education. Presenters will deliver sessions incorporating their vision of excellence in gifted education, such as showcasing successful programming for the gifted learner, sharing best practices to develop attendees' individual educational skills, and idea exchange seminars as a way of increasing participants' knowledge in the gifted field. Speakers will also provide an overview of teaching strategies, skills, and characteristics specific to the gifted learner.

This year's conference will seek to guide educators on best practices that will help ensure that students from all backgrounds are fairly represented in gifted programs.

The costs run from \$159-\$219, depending on membership in NJAGC. Contact Sue McGreevy at 856-273-7530 or mcgreevys@njagc.org for more information. Visit njagc.org to register.

★ PERSONALIZED LEARNING CONFERENCE MID-ATLANTIC

Join innovative educators March 11-13 at Harrah's in Atlantic City and explore next generation learning at the Personalized Learning Conference Mid-Atlantic (PLearnMA). Learn how to assist your students in identifying their motivations and goals and use the social-emotional skill of self-management to persist in achieving them. Deepen connections within the classroom to build foundations of self-regulation

to better access academic content presented in a personalized learning environment.

The theme this year, "Integrating Social Emotional Learning with Personalized Learning," will feature over 120 dynamic and interactive sessions focused on personalized learning for K-12 students. Attend featured breakout sessions, meet the experts, connect with exhibitors and vendors and network with leaders and innovators.

The cost is \$475, which includes attendance to the full conference from Wednesday, March 11 through Friday, March 13. A waiver for overnight travel has been obtained for this conference

from the New Jersey Department of Education.

Meals and refreshments—opening reception, breakfasts and lunches—are included. Available for purchase separately (not included in registration): book study, and book only. Capital Area Online Learning Association (CAOLA) members receive \$100 off registration; contact CAOLA for code.

To register go to bit.ly/plearnma or contact Mark Hennes at 717-732-8427 or mhennes@caiu.org.

MORE TO LEARN

MASTER TEACHER INSTITUTE IN HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

Using Personal Letters to Teach about the Holocaust

A dynamic one-day workshop on Holocaust representation and the use of personal letters as primary documents for teaching about family separation, Holocaust history, immigration, and anti-Semitism will be held at Rutgers on March 4, 2020, under the auspices of the Herbert and Leonard Littman Families Holocaust Resource Center (HRC) and the Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life.

The workshop will be taught by two distinguished speakers: Debórah Dwork, the inaugural Rose Professor of Holocaust History and founding director of the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University, whose recent research focuses on the use of personal letters as primary documents in Holocaust scholarship; and Ted Rosenthal, acclaimed jazz pianist and composer of the recent jazz opera "Dear Erich," based on more than 200 personal letters found in his family's attic between his father in America and his grandmother in Nazi Germany. The HRC's pedagogical consultant, Colleen Tambuscio, will guide teachers in ways to include personal letters and eye witness testimony in their classroom teaching.

This free workshop for middle and high school teachers will be held on the Rutgers New Brunswick campus from 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Educational materials, professional development credits, and lunch will be provided.

Advance registration is required at BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu. Free parking will be available.

To register, one must be a current 6-12 grade teacher with at least one year of teaching experience and at least one year teaching the Holocaust. For more information, email Sarah Portilla at sarah.portilla@rutgers.edu.

GOOD IDEAS IN TEACHING PRECALCULUS, AND . . ."

Includes keynote on congressional gerrymandering

The keynote speaker, Diana Davis, is a visiting professor from Swarthmore College. Gerrymandering, the drawing of congressional districting lines for political advantage, has been in the news a lot recently. Mathematicians have been instrumental in creating tools to identify when a districting plan is gerrymandered; a mathematician helped Pennsylvania throw out its gerrymandered plan, and a group of mathematicians contributed important supporting evidence in the March 2019 U.S. Supreme Court case about gerrymandering in Maryland and North Carolina. Davis explains how geometry and statistics can help detect gerrymandering. Attendees will have a chance to try their hands at gerrymandering and at using some of the tools that mathematicians have developed to measure the problem.

In addition to the keynote, there will be more than 30 breakout sessions in precalculus, calculus, algebra, geometry, statistics, discrete mathematics, instructional strategies, technology integration and general interest. The target audience is mathematics teachers from grades 9 through 14. There will be nine or 10 open sharing sessions for teachers to interact with colleagues on selected topics of interest for this audience. Register at tinyurl.com/AMTNJ-DIMACS-2019-2020 and select the conference. A complimentary continental breakfast and lunch are included.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS ROUNDTABLE

Ocean County Soil Conservation District announces its 23rd Annual Environmental Educators Roundtable, which will be held on Earth Day, April 22 from 3 to 8 p.m. The event takes place at the Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education in Waretown.

Our Roundtable theme this year is "Happy Earth Day for the Next Generation – Full STEAM Ahead!" The event will feature an array of STEAM-based activities and field experiences to motivate and inspire educators to incorporate environmental topics into their curricula. Informative and adventurous programs are aligned with Next Generation Science Standards. Explore the local Barnegat Bay watershed and network with environmental educators while gathering resources, ideas and lesson plans to take back to your classroom.

Doors open at 3 p.m. for an Open House that includes exhibitors and a light dinner. Workshops are offered from 4:30 to 6:45 p.m., followed by dessert and light refreshments. The keynote presentation by Xerces Society Senior Biologist, Kelly Gill, will run from 7 to 7:45 p.m.

Wrap-up, evaluations and professional development certificate distribution conclude the event.

The fee is \$25.

The deadline to register is April 10. Contact Becky Laboy, Education Outreach Specialist, Ocean County Soil Conservation District at 609-971-7002, ext. 114 or education@soildistrict.org. For more information visit soildistrict.org/educational-programs/roundtable.

MAITLAND P. SIMMONS SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR SCIENCE TEACHERS

Interested in shifting your science instruction from a place where students are just "learning about" to one where they are "figuring out" the how and why?

The New Jersey Science Teachers Association (NJSTA) announces the 16 annual Maitland P. Simmons Memorial Award Summer Institute designed for teachers of science in grades K-12. This five-day institute titled "NGSX:

Science Exemplar System for PD” is a system of professional development designed to help teachers learn about the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and three-dimensional science teaching and learning that is described in the Framework for K-12 Science Education. NGSX brings the expertise of NRC Framework developers, experts in teacher learning, and expert professional development facilitators to science educators.

NGSX is organized into learning pathways structured to immerse participants in the three dimensions of learning: core ideas of science, scientific and engineering practices, and crosscutting concepts called for in the framework. Using a web-based system of tasks, tools and resources in a study-group format, the NGSX experience combines firsthand science investigations, videotaped expert commentary and classroom case studies along with facilitated individual, small group and whole group discussions.

The Institute will be held at the New Jersey Center for Science, Technology, and Mathematics/STEM Building of Kean University in Union from July 13-17. Twenty-four teachers will be offered opportunities to collaborate and enrich their ideas.

Daily light breakfast, breaks, and lunch will be included.

The institute is supported by the Maitland P. Simmons Memorial Award Scholarship Fund of NJSTA which covers all costs for NJSTA members. Information and online Applications are available at njsta.org.

Successful applicants will be notified on a first-come, first-served basis and will be required to submit a \$100 reservation fee within one week of notification to be refunded only upon successful completion of the institute. Applicants who are accepted must commit to attend each full day of the program. All teachers of science are welcome to apply, but teachers who are accepted for the Institute must become NJSTA members to participate.

NGSS SUMMER INSTITUTE SLATED FOR JULY

Is your classroom aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)? As the fourth year of NGSS implementation begins, many educators are ready to deepen their understanding of several foundational aspects of the NGSS:

- Developing and using phenomena.
- Developing instructional and assessment tasks that meaningfully integrate practices, crosscutting concepts and core ideas.
- Prompting student responses using crosscutting concepts.
- Supporting students in using core ideas to construct explanations supported by arguments.
- Supporting students in defining engineering problems and developing/optimizing solutions.

The Science Education Institute at Raritan Valley Community College offers a week-long Institute designed to support K-12 teachers and administrators with the implementation of the NGSS. This Institute follows the recommendations from the latest National Academies of Sciences Report and incorporates what we are learning about NGSS implementation through our work with thousands of teachers in New Jersey and across the nation.

The Summer Institute provides an immersive experience with the vision behind the NGSS and its three dimensions: the core ideas, the practices, and the crosscutting concepts. Participants engage in NGSS-aligned investigations to experience how practices, crosscutting concepts, and core ideas are meaningfully integrated in instruction and assessments in physical science, life science, earth science, and engineering. The institute includes K-12 sessions to illustrate how the NGSS develops across grades as well as breakout sessions for grades K-5 and 6-12. Every day there will be multiple opportunities for reflection and structured time to plan NGSS-aligned investigations.

The week-long institute is held at Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg.

Each day begins promptly at 9 a.m. and ends at 3:30 p.m. Light breakfast and lunch will be provided.

The institute is led by Dr. Wil van der Veen, a nationally recognized expert on the NGSS and science education and a member of the New Jersey State

Leadership Team for the NGSS. Participants will work in small groups that are facilitated by experienced classroom teachers from the institute’s NGSS Teacher Leader Program.

The fee is \$300 for the week. Register early as our Summer Institute tends to fill up quickly.

For more information and to register visit raritanval.edu/ngss or contact Tina Gandarillas at tina.gandarillas@raritanval.edu or 908-526-1200, ext. 8942.

To develop a long-term NGSS professional development plan for your district, email Dr. Wil van der Veen at wil.vanderveen@raritanval.edu.

MATH WORKSHOPS OFFERED AT RUTGERS

The Association of Mathematics Teachers of New Jersey (AMTNJ), with the cooperation of the Rutgers Department of Mathematics and the Center for Discrete Mathematics and Theoretical Computer Science (DIMACS), is offering math workshops for elementary, middle and high school teachers. The workshops are held on Rutgers’ Busch Campus and run from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Following are workshops offered in January. Workshops can be reviewed at the indicated websites.

High School workshops

- March 2: Symphony of Math, Grades 6-12
- March 4: Spurring the Imagination in Reasoning with Fun/Non-routine Math Problem, Grades 9-12
- March 10: So You Want to Start a Discrete Math Course? Grades 9-12
- March 17: Active Learning in Secondary Mathematics, Grades 6-12
- March 20: Precalculus Conference: Good Ideas in Teaching Precalculus and, Grades 9-14
- March 27: Empowering Students Who Ask, “When Are We Ever Going to Use This Math?” Grades 6-12

Registration and information:

tinyurl.com/AMTNJ-DIMACS-HS-2019-2020A

Middle School workshops

- March 2: Symphony of Math, Grades 6-12
- March 6: Teaching and Learning in a Heterogeneous Class: “Is it really possible?”, Grades 6-8
- March 17: Active Learning in Secondary Mathematics, Grades 6-12
- March 19: The Math Workshop Model, Grades 5-8
- March 27: Empowering Students Who Ask, “When Are We Ever Going to Use This Math?”, Grades 6-12
- March 30: Formative Assessment with Web-Enabled Devices, Grades 6-8

Registration and information:

tinyurl.com/AMTNJ-DIMACS-MS-2019-2020A

Elementary School Workshops

- March 3: Essential Understanding of Fractions and Operations with Fractions, Grades 3-5

Registration and information:

tinyurl.com/AMTNJ-DIMACS-Elem-2019-2020A

For more information or questions, contact AMTNJ at amtnj@juno.com.

SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ STUDENTS AND FAMILIES IN THE CLASSROOM

BY AMBER MYRRH INGRAM, NJEA PRESERVICE VICE PRESIDENT

The increase in the legal recognition of LGBTQ+ rights over the last decade—as well as the work to accept and celebrate their lives for more than a half century—means that educating our students about the history and realities of LGBTQ+ is essential. In addition, legislation signed last year by Gov. Phil Murphy requires that schools develop curricula that accurately portray the political, economic, and social contributions of persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals.

In having classroom discussions about LGBTQ+ persons, we cannot ignore the violence and discrimination they have faced and continue to face at the hands of hetero- and cis-normativity, the assumption that only heterosexuality and identifying only by one's gender as assigned at birth (i.e., cisgender) is normal and superior to other sexual orientations or gender identities. Many educators may struggle with how to address LGBTQ+ people, their relationships and families at various age levels, but it is vital to understand why we must:

- There are students in your classroom who fall into these identities.
- You will have families that fall into these identities.
- LGBTQ+ history is integral to U.S. history.

LGBTQ+ students are at an extreme disadvantage in schools where they are not accepted. In classrooms where educators affirm only opposite-sex relationships and narrowly defined expressions of gender, LGBTQ+ students will feel unheard or inadequate. They will wonder if they should trust or value all of the identities that make them who they are.

As educators, we are charged with guiding students to knowledge, serving them meals or driving their school buses, but we are also charged with keeping them safe physically and emotionally. One way to affirm students' various identities is to

ask ALL students which personal pronouns they identify with—not just the students you suspect may be transgender or gender nonbinary. It's a simple way of letting LGBTQ+ students know that you're there for them and modeling the behavior for all students.

LGBTQ+ families are your closest allies in meeting the needs your students. These families exist in a world that legally accepts them but socially does not. Affirming their identities at school reverses the damage of social stigma. If parents feel safe, their children will feel safe. You can help by doing the following:

- Never assume a parent or guardian's sexual or gender identity. If they are LGBTQ+ don't be overly inquisitive. Wait for them to open up to you.
- Always ask students for "guardian" information in place of the gendered "mother" and "dad." This not only affirms families with LGBTQ+ identities but families that may be headed by aunts, uncles, grandparents or other caregivers.

Educators need families and families need educators. By affirming their humanity, you will begin to bridge that gap.

LGBTQ+ history is embedded into the foundation of the United States. We can look at the work of trans-activists Marsha P. Johnson and Sylvia Rivera before, during, and after the Stonewall Riots in New York City in 1969, as well as the thousands of marches and protests to further the cause of rights for LGBTQ+ persons and those living with HIV/AIDS. We can honor and celebrate the talented works of LGBTQ+ writers James Baldwin and Audre Lorde, as well as, trans-activist/screenwriter/producer Janet Mock.

The 2020 election provides a lesson as the first to have an openly gay major candidate, Pete Buttigieg. There are also countless other LGBTQ+ politicians

“

In classrooms where educators affirm only opposite-sex relationships and narrowly defined expressions of gender, LGBTQ+ students will feel unheard or inadequate.

who serve at the state and national levels, including Althea Garrison, a Massachusetts politician who identifies as transgender; Kate Brown, the governor of Oregon who identifies as bisexual; Danica Roem, a transgender woman twice elected to the Virginia House of Delegates; and so many more.

As we further our work in the union and in our schools, it is imperative that we pay close attention to the ways in which we interact and advocate for people with LGBTQ+ identities. Be accepting of students regardless of their identities and never make assumptions. Ask questions with compassion but never overstep. Educate yourself on what you do not know.

For more information, I invite you to read, *Queer Scholarly Activism: An Exploration of the Moral Imperative of Queering Pedagogy and Advocating Social Change* at bit.ly/363sjDB. (Bitly links are case-sensitive.) 🏠

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

LEARNING OUR WAY FORWARD

BY MICHAEL RITZIUS

Professional Development has been undergoing a much-needed makeover in recent years, especially at NJEA. Educators are moving toward more participant-led approaches, rather than presenter-led approaches. The proliferation of Edcamps across the state is an example of this. NJEA has been working to redefine professional development as a collective pursuit that leads to systemic change. Practices such as World Café and Open Space drive participatory leadership, which assumes that expertise and experience are found throughout a roomful of educators rather than solely in the PowerPoint presentation of a traditional workshop presenter.

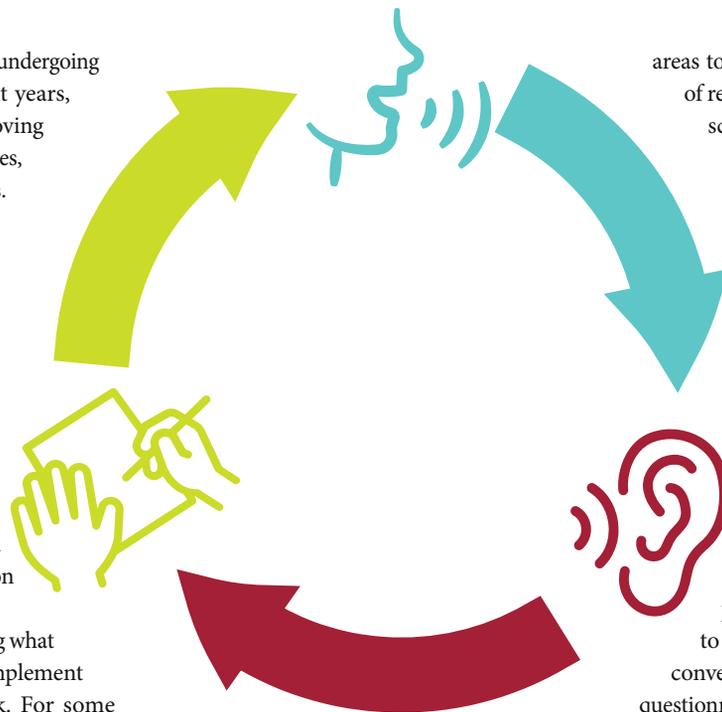
More recently, NJEA has been using what is known as design thinking to complement and extend the participatory work. For some background, see these previous *Review* articles: “Professional Development Redefined” and “Participatory Leadership: Shifting from Buy-in to Ownership.” You can find these article on njea.org by searching each article title.

At the heart of this work is the need to develop collective understandings among the participants of a school community and organize those understandings so that the community can work productively. This requires people talking to each other in an intentional way. A Design Thinking approach called Stakeholder Interviews can meet this need.

WHAT IS A STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW?

A stakeholder interview is an intentionally crafted conversation to understand the shared lived experiences of a group of people and identify

Michael Ritzius is an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. He can be reached at mritzius@njea.org.



areas to act. It can be used for any number of reasons—preparing for a shift to block scheduling, understanding the impact of a program such as positive behavior interventions and supports, a new curricular approach, or community organizing—a situation that could have diverse and complex consequences.

The approach is especially useful for large groups with only one hour needed to interview every member. The largest group so far to use a stakeholder interview approach had 720 members. Interviews are guided by an interview protocol consisting of roughly five to seven questions meant to serve as conversational prompts, as opposed to a questionnaire or survey. Afterward, interviews are collected and analyzed through a process called affinity mapping, which is a method for finding patterns and trends across qualitative responses. For a beginners guide to affinity mapping, visit bit.ly/affinitymapping.

HOW TO USE STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Stakeholder Interviews are equal parts science and art. Fundamentally, they are a qualitative research tool guided by principles (the science). These principals, from Dr. Otto Scharmer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, include:

- **Access transparency and trust.** Be open and honest with your intention in conducting interviews.
- **Engage in appreciative listening with suspended judgement.** Listen to interviewees to see and understand their experience from their perspective. Avoid inserting your own experiences into their story.

- **Leverage presence and silence.** Give the interviewee your full attention. Work to silence your inner monologue and urge to interrupt or fill quiet with your own voice.
- **Embrace your ignorance.** As the interview unfolds, trust and ask the questions that occur to you, even if they reveal a lack of basic understanding.
- **Give the conversations appropriate time.** Allot 15 minutes at a minimum.
- **Process the interviews.** Report what you have learned back to participants.

The art of stakeholder interviews is in how you structure the engagement. Personally, I have conducted stakeholder interviews for whole memberships all at once or over the course of weeks with smaller building-level engagements. I have conducted them with members, parents and students with groups as small as 12 and as large as 1,600.



New Brunswick EA member Melissa Katz conducts a stakeholder interview.

WHAT DOES A STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW LOOK LIKE?

Stakeholder interviews could be a series of one-to-one conversations or a large-scale membership wide engagement. For the large-scale engagements, it is recommended that a nonparticipating facilitator be used to conduct the meeting. The facilitator will manage materials, time and provide directions for the participants. In these large-scale engagements, participants will form triads with each playing a role—interviewer, interviewee and notetaker. Over the course of 20 minutes, the interviewer will use the interview protocol to host a conversation with the interviewee while the notetaker records in detail. After 20 minutes, everyone changes roles and repeats until each person has had an opportunity to be interviewed.

RESULTS

This approach has rendered several surprising results. Aside from providing leaders with new insights into addressing challenges, the collective approach helps develop empathy across the membership. It builds a sense of shared purpose along with shared understanding. It leaves participants feeling heard and empowered to act in ways that benefit the greater community. It is a research tool that also sets the stage for organizing for change.

If you are curious about the stakeholder interview approach, please email me. You may also read more at The Presencing Institute at MIT. Visit presencing.org/resource/tools/stakeholder-interview-desc. 

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NJREA RENEWS STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS

College students who were awarded scholarships from NJREA may renew them each year, provided they meet the criteria for the award. Recipients of either the Elizabeth Allen or Isabelle M. Hickmann four-year scholarship are eligible for renewal if they maintain a college GPA of at least 3.0.

Recipients of the Fred E. Aug Community College Scholarship are eligible for renewal in their second year if they maintain a college GPA of at least 2.75. On this page are renewal recipients for the 2019-20 school year.

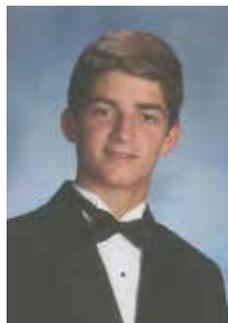


Jeremy Conover is a senior majoring in special education at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ). In addition to coursework, Conover continues to work as a mentor for the Career and Community Studies (CCS) program offered at TCNJ for individuals with intellectual disabilities. He also started coaching the CCS intramural flag football and softball teams, as well his Special Olympics bocce team in the spring, ultimately coaching at the annual summer games held at TCNJ. Conover believes that

these extracurriculars balanced his academic and social life well and is looking forward to continuing these activities during this year to further develop his skills in the field of psychology.



Sabrina Costa began her sophomore year at UCLA as a biology major. She was fortunate to have some top professionals in the country as professors in her freshman year. Because her major requirements are science-based, Costa decided to take some classes that were not in her comfort zone, including theater and philosophy. Outside the classroom, Costa joined the fashion club and created six designs that were in a fashion show at school. Her fashion line was featured on the front page of the school newspaper.



Ryan Devine completed his sophomore year at Dickinson College, where he majors in economics. In his words, "Being one of four, just a year apart, we are all responsible for our college loans. This scholarship means the world to me." As he looked back at his sophomore year, Devine realized that he had changed. Outside the classroom, he grew and thrived, becoming more outgoing and involved in his community. Devin was chosen to be a member of Dickinson's Student Advisory Athletic Committee, which represents

the interests of student athletes within the Centennial Conference and within NCAA Division III. College academics continued to challenge him, and he recently finalized his major in quantitative economics, which will enable him to graduate with a STEM degree.



Elvis Ramirez completed his first year at Camden County College as a liberal arts and sciences major. He felt his first year in college taught him many things about time management, maintaining a budget and maturing into adulthood. In the first semester, Ramirez struggled to adapt to the college environment, but he eventually become accustomed to the requirements of his professors and met deadlines for assignments. Ramirez now maintains a 3.8 GPA

and plans to use what he has learned to improve himself academically and achieve all the goals that he has set.



Marissa Spletter is now a sophomore at Boston College majoring in business. She faced the same challenges as many freshman: time management. Despite this, Spletter quickly learned to budget her waking hours wisely. She was involved in several on campus activities and particularly enjoyed the Women Innovators Network. Additionally, Spletter serves as a mentor to a younger student in a smaller school and enjoyed working as a basketball and floor hockey referee for intramural sports.

Overall, the first year at Boston College has led Spletter to grow immensely, both in and out of the classroom.

Around the counties

For questions, call your county REA. For trip details, check the county newsletter.

ATLANTIC COUNTY REA'S next meeting/luncheon will be held on Tuesday, March 3 at the Smithville Inn in Galloway. The cost is \$27. To attend, call Linda Young at 609-226-6202.

CAMDEN COUNTY REA welcomes you to its annual breakfast workshop on Thursday, March 26 at the CCCEA office in Voorhees. To attend, call Linda Baechler at 609-268-1433.

The **CAPE MAY REA'S** next business meeting/luncheon will be held on Wednesday, March 18 at the Flanders Hotel in Ocean City. The cost is \$25. To attend, call Sharon Popper at 609-602-0046.

Join **CUMBERLAND COUNTY REA** for its winter meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, March 11 at the Greenview Inn at Eastlyn Golf Course in Vineland. The cost is \$30. To attend, call Irene Savicky at 856-863-8424.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY REA'S next meeting/luncheon will be held on Thursday, March 12 at the Grand Marquis in Old Bridge. A Middlesex County senior advisory representative will be the guest speaker, and an NJEA Member Benefits fair will be available. The cost is \$32. To attend, call Anne Chomko at 732-675-1734.

MONMOUTH COUNTY REA looks forward to seeing you at its spring meeting/luncheon on Tuesday, April 7 at Branches in Long Branch. In addition to a Member Benefits fair, MCREA officers will be installed and philanthropic awards presented. The cost is \$30. To attend, call Sue Shrott at 732-995-7754.

MORRIS COUNTY REA will hold its spring meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, March 11 at the Zeris Inn in Mountain Lakes. Guest speaker Joan Castellano will present "Laughter Yoga". The cost is \$35. To attend, call John Beekman at 973-514-1080.

PASSAIC COUNTY REA'S next meeting/luncheon will be held on Wednesday, March 25 at the Brownstone House in Paterson. To attend, call Kitty Sausa at 201-415-7577.

The **SALEM COUNTY REA** will hold its next meeting/luncheon on Monday, Feb. 24 at the Alloway Municipal Building in Alloway. A representative from the Inspira Network will be the guest speaker. The cost is \$17. To attend, call Rosemma Ward at 856-534-0782.

Join **UNION COUNTY REA** for its winter meeting/luncheon on Tuesday, Feb. 25 at The Westwood in Garwood. The cost is \$25. Call Donna Mertz-Burkhardt at 908-686-2390 to attend.

NJRE-CENTRAL FLORIDA'S next meeting/luncheon will be held on Wednesday, April 1 at the Chesapeake Bay Grille at the Arlington Ridge Golf Club. Attendees will hear a discussion about the latest pension and health benefits news. To attend, call Steve Mockus at 352-638-2609.



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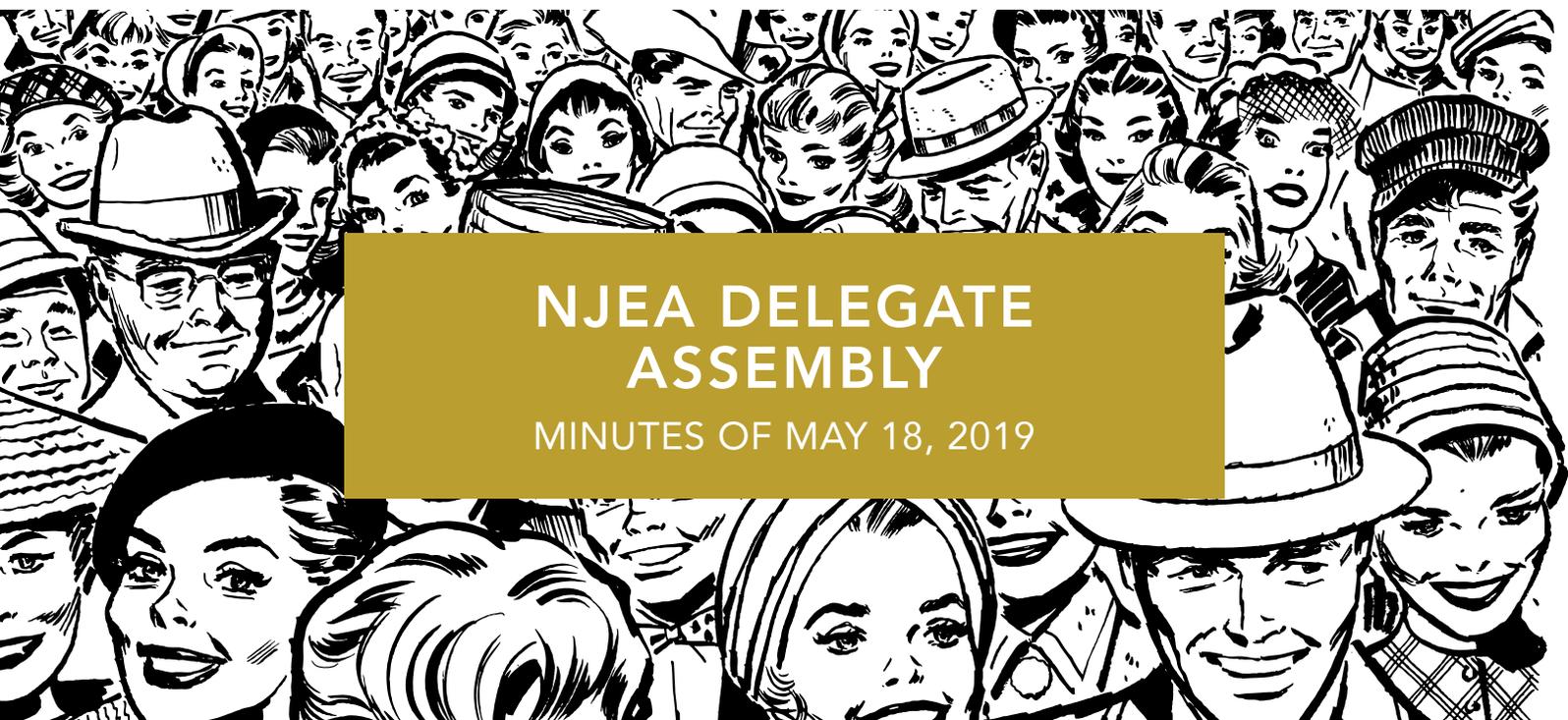
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NJEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

MINUTES OF MAY 18, 2019

The NJEA Delegate Assembly met on May 18, 2019, at the Hilton, East Brunswick, NJ, at 9:30 a.m. President Marie Blistan presided.

Roger Baker (Retired) delivered the inspirational message and led the body in the flag salute.

Roll call was taken. There were 111 out of 128 delegates present. Alternates were seated as follows: Fletcher for Bradler (Bergen); Greenfield for Rock (Essex); Brennan for Rissling (Gloucester); Curry for Tomlinson (Hudson); Hicks for Williams (Mercer); Augsbach for Comey, Lewis for Herrick, Bloom for Lewandowski and Ebler for Yeager (Middlesex); Brache for Rodrick (Monmouth), and Cortinas for Jones (Union).

Absent were representatives Romito and Tomlinson (Atlantic); Zahn (Camden); Robertson (Essex); Crawford (Hudson), and Hodge (Higher Ed.).

Blistan asked if there was objection to adopting the agenda with flexibility. There was objection. Ryan Griffin (Gloucester) moved to adopt the agenda with flexibility. The motion was duly seconded and approved.

Laurie Schorno (Morris) moved to consider the report of the Budget Committee with recommendations immediately. The motion was duly seconded and approved.

Jennifer Clemen (Bergen) moved to postpone consideration of the Budget Committee report until a special meeting to be held on June 8, 2019, following the state caucus meeting for NEA Representative Assembly delegates. The motion was duly seconded. The motion failed.

BUDGET COMMITTEE REPORT

The chair called upon Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty to present the report of the Budget

Committee with recommendations. Following the presentation, Michael Kruczek (Warren) moved to adopt recommendations 1-6. The motion was duly seconded. Following discussion and questions, Mr. Griffin (Gloucester) moved to close debate. The motion was duly seconded and approved. The main motion was approved.

Mr. Kruczek (Warren) moved to adopt recommendations 7-9. The motion was duly seconded and approved.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ms. Blistan addressed the following topics in her report:

- Efforts to support the State Budget as proposed by Governor Murphy.
- Work with a coalition of school district administrators and other education organizations to obtain relief for districts slated for substantial cuts in their state aid.
- The introduction by the Senate president of a package of bills, including legislation to scale back health insurance for all public employees and significantly reduce pensions for new public employees (except police and fire).
- Testimony to the Joint Committee on the Public Schools by numerous groups, including NJEA, that overwhelmingly favored the elimination of state exit testing for graduation.
- An update on NEA's preparation for the 2020 presidential and congressional elections.
- The circulation of NEA's screening questionnaire for presidential candidates.
- The work of a new Amistad Task Force to broaden the use of curriculum and materials from the NJ

Amistad Commission.

NONDELEGATE SPEAKERS

The chair interrupted her report at 11 a.m. to allow nondelegate members to address the body. Edith Fulton (Retired), John Coniglio (Morris), Melissa Matarazzo (Morris), Maria Enriquez (Hudson), Stephanie Cholak (Ocean), Kelly Ann Morris (Camden), Adam Sheridan (Camden), Mercedes Davidson (Passaic), Chrissy Kosar (Gloucester), Dan Cummings (Middlesex), and Theresa Fuller (Somerset) all spoke of the need for relief from Chapter 78 to prevent negative net pay for members, and protecting the rights of ESP members, and strongly opposed the pension and health benefit proposals introduced by Senate President Steve Sweeney.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT (CONTINUED)

The chair concluded her report by calling on UniServ-South Director Patrick Manahan, who presented an update on NJEA's Chapter 78/ESP Job Justice campaign.

EMPLOYER SERVICE AND RETIREMENT RECOGNITION

Ed Richardson presented service awards to NJEA employees who had completed 10, 20, 25, 30, 35, and 40 years of service. He also recognized employees who had retired during 2018-19. Ms. Blistan presented an award to Mr. Richardson, who had completed 25 years of service.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Sean M. Spiller discussed the political context of the proposals introduced by the Senate President,

and the Red for Ed movement across the country, in which educators in multiple states rose up and took drastic action to oppose similar attacks on public education. He urged members to remain committed to the Chapter 78/ESP Job Justice campaign and be ready to ramp up activity as needed.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr. Beatty presented the financial report as of April 30, 2019, which was provided to the delegates in advance of the meeting.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mr. Richardson reported on the following:

- The status of federal legal cases filed against NJEA, following the Janus decision, noting that some 40 similar claims have been filed by anti-union groups across the country, and that 14 had resulted in decisions in favor of the unions, with the remaining cases still pending.
- NJEA's intention to appeal to the State Supreme Court a state appellate court decision against NJEA in the Pepe case, challenging the application of Chapter 78 to some retired educators.
- The governor's conditional veto of a bill to require various entities to disclose their donors, including some groups supported by NJEA.
- An agreement reached by the Murphy administration and the Education Law Center to settle litigation regarding the statewide assessment system and that NJEA would seek an appeal before.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Chairperson Tom Tamburello presented the report of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee with recommendations. Chris Cannella (Essex) moved that all recommendations in the report be approved. The motion was duly seconded. The motion carried.

The body received the following reports without recommendations:

- Executive Director's Report on Goals
- Editorial Committee
- Instruction Committee
- Member Benefits Committee
- Membership Committee

Erin Wheeler (Monmouth), chair of the Vocational, Career and Technical Education Committee, presented the report submitted jointly by her committee and the Certification, Evaluation and Tenure Committee. Chrystal Parr-Allen (Union) moved to approve all recommendations in the report. The motion was duly seconded. The motion carried.

Chairperson Sally Blizzard presented the report of the Exceptional Children Committee with recommendations. Carmen Porter (Salem) moved to approve all recommendations in the report. The motion was duly seconded. The motion carried.

Kelee Mitchell-Hall (Union) presented the report of the Human and Civil Rights Committee and moved to approve all recommendations in the report. The motion

was duly seconded. The motion carried.

Chairperson Edwinta Rhue (Hudson) presented the report of the Public Relations Committee and moved to approve all recommendations in the report. Carrie Odgers-Lax (Passaic) asked to divide the motion to consider the recommendations separately. Following discussion and questions on Recommendation 1, Andrew Hibbell moved to refer Recommendation 1 back to committee. The motion was duly seconded. The motion carried. Recommendation 2 was approved. Ms. Odgers-Lax moved to refer Recommendation 3 back to committee. The motion was duly seconded. The motion carried. Recommendations 4 and 5 were approved.

The chair introduced the report of the Executive Committee and asked Mr. Richardson to review it with the body. Esther Fletcher (Bergen) moved to refer the report to the Elections Committee for clarification of the proposed Elections Code. The motion was duly seconded. The motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Cannella (Essex) moved New Business Item 1: That NJEA support the CWA's Rally for a Budget that New Jersey Deserves, on June 13 by:

- a. Using funds already budgeted for steering committee-led actions to supply transportation to members by organizing buses in strategic county and/or regional locations.
- b. Encouraging each local to send at least two members per building to the rally on June 13.

The motion was seconded. Without objection, he amended the motion to read: That NJEA support the CWA's Rally for the Budget that New Jersey Deserves, on June 13, by encouraging each local to send at least two members per building to the rally on June 13. The motion, as amended, was approved.

Ms. Odgers-Lax (Passaic) moved New Business Item 2: That NJEA conduct a thorough review of all existing policies and rules to determine if there are ways to amend, revise, or expand those policies to ensure that local and county affiliates have the flexibility and support necessary to determine how best to grow, serve, and protect their members. The motion was seconded. The motion failed.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

The chair presented awards to members who were concluding their service on the Delegate Assembly and thanked them for their service.

Gary Mazurek (Union) emphasized the need to strongly fight the senate president's pension and health insurance proposals and urged delegates to attend the rally on June 13.

Dan Epstein (Somerset) thank John McEntee and his members from Paterson for attending the senate president's town hall at Rutgers.

Heidi Olson (Mercer) spoke of the need to support Gov. Murphy and weaken the political machine that supports the Senate president.

Mary MacRae (Somerset) welcomed Bob Blistan back after his recent illness.

John McEntee (Passaic) expressed his thanks to Mr. Epstein for his work at the town hall.

Lori Lalama (Passaic) warned delegates to follow the American Legislative Exchange Council, which prepares and distributes legislation nationwide, much of which is anti-union and anti-public education. She also invited delegates and members to a screening of "Backpack Full of Cash," a documentary about efforts to privatize public education.

Brenda Brathwaite (Atlantic) emphasized the need to shut down the threats made by the senate president's pension and health insurance proposals and urged delegates to attend the rally on June 13.

Angela Lawler (Union) thanked Mr. Spiller for his assistance in addressing significant problems with the superintendent of her school district.

ADJOURNMENT

At 3:34 p.m., Mr. Griffin (Gloucester), moved to adjourn. The motion was duly seconded. The motion carried.

Submitted by:

Edward Richardson
Executive Director

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STAFF NEWS

HIRES AND PROMOTIONS



NJEA congratulates **KEVIN KELLEHER** on his promotion to deputy executive director on Dec. 16. Since 2013, Kelleher has been the director of the Division of Research and Economic Services. He initially joined NJEA staff in January 2003 as an associate director in the Pensions and Benefits Unit of that division. Kelleher has also served as interim director of the Government Relations Division since December 2018. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Kelleher taught middle school math in Mendham Township, Morris County, for 10 years. He also taught for two years in Long Beach, California. In the Mendham Township Education Association, Kelleher had served as president, vice president, and negotiations chair. Prior to his teaching career, Kelleher worked in the pension field in New York City. He holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics from St. Bonaventure University and a master's degree in curriculum development from California State University at Dominguez Hills. He lives in Mount Laurel.



NJEA welcomed **VICKI SERREINO** on Jan. 2 as an administrative assistant in the Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. Serreino will have primary administrative duties over the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy. She has more than 20 years of experience in legal and stock brokerage firms. Serreino most recently worked as a legal secretary for Schwab, Haddix and Millman, a law firm that works as staff counsel for American International Group (AIG). She received her executive secretarial program certification from the Stuart School of Business Administration. Serreino lives in Monroeville with her husband, Peter.



NJEA congratulates **PATTI HABERSTICK** on her promotion to executive assistant/office manager to the executive director on Dec. 1. Since 2013, Haberstick has served as confidential assistant to the assistant executive director. Haberstick initially joined NJEA staff in October 1984 as a secretary in what was called then called the Instruction and Training Division. In 1991, she transferred to the Research and Economic Services Division where in 1998 she was promoted to administrative assistant. Haberstick lives in Delran with her husband, Lew, and daughters, Amanda, Ashley and Aimee.



NJEA congratulates **TABATHA WALTON** on her promotion to secretary in the Region 13 UniServ office in Flemington. Walton first joined NJEA staff in March 2019 as an office assistant in the Region 20 UniServ office in Jersey City. Prior to NJEA employment, she worked for the Union Township School District in Union County as a one-on-one paraprofessional where she assisted students with varying medical and developmental disabilities in an inclusive environment. She also assisted the teacher with clerical responsibilities related to other assigned students. In her community, Walton provided one-on-one tutoring in literacy and math to students. She lives in Union County with her husband and three sons.

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2/12

Wednesday

**Executive
Committee
meeting**

2/21-22

Fri. & Sat.

**Winter
Leadership-
North**

3/6-7

Fri. & Sat.

**Winter
Leadership-
Central**

3/27

Friday

**Executive
Committee and
County Presidents'
Council meetings**

3/28

Saturday

**Delegate
Assembly**

4/17-18

Fri. & Sat.

**Higher Education
Conference**

4/18

Saturday

**Preservice
Conference**

4/23

Thursday

**NJREA Spring
Luncheon**

4/23

Thursday

**NJEA PAC
Operating
Committee**

4/25

Saturday

**NJEA
Communications
Tools Workshop**

deadlines

3/23 Higher Education
Conference
Event date: April 17-18

4/3 Preservice Conference
Event date: April 18

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4/17 Conference
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April 18, 2020

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Murphy's vision for a stronger, fairer New Jersey includes all educators

New Jersey residents rarely pay as much attention to the governor's annual State of the State address as they do its national counterpart. It usually is delivered in the middle of the day in the middle of the week. And while NJTV provides considerable coverage during the speech and in its evening newscast, the New Jersey-based network competes with local news in New York and Philadelphia, which do not devote much time to state government unless bridge traffic is involved.

But if you did hear the speech on Jan. 14, you know that there was a lot to like for those who work in the state's public schools.

Early in the speech, Murphy boasted of New Jersey's educational success crediting the whole school community—not only teachers but everyone who makes our schools do so well. Throughout the State of the State, every time Murphy spoke about education and educators he intentionally included educational support professionals (ESPs)—the bus drivers, secretaries, custodians, food service professionals, paraprofessionals, security officers, and every other staff member who makes up the school support team.

"Our public schools are ranked as the very best in the entire country," Murphy said. "Let's thank our public school educators and

educational support professionals, who do this outstanding work every day."

Soon after, he singled out NJEA by name.

"In this 401st year since the first enslaved Africans arrived on the shores of this continent, we're committed to furthering the work of the Amistad Commission and the NJEA Amistad Stakeholder Group to ensure that the African American story is made real not just for all our students, but for our educators through the new Amistad Journey program," he said.

In fact, Murphy attended the most recent NJEA Convention, primarily to help the NJEA Amistad Stakeholder group announce the Amistad Journey. Modeled after the Holocaust Commission's tours of European sites of the Holocaust, the Amistad Journey will guide educators through educational tours of sites in Africa and the United States that were central to the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Murphy also addressed the restoration of \$500 million in formula-based aid to public schools, the elimination of lead in school water supplies, tuition-free community college, and the integration of climate change education across K-12 curriculum standards—a concept introduced by the New Jersey Department of Education at the Jan. 8 meeting of the State Board of Education.

With the new legislative session underway, Murphy indicated that he will continue to fight for job justice for ESPs and relief for all school employees from the exorbitant payroll deductions caused by Ch. 78. He noted that working with state workers, the state was able to reduce health care costs without sacrificing the quality of health care.

"Let's not forget that the overwhelming number of our educators and ESPs are New Jersey property taxpayers," Murphy said. "This is the kind of win-win-win approach we need as we continue taking on the root causes of our high property taxes and seek to bring stability and relief to our middle class and seniors."

The governor understands that keeping our public schools strong requires treating school employees with respect. From the start, Murphy has been a champion of New Jersey's public schools and the dedicated professionals who make them the best in the nation. He's invested in public education, from preschool through college, and is working to restore full funding to all schools. He recognizes that strong public schools are the key to building a stronger, fairer New Jersey for all of us. 🇺🇸





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