

NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

REVIEW

MARCH 2020
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an education and advocacy resource



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24 FINDING PEACE IN YOUR WORKPLACE

26 GIRLS WHO CODE

30 AVIATION STEM DAY

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Speech-Language Pathology

At the NJEA ESP Conference, workshop participants in "Using Art to Discover Your True Potential" show off their finished product: a Gratitude Graffiti puzzle. Artist Kelly Sullivan, who previously oversaw a "Finger Smear" project at the NJEA Summer Leadership Conference, presented the workshop.



The NJEA Convention Committee promotes the convention all year long, including staffing a table at the NJEA ESP Conference, Jan. 31-Feb. 2. Committee Chair Sue Davis (r) and Patrick Frain (l) discuss the convention with NJEA Executive Committee member Laurie Gibson-Parker.



Prior to the awards program at the NJEA ESP Conference, ESP Committee member Regina Jagoo pins a boutonniere on Essex County ESP of the Year Renaud Pierre Louis.

Marvalene Ralph, a paraprofessional and member of Woodbridge Education Association, attended the Para Power workshop at the NJEA ESP Conference.



FEATURES



20 | MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA

Brian Bigden's decision to be open with his family, his colleagues and his students, about his struggle with general anxiety disorder, enables him to challenge myths and stereotypes otherwise well-meaning people believe. He empowers his students to help erase the stigma of mental illness.

BY BRIAN BIGDEN



24 | PEACE IN YOUR WORKPLACE

Whether we work in a classroom, an office, a school bus or a cafeteria, we all bring an array of stress, anxiety and in some cases, downright panic with us every day. Until we come to terms with our own stress and frustration, it grows more challenging to help students cope with theirs. The Cape May County Teacher of the Year offers strategies reduce stress and be truly present for our students and our colleagues.

BY THOMAS BELASCO



26 | GIRLS WHO CODE

Girls Who Code (GWC) is a leading nonprofit with a mission to close the gender gap in technology. GWC programs include free after-school clubs for grades 3-12, exposing girls to computer science during those critical years. Read about Aria Jimenez's journey as a GWC Club facilitator at East Orange STEM Academy, a club in GWC's Community Partnership with the East Orange School District.

BY ARIA JIMENEZ AND EVE BALICK



30 | AVIATION STEM DAY

On Aviation STEM Day, the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center showcases science, math, art, and other subject matter in action. Located near Atlantic City airport, the tech center helps students interested in careers in aviation learn more about the professional opportunities available to them. The tech center also sends presenters out to schools throughout the year.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY

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GOOD NEWS!

Did you know?

New Jersey leads the nation in education policy and performance.

Source: "Quality Counts 2018: Grading the States," Education Week. January 2018.

The number
83%
The percentage of Americans who support increased funding for public education, even if it would raise their taxes.

Source: National School Boards Action Center poll, as reported in Markets Insider, Feb. 3, 2020. (markets.businessinsider.com)



On the Cover



In this edition of the Review, Brian Bigden, the membership chair for the North Plainfield Education Association, shares how he helps his psychology students understand mental illness.

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*.



CULTIVATING CURIOSITY



NJEA President Marie Blistan with members at the ESP Conference. From left: Bob Blistan, Karol Ball, Marie Blistan, Nicholas Nicoletta, Martine Robinson, and Nadine Batchelor-Hale.

We are very fortunate to have chosen a profession that is built on curiosity. For the most part, we are our students' guides on a journey of discovery. But at the same time, we are on that journey.

In this issue, you will hear from two educators who are sharing their mental health stories and strategies, and you will read about two programs, the FAA Tech Center's Aviation STEM Day and Girls Who Code, who are trying to open more doors for our students and inspire greater curiosity about our world.

I hope that in this issue you find things you connect with that help you maintain your curiosity and inspire your creativity. Thank you for choosing the education profession and thank you for the amazing work that you do to encourage and engage your students every day!

Marie Blistan

OFFICERS ONLINE

MARIE BLISTAN

Facebook

@Marie.Blistan: NEA SUPERWEEK was full of meetings, discussions and sharing of best practices that support our students across the country! What a wonderful host, John Marshall, son of the great Thurgood Marshall, was at the NEA Gala celebrating our educators who have been recognized for outstanding accomplishments! Dr. Linda Darling-Hammond accepted her achievement award and recalled her beginning teacher career in NEW JERSEY and Pennsylvania! Our presidents' meetings included sharing highlights of Congressional candidates who are true supporters of the American Dream and role of public education and our members' support of THEM! Our solidarity in RedforEd Wednesdays continue as educators continue to pursue respect and fair compensation. RedforEd is a national campaign and NJEA is part of the movement in New Jersey and with our sister states! Our board of directors continued the advocacy on behalf of our members, students, and public education. NJ State Teacher of the Year Jen Skomial, Morris County (2019) was recognized on stage at the Gala! New York teacher, Alhassan Susso, recognized as the recipient for the Member Benefits award. His story was inspirational and noteworthy!

NJEA President Marie Blistan shared her observations and photos of this year's NEA Superweek, an annual gathering in Washington, D.C. that brings together association presidents from across the country as well as NEA Directors and other leaders to coordinate a national strategy that advances public education.

SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

@SpillerForNJEA: Congratulations to our 2020 ESP of the Year Stacy Yanko, Career Achievement Awardee Jayne Carmen, Friend of ESP honoree Kevin Ciak and all our county honorees!

NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller shared photos from the 2020 NJEA Educational Support Professionals (ESP) Conference. With his fellow officers, he presented awards recognizing excellence among NJEA's ESP members and honoring those who value the work they do. For more about the winners, see Page 14.

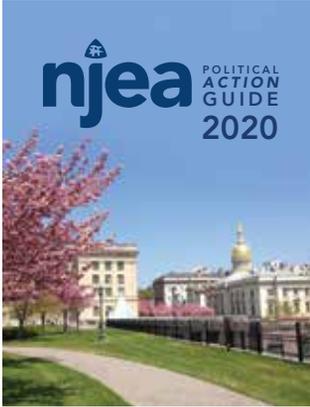
STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: Thank you to all the members of the Pleasantville Education Association at the high school and middle for a great day and "lunch in local." You were welcoming and engaging as we discussed the work that we do and where we go, together! Always empowering to be out in the buildings with our union brothers and sisters, adding advocates to the cause!

NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty shared photos and his observations from his visit to Pleasantville schools in Atlantic County.

KNOW. LEAD. ACT.



GET YOUR 2020 NJEA POLITICAL ACTION GUIDE

NJEA members know that as educators and advocates, it is our responsibility to engage in political action. To make that responsibility easier,

NJEA's Government Relations Division has produced a digital Political Action Guide that contains the information you need to influence your elected leaders, from your local school board to the U.S. Congress. You can download the guide at actioncenter.njea.org.

REGISTER FOR THE COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS WORKSHOP



Deadline is April 3

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.

Workshops include:

- NJEASites User Roundtable
- Public Speaking
- Facebook and Instagram
- Let's Give Them Something to Talk About (video training)
- Newsletter Tips and Tricks
- Smartphone Photos that Play Well on Social Media

Look for the registration form at njea.org/commtools. The deadline to register is April 3.

SIGN UP FOR THE NJEA POLITICAL LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

The NJEA Political Leadership Academy, which will be held at NJEA headquarters in Trenton, is a training program for members who are thinking about running for office or want to become more involved in politics. Attendees will learn the ins and outs of running, winning, and how your union can help.

You may attend on May 9 or Aug. 15. The day runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at NJEA headquarters in Trenton.

Registration is online only. Go to njea.org/pla-may20 to register for May 9 or njea.org/pla-aug20 for Aug. 15.

For questions, contact Janet Bush at jbush@njea.org or 609-310-4249.

SELFIE OF THE MONTH

Regional study groups for the recently launched NJEA Teacher Leader Academy met throughout the state. Teacher Leader Consultant Dr. Johanna Amaro snapped a selfie of the first session of a study group meeting in Cranford.

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.



ANNUAL ELECTION FOR NJEA REPRESENTATIVES SLATED FOR APRIL

NJEA will hold its annual elections in April for NJEA county (and other unit) representatives. This year, approximately one-third of the Executive Committee and approximately one-half of the Delegate Assembly and Delegate Assembly Alternates will be elected.

Balloting is conducted with the assistance of an outside vendor. A ballot and a postage-paid return envelope are sent to each member. The ballot will come via first class mail at the address currently on file. A paper ballot will be used. Complete instructions for voting will be contained in the ballot mailing. To be counted, voted ballots must be mailed to the address specified in the ballot mailing. Ballots sent to any other address will not be counted.

If there are any unanticipated changes in procedure, this information will be published in the April *NJEA Review*, publishing schedules permitting.

Elections will be held between April 1 and noon of April 15. To be counted, ballots must be received at the address indicated in the ballot mailing no later than noon on April 15.

For complete elections rules and procedures, visit njea.org/njeaelections.

AARON FICHTNER TO KEYNOTE NJEA HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE

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, contact the NJEA UniServ Region 29/Higher Education office at 609-689-9580 or jdiquinzio@njea.org.

NJEA SEEKS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD NOMINATIONS



Former NJEA Government Relations Division Director Ginger Gold Schnitzer received the 2019 Distinguished Service Award. From left: Distinguished Service Award Committee Chair Danielle Clark, Gold Schnitzer, Marie Blistan, Sean M. Spiller, and Steve Beatty.

Do you know an individual or group that has made a significant contribution to public education in New Jersey?

Nominations are now being sought for the 2020 NJEA Ruthann Sheer Award for Distinguished Service to Education. The award is named in memory of an educator from Hackensack who was its 1994 recipient. The award was first presented in 1934.

The award is designed to call public attention to those who greatly serve New Jersey public schools and children. Such service to education may take any form that in the opinion of the Distinguished Service Award Committee most merits the recognition this award involves.

Any New Jersey resident or organization, including educators, may be nominated. Excluded are NJEA officers during their terms in office.

Past award recipients have included state and federal lawmakers, reporters and editors, newspapers, the New Jersey Congress of Parents and Teachers, PTA leaders, former NJEA presidents and staff, State Board of Education members, museum curators, school board members, and others who have promoted public school employee rights and public schools.

You may nominate the individual online at njea.org/serviceaward.

You may also submit nominations by mail to:
Ruthann Sheer Distinguished Service Award
NJEA
PO Box 1211
Trenton, NJ 08607-1211

Please include the nominee's name, address, phone number and email address along with a narrative explaining why the nominee should win the award.

Whether online or by postal mail, nominations must be received no later than June 20, 2020.

The NJEA Executive Committee selects award recipients based on recommendations from the Distinguished Service Award Committee.

HEALTHY SCHOOLS NOW OFFERS TRAINING SESSION ON MARCH 14

Schools should be safe places to learn and work, but in many cases, they are anything but. Some common hazards include:

- Lead in paint and water
- Mercury in flooring
- Excessive heat

These conditions can have a direct impact on staff and student health. Unhealthy schools cause asthma, allergies, headaches, fatigue, nausea, rashes, and chronic illnesses; more medication use by children and staff; learning and behavior difficulties; greater liability for school districts; and lower achievement.

Come learn how parents and school staff together can become part of the solution!

In addition to presentations on mercury, lead and temperature, breakout sessions will cover:

- Inequality in Education
- School Health & Safety
- ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

A panel discussion will also be held on Healthy Schools Now success stories.

The workshop is scheduled for March 14, 9 a.m.-2 p.m. at NJEA headquarters, located 180 West State Street, Trenton. Set your GPS for 100 Capitol Street, Trenton to be guided directly to the parking lot behind the building at the second-floor entrance.

Register at bit.ly/2O5GsdK. (Note that bit.ly links are case-sensitive and that the "O" in the URL is the letter O.)

For more information, contact Heather Sorge, Healthy Schools Now Campaign Organizer, NJ Work Environment Council at 908-310-7874 or HSorge@njwec.org.

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- Post-Master Supervisor Certification (on campus and online)
- Post-Master English as a Second Language (ESL) Certification (online)
- Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Certification
- Special Education Certification

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MARCH 3 • 6:30 PM
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LEGISLATIVE ROUNDUP

AN OVERVIEW OF RECENT STATE ACTIVITY

BY KAITLYN DUNPHY, ESQ.

The Statehouse has seen a flurry of activity in recent months, and Gov. Phil Murphy's pen has had no shortage of work signing many of the newly passed bills into law. This article highlights some of those recent laws that may be of interest to NJEA members, as well as to the broader public labor and education communities. It is by no means an exhaustive recitation of all the recent changes in the law—there is a page limit after all! Over the course of the recent lame duck session, over 150 bills were signed into law.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

A few amendments were made to New Jersey's Law Against Discrimination (LAD), a law that prohibits most forms of discrimination in employment, housing, and public places of accommodation.

Perhaps the most notable of those amendments is the Create a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural Hair Act, or CROWN Act. The CROWN Act prohibits discrimination based on hair textures, styles or types historically associated with race, such as braids, locks and twists. With the passing of this legislation, New Jersey becomes the third state to enact a hairstyle anti-discrimination law, behind California and New York.

Further, the school law that prohibits excluding children from public schools because of their race, creed, color, national origin or ancestry, was updated to include immigration status, or any protected category under the LAD, such as religion, sex, disability, or gender identity or expression.

Kaitlyn Dunphy is an associate director of NJEA Legal Services and Member Rights in the NJEA Executive Office. She can be reached at kdunphy@njea.org.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Two bills were passed to protect the health and safety of New Jersey's student-athletes. The first requires school districts that participate in the New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) to adopt the NJSIAA's heat participation policy. This policy sets guidelines for holding athletic events and practices at certain heat and humidity levels, to protect student-athletes from weather-related injuries such as heat stroke. The second requires schools to establish emergency action plans for responding to serious sports-related injuries for sixth through 12th graders.

New Jersey's students will also be protected by a law prohibiting the sale of flavored vape products, which will take effect on April 20. Many of the proponents of the bill were motivated by concern that flavored vape products are attractive to young people and enticing a new generation's addiction to nicotine.

"Paul's Law," named after the 13-year-old student who advocated for the bill, permits parents or guardians to request schools to develop and utilize an individualized health care plan for students with epilepsy or seizure disorders. The plan would be developed by the school nurse, in consultation with the parent or guardian, and would set forth the steps to be taken in the event of a medical event.

EDUCATION

Amendments were made to a grant program available for eligible courses in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. Applications for the grants are made to the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and are available to teachers teaching STEM courses at nonpublic schools outside of their regular duties, in accordance with the NJDOE's eligibility requirements. Members applying for these grants should reach out to their association to ensure the

“

Over the course of the recent lame duck session, over 150 bills were signed into law.

grant work does not interfere with their collective bargaining agreement or their usual work.

The "Strengthening Gifted and Talented Education Act" was recently signed into law. It codifies State Board of Education regulations that set school district responsibilities for educational services provided to students from kindergarten through 12th grades. Districts are required to have protocols for identifying gifted and talented students and offer them instructional adaptations and curriculum modifications.

Additionally, the state passed the "Restorative Justice in Education Pilot Program." This pilot program will implement restorative justice practices in 15 schools throughout the state. It will focus on using restorative justice as an approach to discipline. The bill's sponsors have noted that it is an alternative to suspension and expulsions, which keep students out of the classroom and disproportionately affect students of color.

This is only the tip of the iceberg of recent legislation that has been enacted to protect our students and preserve our member's rights. Such efforts are only possible through the continued activism of our membership. 🇺🇸

COOL STUFF



MIDDLE SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL NJ MAPPING COMPETITION

Middle and high school students are encouraged to enter a contest to create New Jersey-themed online maps, using Esri's free ArcGIS Online platform. Encourage your students to learn some online mapping skills and create a story map using New Jersey content.

This competition is part of a national mapping competition sponsored by Esri, the maker of ArcGIS. Students may work alone or in pairs to create their maps, and a school may submit up to five of their best maps to be judged at the state level. Up to ten Amazon gift cards of \$100 each for the top high school and middle school maps (\$100 per team, maximum of five high school and five middle school) may be awarded.

The top map from New Jersey will be submitted to the national competition. Winners of that competition will be invited to California to receive their award. Schools must pre-register by March 20 and submit maps by May 1. For more information, visit bit.ly/2uBS2Gj. To register, visit bit.ly/njarcgis. Bitly links are case-sensitive.

Send your questions to mapnjcompetition@gmail.com.



19TH AMENDMENT RESOURCES

NJ Women Vote offers resources to help guide research and program development related to the history of women's suffrage in New Jersey and beyond. Website links include curricula, research resources, biographies, maps and more, including the role of New Jersey women and allies in the suffrage movement. For resources to use in the classroom, visit: discovernjhistory.org/njwomenvote2020/njwomenvoterresources. Contact NJWomenVote100@gmail.com with suggestions or comments.

100 YEARS OF SUFFRAGE—THE LEBANON TOWNSHIP MUSEUM

The Lebanon Township Museum is featuring a two-month celebration of 100 Years of Women's Suffrage with a multifaceted exhibit and a number of exciting events. 100 Years of Suffrage: A Celebration in Quilts, created by The Courthouse Quilters, is on display from Feb. 1 through March 28. Courthouse Quilters is a non-profit whose purpose includes preserving and promoting the history of quilting and supporting charitable activities. For more information, visit lebanontownship.net/services/museum.aspx.



NJ WOMEN VOTE: ONLINE BIOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY

NJ Women Vote website features biographies of New Jersey suffragists in an easy to use, searchable online biographical dictionary of the woman suffrage movement in the U.S. Teachers, civic and history organizations, and anyone researching suffragists from different New Jersey communities will find important information about the women, their allies, and the communities that played a role in the suffrage movement. Visit bit.ly/njsuffragebios.

100TH ANNIVERSARY OF NJ WOMEN VOTE: SLOW ROLL

Women and girls celebrated their new freedom to move around in the world when they began riding bicycles. It was believed that bicycling was the catalyst for giving women a fuller sense of their role in life. Susan B. Anthony thought bicycling had "done more to emancipate women than anything else in the world." In honor of the 100th Anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote, the NJ Suffrage Slow Roll, where cyclists can bicycle to sites along the New Jersey Women's Heritage Trail is scheduled for Saturday, May 16, 2020 at Historic Smithville Park in Eastampton, NJ. For more, visit discovernjhistory.org/njwomenvote2020.



NEW JERSEY HISTORY DAY

The New Jersey History Day program is an affiliate of National History Day (NHD), an exciting education program that engages students in the process of discovery and interpretation of historical topics. Either individually or in a group, students present their historical research on a topic related to the competition's annual theme in the form of a performance, exhibit, documentary, website or paper. These projects are evaluated at local, regional, and state competitions that culminate in a national contest every June at the University of Maryland, College Park. Visit nhd.org/affiliate/new-jersey for more information.

The History Day program is open to students in grades 6-12 and is held May 2 at William Patterson University. Regional Contests are held this March at Monmouth, Rutgers, and Seton Hall Universities. Judges are needed in all categories and NJEA members are encouraged to apply for positions. For more information, email Nancy Norris-Bauer, NJ History Day coordinator, at norrisn@wpunj.edu.

QUICK TIP

CREATE A “COOL DOWN” BOOKBAG

You're right in the middle of a lesson and you have the students' attention. You feel like they understand the concept. Students are raising their hands, adding onto what you're discussing, when suddenly one of your students gets angry, or frustrated, or just needs a break. It interrupts the flow of the class as you try to redirect and refocus that student. You lose momentum and the class loses attention.

This is what commonly happens when students do not have self-control. However, when given the right tools, students can begin to understand what self-control is and how to handle their feelings.

The cool down bookbag started out in our classroom as the cool down center. It was an area of the room we designated for students to go to calm down and refocus. As a class, we brainstormed things we could do to help us relax in a stressful situation. Students drew pictures to remind themselves of these strategies, and we pasted the drawings on a trifold board in the center. This worked well for the class that year but the following year we saw that students wanted more control of the situation.

We decided to give them that control. We placed all the items from the cool down center into a bookbag. We called it “The Cool Down Bookbag” and told students they could take the bookbag wherever they felt comfortable in the classroom.

As time went on and more and more students started to use the bookbag, they even made suggestions for other items. For example, a group of boys asked if they could put a joke book in. This made the cool down bookbag their own, and it let students take more ownership for their behavior.

The bookbag has items to reach students on every level. There's a notebook for students to write down their thoughts and emotions. There is also blank paper for students who express themselves better with drawing. There is a deep breath Velcro board where students can monitor their breathing by moving a check mark up or down to count the number of deep breaths they take. A class favorite is the “calm down jar” where students shake a bottle filled with colorful glitter and then relax as they watch the glitter fall.

As the year progressed, if we were in the middle of a lesson and someone needed a time out, they would simply say “I need the bookbag,” and they would go to calm down on their own. When the class was working on their own I would go over and consult with the student who was calming down. Sometimes the student would go back after a few minutes on their own and ease back into the lesson.

The cool down bookbag has helped students take control of their emotions and take the spotlight off themselves while in a stressful situation.

Submitted by Carteret teacher Nikki Silva, 2018 Milken Award Winner



A class favorite is the “calm down jar” where students shake a bottle filled with colorful glitter and then relax as they watch the glitter fall.



HAVE A QUICK TIP OF YOUR OWN?

Send it to NJEAReview@njea.org. Tips need not be limited to classroom teachers. If you have tips for the office, the cafeteria, building and grounds work, or any way to make life better for you and your colleagues, share the wealth.

NJEA Report

NJEA honors achievement at ESP Conference



From left: NJEA President Marie Blistan, ESP Committee Chair Joann Houck, ESP of the Year Stacy Yanko, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty and NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller.

YANKO HONORED AS ESP OF THE YEAR

At the NJEA Educational Support Professionals (ESP) Conference on Feb. 1, Stacy Yanko was honored as the 2020 NJEA Educational Support Professional of the Year. Featured in the February *NJEA Review*, Yanko is a guidance secretary at Hopatcong High School. She has been with the district since 2006, when she was hired as a paraprofessional.

Among her many responsibilities as a guidance secretary, Yanko helps students and their families find the right colleges and post-secondary opportunities. She also helps students identify and apply for scholarships and many other tasks.

“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.”

Yanko once spearheaded the revitalization of a school library. The library went from being a wasted space in the school building, to a vibrant place where both students and teachers felt welcomed and inspired.

NJEA President Marie Blistan presented her with the award.

“We are proud that Stacy Yanko is being recognized for outstanding work both in school and with her local association,” Blistan said. “Her students and colleagues rely on her expertise and appreciate her dedication to our profession.”

“Member participation is important at every level, and I want everyone to experience the enthusiasm and pride that I feel in my heart,” Yanko said upon accepting the award. “I am truly honored to have the opportunity to be awarded this recognition.”

CAREER ACHIEVEMENT AWARD GOES TO HAMILTON TOWNSHIP LEADER

Jayne Carmen, vice president for ESP of the Hamilton Township Education Association in Atlantic County, received the 2020 NJEA Career Achievement Award. She also chairs the HTEA Pride and FAST Committee. In the Hamilton Township School District, Carmen serves as the administrative assistant to the director of curriculum and as secretary for the child study team at William Davies Middle School.

NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller presented the award.

“After reading all the letters of recommendation for her nomination, a common thread kept coming up,” Spiller said. “Jayne is always willing and able to help wherever she goes. As one letter said, ‘She gets things done!’”

While serving as chair of the Pride and FAST Committee, Carmen expanded its scope by involving many school and area residents in projects that have been critical to the community’s well-being.

“Jayne is her community, and she has remained dedicated to working on behalf of her members there,” Spiller said. “Whether Jayne is running a food bank for veterans, helping with scouts, or making sure everyone is invited to the community picnic, Jayne is committed to helping others.”

Carmen, however, extended the credit to others.

“So many exceptional people work quietly, consistently, and without accolades, and I want to accept this award in their honor,” Carmen said. “We do what we do because we love the students we serve, and we appreciate how hard our colleagues are working to make sure our schools are happy, nurturing environments for children, so they can thrive and reach their full potential!”



From left: Marie Blistan, Sean M. Spiller, ESP Career Achievement Award recipient Jayne Carmen, Joann Houck, and Steve Beatty.



Steve Beatty and Friend of ESP Award recipient Kevin Ciak.

SAYREVILLE BOARD MEMBER NAMED FRIEND OF ESP

The Friend of ESP Award recognizes leadership, dedication, commitment and support that demonstrates true friendship of and advocacy for ESPs and their contributions to public education and students.

Kevin Ciak, a member of the Sayreville Board of Education, was awarded the 2020 NJEA Friend of ESP Award. Just 19 years old when he was first elected to the board in 1994, Ciak has served as its president for 14 years of his 26-year tenure.

Ciak was president of the New Jersey School Boards Association from 2006-08 and president and chair of the National School Boards Association in the 2017-18 school year. He also served two years as president, and another two as vice president, of the Middlesex County School Boards Association. He was honored as 2002-03 Middlesex County Board Member of the Year.

Kevin Bloom, the secretary of the Sayreville Education Association, nominated Ciak.

“You would be hard pressed to find someone else who demonstrated a clearer alignment to the principles set forth by NJEA to ‘...create an optimal environment to achieve excellence in public education in New Jersey,’” Bloom wrote.

Ciak has been instrumental in growing the ESP workforce in the district. In the last 20 years, Sayreville has gone from employing 134 ESPs to 210.

“In fact, when privatization was discussed within the district—notably at a time when he was not the board president—Kevin made clear his opposition to privatization as a cost-saving alternative,” NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty said in conferring the award.

In his support for Ciak’s nomination, Sayreville School District Superintendent Richard Labbe noted, “Kevin has always championed the work of our education support professionals, whom he feels are the unsung heroes in our district that—like every faculty member—take pride in the direct and indirect impact they make daily on our students.”

COUNTY ESPs OF THE YEAR

Atlantic County

Teresa Calvi, a paraprofessional with the Mainland Regional Education Association

Bergen County

Diane DeBiase, a secretary with the Carlstadt Education Association.

Burlington County

Deborah Crosby, a teaching assistant with the Burlington County Special Services Education Association

Cape May County

Kenneth Basset, a paraprofessional with the Cape May County Special Services Staff Association

Cumberland County

Jodi Dickinson, a library clerk with the Hopewell Educators Association

Essex County

Renaud Pierre Louis, a bus driver with the South Orange-Maplewood Education Association

Gloucester County

Shawn Dudley, a custodian with the Washington Township School Support Service Personnel Association

Hudson County

Jeannine Visconti, a paraprofessional with the West New York Education Association

Hunterdon County

Carol Rocha, a secretary with the Hunterdon Central Education Association

Mercer County

Antoinette Hopkins, a paraprofessional with the Princeton Regional Educations Support Staff Association

Middlesex County

Kim McMillan, a dropout prevention officer with the New Brunswick Education Association

Monmouth County

Jacqueline Kruzik, an instructional assistant with the Matawan Aberdeen Regional Education Association.

Morris County

Jean Swanick, a paraeducator with the Rockaway Borough Education Association

Ocean County

Lisa Moody, a paraprofessional with the Lakewood Education Association

Passaic County

Belitza Callegari, an instructional aide with the Paterson Education Association.

Salem County

Jennifer Jenkis, a paraprofessional with the Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional Education Association.

Sussex County

Stacey Yanko, a guidance secretary with the Hopatcong Office Personnel Association

Union County

Colleen Nemeth, a secretary with the Clark Education Association

Warren County

Ann Davis, a secretary with the Phillipsburg Education Association



NEA media grant promotes county colleges

Last fall, NJEA received a \$270,000 grant from the National Education Association (NEA) to promote community colleges and teacher diversity. The NEA Media Grant program is intended to advance the cause of public education and publicize the role of the association and its affiliates in improving the quality of public education.

NJEA interviewed several teachers and educational support professionals who are community college graduates. They were asked about their educational journey and how community college helped them achieve their career goals. To watch these videos, visit njea.org/highered.

With grant support, community college radio advertisements began in December and a statewide digital billboard campaign launched soon after. The billboard message reads “NJ’s Community Colleges: Start your Success Story” and directs viewers to njea.org/highered. The website includes community college resources, helps users to find their local college, and features videos spotlighting community college success stories.



Noelle Mironis



Temika Langston-Meyers



Kimberly Suarez



Jacqueline Gentry



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Blistan speaks up for students ahead of Trump rally



NJEA President Marie Blistan joined Cape May County Indivisible's protest at President Donald Trump's campaign rally at the Wildwood Convention Center on Jan. 28. Speaking to hundreds of protestors outside the convention center, Blistan inspired the crowd and encouraged all in attendance to stand against racism, classism, bigotry and hate.

Trump hosted the campaign rally in Wildwood to support former Democrat Jeff Van Drew, a member of Congress representing New Jersey's southernmost district. Van Drew announced his switch to the Republican Party on Dec. 19.

Martin Luther King III, several Democratic candidates vying to unseat Van Drew in the November 2020 election, and others also spoke at the protest. All spoke of the importance of coming together during politically divisive times. They urged protesters to fight against the mistreatment of all people and emphasized the importance that organizing will play during the upcoming election cycle.

"Because of the work these members do every day for our students, our New Jersey public schools are rated number one in the United States," Blistan said. "Yet, even here in New Jersey, our educators have been treated disrespectfully by some elected leaders. So anytime that there is an opportunity to stand up and model for our students what really makes our country great, our union of educators will show that there is another way!"

Blistan said that America's children deserve leaders they can look to for hope and inspiration.

"Our union of educators is committed to teaching our students that our country is a place

where any person or any child can dream and can make their dreams a reality," Blistan said. "Yet, the education policies of this president threaten quality public education even in our great state of New Jersey."

Blistan offered a sample of those harmful policies, stating that Trump:

- Supports private school vouchers so that the public schools will be economically starved.
- Has cut funding to public education through Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos, who has never attended, worked in, or sent her children to public schools.
- Reduced federal aid for preschool expansion, denying access to a level playing field for all children.
- Has threatened to eliminate the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.
- Has proposed more than \$7 billion in cuts for public education after passing a \$1.5 trillion tax cut that benefited corporations and the ultrawealthy.

"We're here today because when we teach our children that 'they must be the change they wish to see in the world,'" Blistan concluded. "We tell them it means standing up for what you believe in."

Blistan's speech can be viewed in the online version of this article at njea.org.

Full-Tuition Scholarships in Orton-Gillingham Teacher Training

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Strengthening Gifted Education in NJ signed by Murphy

Just in time for this year's Gifted and Talented Students Month, which falls in March, Gov. Phil Murphy signed the Strengthening Gifted Education in New Jersey bill into law on Jan. 13. It is the first of two bills supported by the New Jersey Association for Gifted Children (NJAGC) to become law. The legislation allows a nine month "get ready" period.

After more than two decades delivering public testimony to the New Jersey State Board of Education and meeting with the state's Department of Education (NJDOE), NJAGC was advised to advocate for legislation requiring reforms to the current regulations in New Jersey Administrative Code supporting gifted students. Representatives from key education stakeholder groups collaborated to agree on the provisions of the new law.

"We advocate for our students every day in our classrooms, in our schools, and in the community," said NJAGC Advocacy Vice President Roberta Braverman. "One group of students has often been overlooked in New Jersey. Parents and educators are working together to address the problems affecting the equity and access to quality gifted education services in schools across our state."

HOW PREPARED ARE EDUCATORS?

Braverman cites NJDOE statistics, pointing out that New Jersey had 590 school districts with 2,516 school buildings in the 2016-17 school year. There are over 1.4 million public and public charter school students. In that year, there were 116,351 full-time classroom teachers.

Using this data, the NJAGC notes that if 10% of New Jersey's students were identified as gifted

in every grade, that would represent more than 140,000 students.

Braverman notes that few educators have had any courses in gifted education, though most are required to modify instruction for the gifted students, including meeting their academic and social-emotional learning needs.

"The Strengthening Gifted Education in New Jersey Act will help better meet the needs of students identified as gifted and the educators who work with them," Braverman said.

PROVISIONS OF THE ACT

The act includes these provisions:

- Redefines the current administrative code, including that multiple services should be provided, and the identification of gifted students should match the services provided.
- Clarifies that a student can be gifted in only one or in multiple subjects or areas.
- Requires that each school district reports the number of students identified as gifted by grade level and the number of teachers/administrators whose job includes identification of and services to gifted students.
- Requires a report by each district of policies, procedures, timelines for identification and instructional adaptations made for gifted students in a continuum of services for all levels K-12, including professional development for staff.
- Modifies the goal of meeting the NJSLS to match the student's instructional level.

- Requires that the commissioner of education appoint a coordinator for gifted and talented programs with experience and training in the field of gifted education
- By the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, school districts must make information about gifted education available on the district webpage to include policies and procedures used to identify students as gifted and talented, complaint processes, and the continuum of services offered to gifted and talented students in the district.
- The identification process shall include consideration of all students, including those who are English language learners and those with Individualized Education Plans or 504 plans.

You can learn more about the new law and the New Jersey Association for Gifted Children, an NJEA affiliated group, by following @NJAGCgifted, on social media and through the website njagc.org.

LEARN MORE AT THE NJAGC CONFERENCE

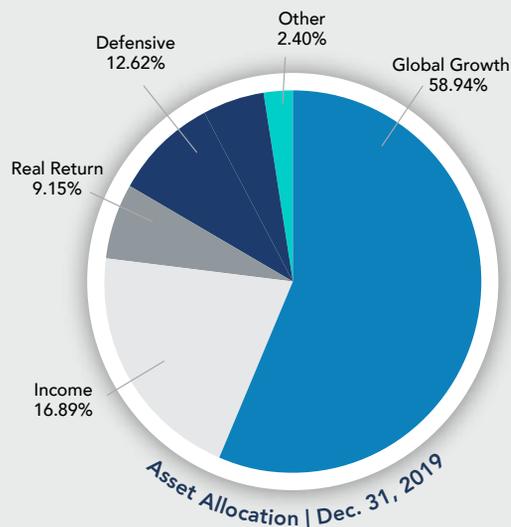
Attend the NJAGC conference on March 20 for gifted education professional development, for guidance in identification and curriculum modification, and to network with administrators, teachers, counselors, psychologists, and specialists tasked with meeting the needs of the special needs of the gifted. Visit njagc.org for details.

PENSION UPDATE

TOTAL PENSION FUND: \$79.73 BILLION

The totals below reflect market values as of Dec. 31, and for comparison, Oct. 31, 2019. The figures, which are rounded, may not reflect the current market values of some alternative investments through the period noted, because of lags in reporting under industry standards.

	Dec. 31, 2019		Oct. 31, 2019	
	Market Value (\$ billions)	Asset Allocation	Market Value (\$ billions)	Asset Allocation
Global Growth	\$46.99	58.94%	\$46.35	58.70%
Income	\$13.46	16.89%	\$13.73	17.38%
Real Return	\$7.30	9.15%	\$7.06	8.95%
Defensive	\$10.06	12.62%	\$9.96	12.61%
Other	\$1.91	2.40%	\$1.86	2.36%
Total	\$76.73	100%	\$78.96	100%



All reports and financial statements are posted on the Division of Investments' website at www.nj.gov/treasury/doinvest/index.shtml.

Parent education conferences partner NJEA with the Latino Institute, local communities

An NJEA-sponsored program is reaching out to parents throughout New Jersey. A FAST initiative, the parent conferences are organized at local level and are held at local schools, as a collaboration with FAST, local associations, and the Latino Institute. FAST stands for the NJEA program known as Families and Schools Work Together for Children.

The local association plans the conference and selects the workshops to be presented. The event consists of a general session with a keynote speaker and two workshop sessions.

Conferences may be conducted in a bilingual mode or entirely in Spanish. Among the workshop themes:

- Managing Stress in the Family
- How to Listen So Young People Speak
- What Parents Should Know about Social Media
- Sexting, Texting and Bullying
- Resiliency and Educational Achievement
- College Financial Aid, Basics for Parents: SAT, FAFSA, HEESA
- Parental Rights and Special Needs;
- How May Parents Contribute in Reducing School Violence
- What is STEM and What You Need to Know
- Helping Children Improve their Study Habits
- Self-Esteem and Enhancing Educational Self-Improvement

FAST encourages families to become involved in their children's education,

to feel welcomed in public schools, and to enhance academic progress. FAST is a coalition of education advocates, community groups, and schools working together to foster family involvement.

The Latino Institute was founded in 2004. For the last 15 years, it has offered empowering workshops and conferences on diverse themes to New Jersey parents. Additional information on the Institute may be found at thelatinoinstitute.com.

For more information about the parent education conferences, email Michael Rollins at mrollins@njea.org.



The **New Jersey Expedited Certification for Educational Leadership (NJEXCEL)** Program is offered by NJPSA's Foundation for Educational Administration (FEA). NJEXCEL is the state-approved, innovative, non-traditional **certification program** with distinct models leading to a Certificate of Eligibility for Principal, Supervisor, Director of School Counseling Services, School Administrator, or Teacher Leader.*

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Register for an info session at www.njexcel.org

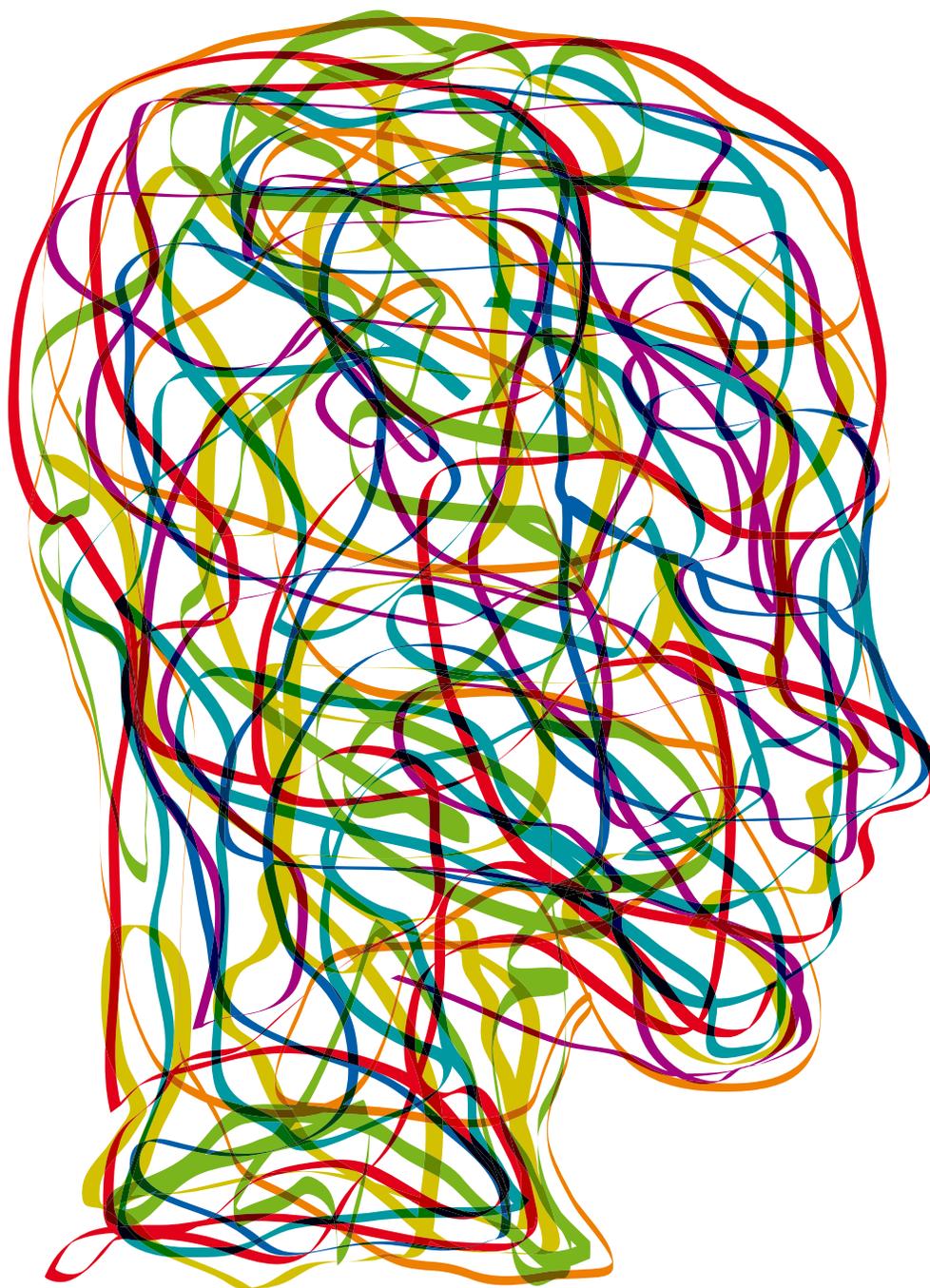
*Teacher Leader Certification is available through NJEXCEL or a 10-month TLC program. For details, go to www.njtlc.org.



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AN EDUCATOR SHARES HIS MENTAL HEALTH STORY

BY BRIAN BIGDEN



I had just finished what should have been a glorious breakfast at the Pancake House in Green Bay, Wisconsin after going to see my beloved Packers and some members of my family, before I started the drive back to Chicago to catch a flight home. However, I couldn't finish my breakfast fast enough, couldn't get to the airport fast enough, couldn't fly home fast enough, because of a long laundry list of school and personal items that was running through my head that I needed to complete. My mind kept tick, tick, ticking with the things I had to do.

I have had days where I felt overwhelmed with things I have to get done, the normal stress that every teacher goes through. But this was to the extreme. I couldn't stop thinking about what I had to get done, couldn't stop thinking that I had to get out of that car right then and there, that I had to get home. This feeling consumed me, raising my heartbeat and my breathing rate. It was terrifying for both me and my wife. I was experiencing my first full-blown anxiety attack on the way to Chicago's O'Hare International Airport.

The following few weeks did not get much better. I started to become consumed by my anxiety, going down a dark rabbit hole of research and talking about it endlessly with my wife. I took an exorbitant amount of sick days the following month because I just couldn't be in a classroom. I couldn't be trapped in a room where I could not leave. I couldn't be trapped in my car for the 20-minute ride to work every day. I just NEEDED to be home lying on my couch talking myself out of this feeling of anxiousness, all while feeling my heart race.

Before I move on, this is where I feel a lot of people get in trouble. People see mental health issues as some sort of weakness or a contagious disease. Yes, something is wrong with them. Something was definitely wrong with me. But if a person has a stomach issue, what does that person do? When a person gets chronic migraines, where do they go? The answer is they go see a doctor the first chance they get. But we tend to keep anxiety, depression or any sort of mental health concern under wraps. This is what I did for about a year.

BEING OPEN WITH STUDENTS

I teach high school Advanced Placement Psychology and Introduction to Psychology in my hometown of North Plainfield. I am very open about my bout with my general anxiety disorder (GAD). Every year at the beginning of my abnormal psychology unit, I ask my students to define anxiety, depression, schizophrenia and a couple other conditions. After they define them, I ask them if they know of anyone who has a mental disorder. Some will say they have a family member or someone distantly related to them. I ask if they think I have had any of the previously mentioned disorders. Most, if not all, say they do not think I have or had any of these disorders.

I tell my students that 18 percent of Americans suffer from anxiety and depression. About 7 percent of those people are, like them, between the ages of 18-25 years of age. That is when I tell my students that I have suffered from GAD and that I still must keep it in check like any other recurring condition, such as high blood pressure or acid reflux. This introduction to the unit is an eye-opener for my students.

Brian Bigden is a psychology teacher at North Plainfield High School. He is the membership chair of the North Plainfield Education Association. He can be reached at brbigden@gmail.com.

“

People are suffering every day because they fear that they will be isolated and will not have the support systems they need to be healthy.



“ Because we do not hear about people living successful lives while addressing their mental health diagnoses, we cannot envision a life that can be happily lived while managing these issues. ”

MYTHS VERSUS REALITIES OF MENTAL ILLNESS

What we hear in the news, watch from Hollywood, or tell one another are the rare instances that make a “good” story. News stories and dramatizations of serial killers and disturbing characters in films like “The Joker” and “Split” help to reinforce a stigma about what it means to live with mental health issues. Because we do not hear about people living successful lives while addressing their mental health diagnoses, we cannot envision a life that can be happily lived while managing these issues. Instead, we are left with stories that perpetuate a stigma.

People hold onto these myths and believe that everyone who has a mental illness is either violently disturbed or broken and should be treated as an outcast. To tell you the truth, these are the reasons why most of my students, before talking to me, take psychology. They are curious about this aspect of humanity. But in my class, we begin to break the stigma.

Thanks to the American Psychological Association, I show videos from Bring Change 2 Mind, a nonprofit organization dedicated to encouraging dialogue about mental health, and to raising awareness, understanding, and empathy. It was co-founded by Glenn Close. Their videos are powerful.

Seeing the students’ faces while watching people describe what they go through when they disclose their mental disorder to friends, colleagues and family members hits them right in the heart. The stigma of having a mental disorder ostracizes them from society. They are rejected by family members who are not educated about the conditions from which they suffer. It proves that the stigma of a mental disorder can discourage those individuals from revealing that they have an issue—an issue that can be remedied. If these individuals are afraid of talking about their issues, then they certainly aren’t getting the help they need. People are suffering every day because they fear that they will be isolated and will not have the support systems they need to be healthy.

It took me a long time to mention my anxiety to my wife because of this. I felt weak. I believed in the stigma, and I felt it was better to be left alone to deal with my anxiety. I missed out on a lot of encouragement and support because I was unwilling to share my struggle with my wife. Once I finally did, things began to get better.

But my job is to educate. I teach my students about some of the types of mental disorders and what can cause mental disorders. My students are introduced to conditions such as phobias. This is where all my students tell stories of a

time when they were bitten by a dog when they were younger, or the power went out and they became afraid of the dark, or their fear that their parents’ divorce will leave them alone, or even experiencing depression because they believe that they never succeed.

All of these stories create some sort of anxiety or depression. I tell my students that these things are not their fault. Instead, these experiences can trigger a biological change in the body and brain. They need to know that EVERYONE has a story, and EVERYONE has a trigger.

“You are NOT alone,” I tell them over and over again.

ENDING THE STIGMA

After my students have been educated about various mental disorders, I tell them that we are now in charge of ending the stigma of mental illness. My students’ projects include identifying ways that they can work to end the stigmas around the mental disorder they are researching. Examples could be finding success stories, such as famous people who have a mental disorder. Or they could speak about mental disorders and educate others about them.

Next, we discuss what can we do for those who are suffering from a mental disorder. We create a roundtable discussion of possibilities of



Students in Brian Bigden’s Introduction to Psychology class pose with the class “therapy clown.”



how we can help the ones we love who have a disorder. Suggestions include counseling, being trustworthy, providing a friendly ear for listening, and being part of their support group. It is inspiring to see how my students care for one another. High school students sometimes have a negative reputation, but as someone who sees and interacts with high school students every day, I can attest to the fact that when presented with a crisis, they are very caring about others.

As for me, I hope that by sharing my story with my students—and now with the readers of the NJEA Review—we can all work to end the stigma around mental health concerns, be on the lookout to provide compassion and support for the people in our lives who may be struggling, and start a dialogue about how we can be there for one another. 🏠

AID-NJEA

YOUR NJEA HELPLINE
– CONFIDENTIAL,
ACCESSIBLE, AND
RESOURCEFUL

NJEA, NJREA and NJEA Preservice members and their families can contact AID-NJEA at 866-AID-NJEA (866-243-6532). This confidential, toll-free help line, based out of Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care, is staffed by qualified retired and active members and answered by a live person 24 hours a day and seven days a week. AID-NJEA is for professional and personal concerns and is not just limited to mental health assistance. Call center staff also maintain an extensive, up-to-date resource file to assist callers in contacting NJEA Member Benefits, social services, government agencies and other locations within NJEA headquarters or its UniServ offices.

AID-NJEA uses the Peer Support Model. That means that each AID-NJEA staff member has public education experience and specialized training to support a wide range of issues. This shared experience helps the call center staff to identify presenting problems and discuss appropriate solutions and referrals. Personal concerns, discussion of family matters, resource information, and just plain conversation are only a few of the things that can be discussed. You will always get a real human voice with no automated systems to navigate, and only members have this convenient, 21st-century option available at no cost.

If you need a listening ear, confidentially talking by phone with another person from the comfort and privacy of your home can be a huge benefit. Hundreds of members use this free member benefit, month after month. With no extra numbers to push and a human voice to greet you, contact is readily accessible to members and their families



FINDING PEACE IN YOUR WORKPLACE



BY THOMAS BELASCO

After attending the School Resiliency Team training with Dr. Lori Desautels and Michael McKnight, I returned to school excited to spread the word and develop a platform for working with those children in the direst need of positive reinforcement. It did not take long to realize that as important as it is to address the needs of children, to be successful we must first meet the needs of those who work with them.

Whether we work in a classroom, an office, a school bus or a cafeteria, we all bring an array of stress, anxiety and in some cases, downright panic with us every day. Until we come to terms with our own stress and frustration, it grows more challenging to help others cope with theirs.

This came together at a somewhat perfect time in my life, as I am currently in a meditation and mindfulness teacher certification program. I began looking at many of our practices in this program and worked on modifying them to be more applicable in the classroom and in techniques that could be implemented quickly between periods.

Thomas Belasco is an English teacher at Lower Cape May Regional High School. He is the 2019-20 Cape May County Teacher of the Year. Belasco is currently in a meditation and mindfulness teacher certification program through practitioners Tara Brach and Jack Kornfield. He can be reached at tjbelasco@gmail.com.

All of these practices not only serve to ground us as individuals, but additionally help us to guide our students in a calmer, focused and deliberate manner. Each morning when I come into the classroom, I read to myself a quote from Haim Ginott that I have laminated and taped to my desk:

"I've come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather. As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or heal. In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanized or dehumanized."

While these techniques help us to regulate ourselves, they ultimately allow us to serve as a thermostat, rather than a thermometer, for the mood of the classroom and de-escalate tense situations rather than making them worse.

As I explore the idea of mindfulness and mindfulness-based stress reduction, I will first explore here the science and documented proof behind these practices and present methods teachers can put into practice immediately in the classroom, between periods, and ideally, throughout our lives.

THE BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

Thankfully, we are looking at mindful practices in a time in which much scientific exploration has been applied to these techniques. In her 2014

paper, "Evidence for Mindfulness: Impacts on the Well-Being and Performance of School Staff," Katherine Weare reports that educators who study mindfulness and put it practice:

- Tend to experience fewer mental health problems such as stress, depression and anxiety.
- Report greater well-being, including a sense of calmness, life satisfaction, self-confidence, and self-compassion.
- Tend to have better physical health, including lower blood pressure, declines in cortisol (a stress hormone) and fewer reported physical health problems and days off work.

Additionally, in her book, *Assessing Mindfulness and Acceptance Processes in Clients*, Ruth Baer, Ph.D. documents meditation's ability to activate regions of the brain that regulate emotion, attention and cognition, as well as alleviate stress and anxiety. Coming from a basis in research, the reminder of this article will present some methods you can use to initiate a practice both in your classroom and develop a simple practice at home.

BREATHING TECHNIQUES

The first step in developing a mindfulness practice is to work on breathing.

Americans have a tendency to take shallow breaths that tend to increase the body's reaction to stressors, rather than reducing the stress. A good first step is to cultivate deep breaths that expand the belly. The term often used in mindfulness practice is a Buddha Belly.



It did not take long to realize that as important as it is to address the needs of children, to be successful we must first meet the needs of those who work with them.

One way to practice this at home is to lie on your back with a pillow or stuffed animal on your stomach. As you breathe, the pillow/stuffed animal should move up and down. Belly breathing has concrete benefits. When you find yourself in a stressful situation, such as a child's outburst or an administrator's classroom observation, simply taking two to three minutes to take slow deliberate breaths into your belly and fully exhaling can cause the body to slow down and relax.

A variation on this technique that helps to clear your mind and guide your focus is a YouTube video titled "Relax and Breathe: Do Nothing for Ten Minutes." This video features an expanding and contracting shape and light music that you can use to accompany your breathing. The shape guides the pace of your breathing, which allows your nervous system to slowly calm down and come back to center. To find it, go to youtube.com and search for the title of the video.

Two more variations on this breathing technique include counting your breaths or reciting a phrase as you breathe in and breathe out. Simply take a stomach-expanding breath. As you exhale, say the number one. Continue this technique counting to 10. If you find yourself distracted and thoughts begin to pull you away, begin again at one and see if you can get to 10.

In reciting a phrase, you simply replace counting with helpful words. I tend to use the phrase "Breathing in calm, breathing out stress." Another phrase that works well comes from the Vietnamese Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh: "Breathing in, I calm myself. Breathing out, I feel at ease. Breathing in, I smile. Breathing out, I release. Breathing in, I dwell in the present moment. Breathing out, I feel it is a wonderful moment."

In all of these breathing activities, it is helpful to close your eyes; but if that makes you uncomfortable, simply soften your gaze upon a place on the floor approximately a foot in front of you.

Another breathing method that I like to use in high stress situations came to me from Brené Brown. It is called foursquare breathing. I breathe in counting to four and hold my breath for another four counts. Then I breathe out for four counts and hold air out of my lungs for four counts. Through the course of the exercise, I draw a square with my finger. Each side of the square represents a step in the exercise: breathing in, holding my breath, breathing out, and holding

my breath. Between class periods, I will do three of these sets of this exercise to clear out what happened the period before and bring me back to the present moment.

Two other practices come in especially handy in high stress moments or times you can feel panic surfacing. They serve to take your mind off the past and bring you squarely into the present moment.

The first activity is a sensory breathing activity invoking all five of your senses.

1. As you slow your breath, look around and silently name five things you can see.
2. As you continue to relax your breath, listen for four things you can hear and name them.
3. Continue the process with three things you can touch; I keep quite a few textured objects on my desk.
4. Now, as you slowly breathe, find two things you can smell
5. Lastly, identify one thing you can taste. I always tell those with whom I work that you can simply taste your tongue; nevertheless, this is a great reason to keep chocolate or mints in your room.

This takes a you out of your head and brings you calmly you into the present moment.

INTENTIONAL WALKING

The second practice is a walking meditation. Once again, you slow your breathing to a deliberate and calm pace. Continue with a consciously slow pace focusing on how your feet come into contact with the ground, the firmness of the floor beneath you and how one foot lifts as the other foot begins to plant itself.

As you perform this intentional walking, soften your gaze about two feet in front of you looking toward the floor. I do not make eye contact with others in the hall as I am trying to direct my mind inward. I would try to undertake a walk of at least 40 steps, but do not get fixated on counting your steps. Additionally, afterward, it is helpful to let your colleagues know what you are doing so they don't just feel you are being rude when you do not say hello. I learned this while conducting a workshop, and teachers mentioned that they thought it was strange when I did not acknowledge them.

The significance of mental grounding brought through mindfulness practices can be seen through its use in the military, on police forces, by professional athletes and beyond. Bestselling

author and historian Yuval Noah Harari, *Sapiens* and *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* writes:

"Two things, mainly. First of all, it's the ability to focus. When you train the mind to focus on something like the breath, it also gives you the discipline to focus on much bigger things and to really tell the difference between what's important and everything else... It's so difficult to keep reminding yourself what is really the most important thing that has happened in history or what is the most important thing that is happening now in the world. The discipline to have this focus I really got from the meditation. The other major contribution... is to learn the difference between fiction and reality, what is real and what is just stories that we invent and construct in our own minds. Almost 99% you realize is just stories in our minds."

The ability to focus and to separate fiction from reality serve teachers well. Improving our focus allows us to be more efficient and productive both in the classroom and through our grading and preparation. Seeing the difference between what is real and what we have created in our minds through worry and perception helps to alleviate the vast majority of our stressors.

Finally, I emphasize that while these are wonderful practices in our classroom, developing a practice throughout your life will provide enormous benefits. Something as simple as 10 to 15 minutes in the morning or evening provides a grounding time that you can tap into throughout the day.

While having a teacher-led group practice is ideal, many of us do not live in an area where that is possible. In those cases, some of the smartphone apps serve to augment the practice. Three that I have used and find particularly helpful are Calm, Headspace, and Ten Percent Happier, created by Dan Harris of "Good Morning America." These three apps require a subscription fee, although Calm and Headspace have offered free subscriptions for teachers from time to time. Insight timer is an app that provides free material.

Whatever method you choose, making your practice a daily habit is key. It does not have to be for a long period of time, 10 -15 minutes a day can bring about substantial changes. Make the time to invest in yourself. You are worth it, and your students will benefit from it. 🙏

EAST ORANGE

GIRLS WHO
CODE CLUE

EXPLORES CODING
AND SISTERHOOD

BY ARIA JIMENEZ,
WITH INTRODUCTION BY EVE BALICK



The members of the East Orange STEM Academy Girls Who Code Club designed a T-shirt for Valentine's Day. The front heart and figurative hands read "Girls Who Code Have Heart" and, on the back, #STEMwillRise. From left: STEM Academy Principal Dr. Vincent Stallings, Mary Grice, Manuela Olan-Hernandez, Keyanna Alexandre, Nadia Barron, Sufia Solozano, Eniola Adebola, and Aria Jimenez.

INTRODUCTION

Girls Who Code (GWC) is a leading nonprofit with a mission to close the gender gap in technology. Our programs include our free after-school clubs for grades 3-12, exposing girls to computer science during those critical years. My role is outreach, helping create new partnerships and clubs in New Jersey.

Only one in five computer scientists are women, leaving many women missing out on lucrative technology careers. Girls Who Code alumni, however, major in computer science or related fields at 15 times the national average!

Our clubs are free. No computer science experience is required to run them. We offer a \$300 fund to support the clubs. Club members work together to apply their skills to make a project that

Aria Jimenez is an English language arts teacher at East Orange STEM Academy. She is also the facilitator of the school's Girls Who Code Club. Jimenez is a member of the East Orange Education Association. She can be reached at mrsariajimenez@gmail.com.

Eve Balick is the Girls Who Code Regional Partnership Coordinator for New Jersey. She can be reached at eve.balick@girlswhocode.com.

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I saw a desperate need for girls to have a place to gather, strengthen their confidence, feel “counted” and empower their visions to be the very best in all of their endeavors.

has an impact in their communities. Moreover, we offer our alumni continuing opportunities for sisterhood, networking and employment.

My work includes both partnership engagement and individual club outreach. We offer partnerships for districts and organizations who start multiple clubs. We have many community partnerships in New Jersey, including collaborations with school districts in Newark, East Orange, Bayonne, Paterson and many more. Learn more about partnerships at girlswhocode.com/communitypartnerships.

Individual host sites, such as schools, libraries, colleges, nonprofits and others can also start individual clubs. (See girlswhocode.com/clubs.) We have hundreds of individual clubs in New Jersey, including the one I run in Kinnelon. Club facilitators are often teachers, librarians, parent vol-

unteers (like me), college students and after-school program coordinators.

As GWC's clubs outreach coordinator in New Jersey, I am available to provide free workshops about our clubs at professional development events and conferences. Please reach out to me if you are interested.

In this article, Ms. Aria Jimenez shares her journey as a GWC Club facilitator at East Orange STEM Academy, a club in GWC's Community Partnership with East Orange School District. As you will see from her story, Ms. Jimenez embraced the opportunity to be “brave and not perfect,” as espoused by GWC's founder and CEO Reshma Saujani. With that outlook, Ms. Jimenez jumped into her GWC Club experience with enthusiasm and courage.



East Orange STEM Academy Girls Who Code Club members participate in Girls Who Code March for Sisterhood.

A GIRLS WHO CODE CLUB JOURNEY

I am proud of my GWC Club from last year. The year was transformative for me and the girls who joined me. I was hired to teach English last year but on short notice found myself in a science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) position. I embraced the opportunity with passion, determination and a little fear.

In addition to GWC, many other STEM related opportunities were placed before us, and we dove in to each one. I say “we” because my students took a leap of faith with me for each new opportunity, competition and contest. Finally, an email, flier, and quick request from my administrator got me started with GWC. I signed up immediately and, to prepare, tried to grasp every piece of information and video sent my way.

Some facilitators may take on a GWC club

because they are highly experienced in STEM fields, but I saw a desperate need for girls to have a place to gather, strengthen their confidence, feel “counted” and empower their visions to be the very best in all of their endeavors. Girls from sixth to eighth grades joined, posing our first challenge of engaging all girls of different ages together. Through the club’s mini plans, extra ice breakers, music, discussions, and watching and highlighting “Women in the Spotlight,” we drew closer together. With only one day a week to meet, we ended up wishing we had more time together.

Once we were closer and had developed a strong, consistent group presence, we got to work on our vision for the club and our school. We wanted to create a website and an app that would allow us to track and measure the social-emotional health of our peers and come up with ways to

turn a challenging day into a more peaceful and productive one. We struggled with fully implementing our ideas because of restraints on access to the blog website and YouTube, but we always found a way around it by coding fervently using *Code.org* projects that included apps to create art and dance videos. We created QR codes and put them on display for students and staff to scan and watch the animation of art and dance come to life.

I was inspired by their engagement and found more ways to get them excited about our club through the events we registered for, such #Raiseandforsisterhood, #Marchforsisterhood and more. My girls designed a gorgeous T-shirt just in time for Valentine’s Day using *CustomInk.com*. This was my gift to them at the time and a small way to say thanks for all of their hard work. The front heart and figurative hands showed:



“ We wanted to create a website and an app that would allow us to track and measure the social emotional health of our peers and come up with ways to turn a challenging day into a more peaceful and productive one. ”

"Girls Who Code Have Heart" and on the back #STEMwillRise. Rise, we did!

I am proud of the accomplishments of my girls and STEM students who were inspired by our commitment and the leadership of my girls. We all felt honored to receive funds from Girls Who Code because it enabled me to show my girls that they mattered and allowed me to buy things to make our classroom space and meetings even more special and comfortable.

I'm looking forward to an incredible year ahead. I know that we will be able to work hard to finish the project and mission we began last year with even more fervor and strength. I cannot say enough about this incredible club, and I will do everything in my power to spread a positive message to the girls of my school, city, state and beyond.

I am so grateful for an opportunity to share the story of an ELA teacher who found a passion for

teaching girls how to code while learning alongside them. I hope this message reaches far and wide and that many more teachers are supported in ways that allow them to bring GWC Clubs to their schools for all ages. 🙌

FAA WILLIAM J. HUGHES TECHNICAL CENTER OPENS ITS DOORS TO



— AVIATION CAREERS —

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY

For the past four years, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) William J. Hughes Technical Center in Egg Harbor Township has hosted Aviation STEM Day. It's a chance for high school students interested in careers in aviation to learn more about the professional opportunities available to them through the tech center.

In 2019, more than 300 students participated in Aviation STEM Day. Students are issued a boarding pass, and they punch the areas they visit. In each area, they listen to short presentations from experts, ask questions and participate in simulations. The students learn about research and development, communications, navigation, surveillance, automation, weather, NAS storyboard, and modeling and simulation, among other topics.

"The FAA maintains the world's safest, most efficient aviation system," said Lyndsay Digneo, aviation STEM program manager for the Tech Center. "The Tech Center is a huge employer in the area and we want to show students that a career in aviation doesn't just mean becoming a pilot or an air traffic controller."

"At the Tech Center, we are conducting research, development, testing and evaluation that impacts the rest of the country," Digneo said. "This is an exciting opportunity to learn more about the kind of innovative work being done in aviation safety, human safety, software, structures, propulsion and airports right here in South Jersey."

Students met with experts in a variety of subject areas, including art. Mary Beth Moschouris is a motion designer who works for Veracity

Engineering, which works with the FAA to create videos explaining how systems work. Moschouris talked to students about commercial space transportation and showed them an animated video she worked on to help illustrate how the complex system functions.

"There's a place for everyone at the Tech Center and we need a wide variety of backgrounds," Moschouris said.

Carlos Morales, a computer science teacher at Cumberland County Technical Education Center in Vineland, brought his students to Aviation STEM Day to show them the practical application of the concepts they study in the classroom.

"We've been doing a lot of Java-based work and my students are seeing how a lot of the people here at the Tech Center use Java to analyze data," Morales said.

"I would definitely recommend this program to other educators," Morales said. "This is our first year participating, but I'm planning to bring more students back next year."

Morales's students share his enthusiasm.

"I can see myself pursuing a career at the Tech Center," said Julie Zhu. "I think it's the perfect place for me."

"I really like math and it was interesting to see all the careers I could pursue at the Tech Center that use math," said Seth Coward. "It's not every day you get to go to a government building and talk about the cutting-edge technology they use."

"I love coding and it was cool to see how I could connect that with the work that's done here," said Daisy Siedlecki. "It was interesting to see how many women are employed here. It makes me feel more confident about the possibility of having a career in this field."

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.

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If you are interested in learning more about the Aviation STEM Program or participating in future events, email 9-ACT-AvSTEM@faa.gov.

Aviation STEM Day is not the only program the tech center offers. Year-round, the tech center conducts site visits and sends Aviation STEM Ambassadors out to schools to do presentations on a variety of topics, demonstrating how their work relates to math and science. In addition, these ambassadors participate in career days and are available to judge science fairs and conduct assemblies.

“We want to share these resources with NJEA members because educators are great messengers for encouraging students to seriously consider careers in aviation and STEM,” said Digneo. “We have great resources available to teachers in New Jersey. We want to get the word out so that more educators take advantage of these opportunities for their students.”

If you are interested in learning more about the Aviation STEM Program or participating in future events, email 9-ACT-AvSTEM@faa.gov. 📧



Cumberland County Technical Education Center teacher Carlos Morales with Geraldine Abreu, one of the many aviation experts who presented at Aviation STEM Day.



Visit the FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center with students and staff from Cumberland Count Technical Education center in this video found at njea.org/FAAtech.



Students from Cumberland County Technical Education Center participate in a virtual reality simulation as their teacher, Carlos Morales, observes.



IS HAZARDOUS TO OUR HEALTH

ESPECIALLY FOR YOUTH

BY DOROTHY WIGMORE

The numbers are disturbing, and they're getting worse. Millions of middle and high school students in the U.S. now are using e-cigarettes, just as efforts to reduce "traditional" smoking seemed to be paying off.

The 2019 National Youth Tobacco Survey found 27.5% of high school students—about 3.6 million—were using e-cigarettes, far outstripping any other kind of tobacco use. Among middle school students, it was 10.5%, up from 4.9% in 2018. The biggest increase in use occurred in 2017-18. About two-thirds of high school students using the devices prefer fruit, menthol and mint flavors.

It's so bad that U.S. Surgeon General Jerome Adams declared youth vaping an epidemic in late 2018. Like others, he blamed the new format, for which a typical cartridge, also called a pod, has about as much nicotine as 20 regular cigarettes. They also can be used discreetly and come in flavors that appeal to youth.

The Trump administration took some action

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.

on certain vaping products containing fruit, mint and other e-cigarette flavors. Gov. Phil Murphy took further action on Jan. 21. As of April 20, the state will permanently ban the sale and distribution of all flavored vaping products, except tobacco, based on the Electric Smoking Device Task Force's report. Supporters talked about the products being a "marketing ploy," designed to attract and hook young people on nicotine, causing harm through the addiction.

One indication of the addiction is that vaping has become common inside schools—in classrooms, restrooms and halls.

"There's little I can do if I'm focused on instruction," says Sarah Reichenbecher, the Freehold Regional High School Education Association president. "Students can pull it out of their sleeve, take a hit, or go out in the hall and go to the bathroom and return. The fact it's so discreet is problematic."

WHAT ARE "ELECTRONIC NICOTINE DELIVERY SYSTEMS"?

E-cigarettes entered the U.S. in 2007. The JUUL version—introduced in 2015 with a funky USB-style design—became the top-selling brand by the end of 2017, especially among young people. JUUL has been investigated and sued for its alleged practice of targeting youth.

For almost 10 years, the devices—"electronic

nicotine delivery systems" or ENDS—were unregulated because they do not contain tobacco. Companies could advertise and sell them without restrictions. Under pressure, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) got authority in 2016 to treat them as tobacco products. The agency also cracked down on those selling to minors, issuing warning letters and fines, and instituting new rules for manufacturers. The vaping industry is fighting back, using the classic tobacco industry tactics of denial about hazards and fighting regulation.

ENDS are purported to be safer than traditional cigarettes because they don't burn their ingredients and cause cancer. One result is the possibility of weaning those addicted to cigarettes off the killer product. Instead, they heat a liquid of nicotine and other chemicals to produce an aerosol (i.e., a vapor with fine particles in it) that users inhale. Liquids also can contain a wide variety of flavors (sometimes-toxic chemicals) or tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), marijuana's "high" component, with Vitamin E acetate.

Propylene glycol and vegetable glycerin help produce the aerosol vapor, which can include a variety of nasty chemicals, depending on the voltage. Newer e-cigarettes, with adjustable voltages for a thicker vapor, may be worse.

“

There is a vaping epidemic in this country, especially among teens. Every day, over 3,500 youths start vaping. In 2018 alone, the number of high school students who vape nearly doubled.

WHAT'S THE HARM?

In the last year, there have been reports of vaping-related deaths and serious hospitalizations across the U.S., and elsewhere. As of mid-January, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) knew of 2,668 hospitalized cases, including 60 deaths—one in New Jersey. The state reported 107 known or suspected cases by the end of January; the numbers peaked in September 2019. Nationally, 15% of patients were under 18 and 37% between 18 to 24.

The CDC suspects Vitamin E acetate is the main culprit for e-cigarette or vaping-associated lung injury (EVALI). However, diacetyl flavorings linked to the devastating “popcorn lung” disease are also named in some EVALI cases. Some flavors may use nut-based allergy-causing chemicals. Other ingredients in the aerosol are hazardous. The few studies available link vaping to chronic lung diseases, asthma and increased wheezing.

Most e-cigarettes contain nicotine; its liquid form can catch fire. The highly-addictive substance increases heart rate and blood pressure, while effects on teens can:

- Harm brain development, until about age 25.
- Affect learning, memory and attention.
- Lead to mood disorders.
- Lower impulse control.
- Increase the odds of young people turning to “regular” cigarettes.

Increasingly, public health practitioners say that children, young people and pregnant women should not be exposed to, or use, ENDS, and those who are trying to quit smoking (i.e., deal with the addiction) should use other means.

The American Heart Association says the

devices’ biggest threat to public health is that vaping “may ‘re-normalize’ smoking. Reversing the hard-won gains in the global effort to curb smoking would be catastrophic.”

Second-hand vapor, the exhaled aerosol, is a concern. Indoor air quality—often already a problem in schools—can be affected, depending on where vaping occurs, how many people vape in the same space, and air circulation. Vaping is a drug delivery system. The drug, nicotine, is highly addictive. When used in enclosed spaces those not already addicted are exposed to the drug and may ultimately be drawn into vaping or smoking.

“Teachers are still subject to whatever the secondary by-product is, in closely-contained classrooms, against our will,” Reichenbecher

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*This is
an emergency
situation.
– American Heart
Association*

says. “Once that vapor’s in the air, it becomes something other students and teachers are breathing in involuntarily.”

There is little information about what ends up in the air, or in bystanders’ bodies. It’s reasonable

to use the precautionary principle of better safe than sorry and focus on ways to prevent vaping.

HOW ARE SCHOOLS RESPONDING?

Some New Jersey schools are clamping down by installing bathroom vaping sensors, assigning bathroom monitors, requiring students to get permission to use a bathroom, and enforcing punitive measures. But the expensive detectors aren’t always effective, some go off randomly, and it can be difficult to determine which students were vaping and who happened to be in the bathroom when the devices sounded.

Other administrations are trying to change behavior, adopting policies to steer students to counseling and treatment. Some use a youth tobacco cessation program. Students caught with an e-device are assigned to complete an online interactive program played something like a video game over eight hours.

“We have to educate, educate, educate,” says one teacher. “We have to make sure the youth understand it’s not just flavored water.”

Others warn that confiscating the product is not going to end the behavior for those who are addicted.

The New Jersey Department of Health has a special vaping website, *VapeFactsNJ.com*, that includes a microsite aimed at teens: incorruptible.us. Its theme is “Big tobacco will never own me.” The website points out that Marlboro cigarette maker Altria invested \$12.8 billion in JUUL in 2018, saying “Vaping is tobacco’s newest hook.”

Resources

American Heart Association

- End the Lies Youth Vaping and Nicotine Research: bit.ly/ahavaping
- The Ugly Truth About Vaping: bit.ly/uglytruthvaping

Centers for Disease Control (CDC)

- Electronic cigarettes: bit.ly/cdc-ecigs
- E-cigarettes: Talk to youth about the risks: bit.ly/cdc-ecig-risks

New Jersey Department of Health

- E-cigarettes and vaping: VapeFactsNJ.com
- Tobacco-free for a Healthy New Jersey: Don’t get vaped in, tobaccofreenj.com/don-t-get-vaped-in-1

What can NJEA local associations do?

- Promote and support proven stop-smoking methods/processes.
- Educate members about the hazards of vaping and effective solutions (inside and outside schools).
- Through NJEA, find out what other local education associations and school districts are doing that recognize the addiction and marketing ploys, support students wanting to quit and educate all about the hazards.
- Report illnesses to school nurse, indicating if you think vaping was involved.

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KINDERGARTEN AND SEESAW

A PERFECT MATCH

BY JOANNA DOUGLAS

I spent 16 years in third and fourth grade. While I loved the independence of those students and their ability to tackle most tasks, I missed my time in kindergarten. So when one of our kindergarten teachers retired, I begged to be moved. Then I started to panic. I began scouring the Internet for ideas about how to connect with my kindergarten parents. What could I do to make them feel a part of their child's school day, and alleviate some of their worries? That's when I discovered Seesaw.

Seesaw is a growing and ever-changing company that provides a digital portfolio for students, a strong communication tool for parents, and an activity library chock full of grade-level appropriate activities that can be done at centers, during technology time, or any other learning time of the day. There is an app for Android and iPhone users as well as an app for teachers, making it easy to access over the course of the day.

The first thing that I decided to use Seesaw for was to document each kindergarten student's weekly progress. I used the video feature to record them reading their high-frequency words. I used the photo and voice record to document their stories from Writer's Workshop. I also used the message center to send out group and individual messages to my students' families. In the beginning stages the hardest part of Seesaw was figuring out a time, at least once a week, when I would use the program. Now, in my fourth year, it has become part of my classroom, and the times when I use it happen organically.

Seesaw has been the key to success in my classroom. I connect each of my student's parents to their own child's portfolio via an individual email at kindergarten orientation. They simply scan a QR code and are connected to their child's journal. It is confidential. No one outside of the family is able to see the students' work. Once connected, they receive a notification each time their child has a new item in their portfolio or if I have sent a message. Parents have the option to receive that notification by text or by email. They then login and view the items. At this point, they

can add a text or voice comment to the item or reply to a message from me. I make it a habit of reading parents comments aloud to their children as the comments come in. They light up when they hear what their parents have to say.

Seesaw also has a bank of activities that teachers can assign to a select group of students or to the entire class. There are activities for each grade level, categorized by subject matter. Ambassadors, which are Seesaw users who have received additional training in the app, can create their own activities and submit them to the activity bank at any time.

The activity that I love the most for my kindergarten students is the one with four boxes, focusing on a high-frequency word for the week. The students must record themselves reading the word, write the word with the drawing tool, circle the words when they are mixed with other words, and lastly, drag the letters of the word into the correct order using the label feature.

I asked a few of my parents to tell me their thoughts on Seesaw, and they were excited to share.

"Seesaw is an amazing app that connects teachers, students and parents!" one parent said. "It allows you to see your child's progress and all of the fun activities on a daily basis. I love getting an alert because then I am part of my daughter's day."

"Seesaw is the epitome of the home and school connection," a parent who is also an educator said. "It gives a meaningful window into the everyday school life and successes that are going on within the classroom."

Another parent's statement summed it up perfectly.

"Seesaw allows working parents to be continuously connected with our child's teacher and progress," the parent wrote. "I love that we can even make comments so our children can see that we are proud of them."



The app has a free version, but there is a paid version available to schools based on a per student dollar amount. My school started off on the free version, and then purchased the school version for pre-kindergarten through fourth grade in our school.

No matter what age, parents truly enjoy getting a glimpse into their children's day. I strongly recommend using Seesaw in your classroom. It helps to strengthen the school to home connection, and it uses technology in a strategically successful way. 📱



No matter what age, parents truly enjoy getting a glimpse into their children's day.

Joanna Douglas is the president of the Point Pleasant Beach Education Association and a kindergarten teacher at Antrim Elementary School in Point Pleasant Beach. She can be reached at douglasj@ptbeach.com.

A CLOSER LOOK ...at the people in our schools



Many people with many different job descriptions are part of the outstanding teams who make New Jersey's public schools the best in the nation. On this page, we highlight three stories of unique educators in our schools.

To watch more stories like theirs, visit classroomcloseup.org.

COMMUNITY AIDE

Edwinta Rhue, a public school community aide from Reverend Dr. Ercel F. Webb Elementary School – P.S. 22 in Jersey City explains the importance of her role in the school and the community. More than just attendance officers, community aides are responsible for helping students get as much instructional time as possible. By serving as a liaison between the school and the parents, aides can help families find solutions that help their children succeed in school.

HEALTH LEADS TO ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Healthy students have better attendance records and can achieve a higher level of academic performance. In many schools, an attendance officer is responsible for checking on students, but at John F. Kennedy Elementary in South Plainfield, school nurse Sheryl Lapp oversees student absenteeism. She works with teachers and parents to determine why the student is absent. For many, medical challenges are the reason. She works with school staff on recognizing early symptoms of many conditions.

IRVINGTON ROTC

U.S. Army Sergeant First Class (Retired) Harvey Craig runs the Junior ROTC program at Irvington High School where he guides his students as they identify and pursue their goals while becoming strong young adults. The cadets demonstrate ceremonial marches and physical fitness teams.

Thousands of "Classroom Close-up NJ" segments are viewable and downloadable at classroomcloseup.org. A searchable database makes finding an entire show or individual segments on any topic easy. These shows can help innovate your instruction, guide you to unknown resources, or simply make your day.

WATCH CCU ON NJTV



classroomcloseup.org

NJEA's "Classroom Close-up NJ" has won 16 Emmy® awards. It inspires and educates the public about the great things happening in New Jersey public schools. The show airs on Sundays on NJTV at 7:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Visit classroomcloseup.org to watch individual segments or the entire show. On Twitter, follow @CCUNJ and "like" the show at [facebook.com/crcunj](https://www.facebook.com/crcunj). On Youtube, visit [youtube.com/c/classroomcloseup](https://www.youtube.com/c/classroomcloseup). On Instagram, search Classroom Close Up.

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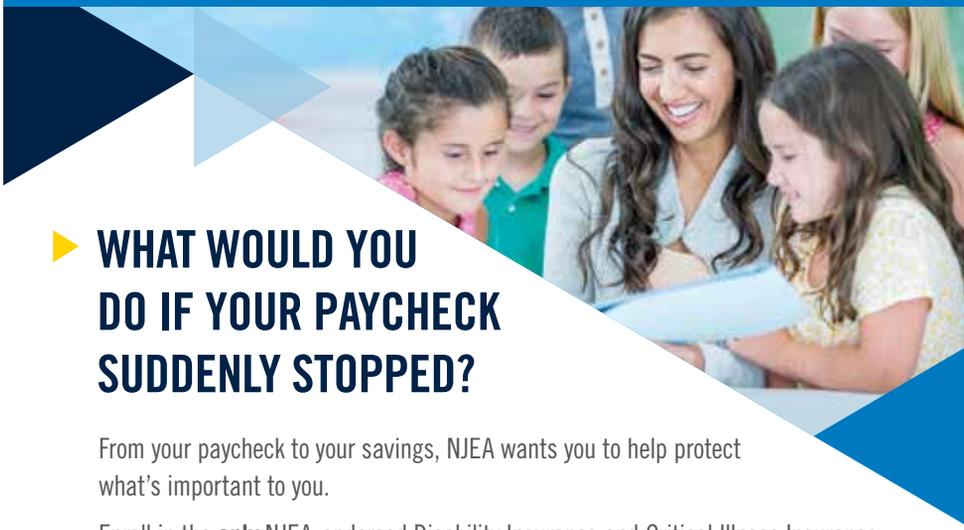
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THE BENEFITS OF TECHNOLOGY FOR PRESERVICE EDUCATORS

BY EMMA K. MURPHY, SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

Teachers are like superheroes—we are strong, steadfast, compassionate, and, most importantly, adaptable. In fact, adaptability is often seen as the most significant characteristic of a great educator. Students in teacher preparation programs need to be equipped with technological skills to bring into the classroom.

With technology advancing rapidly, new programs, including web-based activities and apps, can be used to create a more positive classroom experience. Many advantages of using technology in the classroom include positive encounters with social-emotional learning, classroom engagement, and meaningful ways to encourage higher order thinking. Future educators should delve into this powerful classroom tool and embrace the adaptability we knew we had all along.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

There is a growing interest in social-emotional learning among researchers in curriculum development. Social-emotional learning is a process through which students can learn to cope with emotions and positively relate to their peers and surroundings. Students need to be competent in engaging their peers in positive ways, as research finds that this will result in college and career readiness.

McGraw-Hill's Education Applied Learning Sciences Team concluded that game-based learning using technology can be a way to foster positive social-emotional learning. Web-based games such as Kahoot!, Quizlet or Poll Everywhere will encourage team building and positive social interactions. McGraw-Hill suggests that technology-based games will also support metacognition, or the skill of knowing one's strengths, weaknesses and subsequent progress. Using the internet to have students collaborate with peers—when monitored by the teacher to ensure positive interactions—can encourage social-emotional learning and metacognition.

CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT

Another reason to incorporate technology-

based learning in the classroom is to make skills, and the curriculum in which they are based, relevant to students. Technology has become a way for students to communicate, grow, and learn. In the 21st century, the use and knowledge of computers, smartphones, and personal tablets is a necessity for daily life and future professions.

When using technology in the classroom, students and teachers can collaborate and learn together, which can make learning fun and exciting. Creating lesson plans that have students create Facebook profiles for significant historical figures or seeing a 3-D, web-based version of a bee pollinating flowers will be much more meaningful to students than reading slides off a PowerPoint. Additionally, having the opportunity to showcase internet and overall technology skills will foster student engagement.

Liane Wardlow, Ph.D. writes that students can use different means to research and create, thus establishing their preferred method of learning. Directing one's learning is an important tool for students to learn and using technology can be an interesting way to make learning relevant in the classroom. Positive learning experiences originate from being engaged in material relevant to one's self. This is often found by using online resources and tools.

HIGHER-LEVEL THINKING

As educators, we are concerned about ensuring students have the opportunity to use higher-level thinking in the classroom. Bloom's Taxonomy reminds us that higher-level thinking skills require that students apply, analyze and create something during a lesson. Application involves comparing and contrasting ideas, while analyzing encourages arguing in support or against a certain idea.

The idea of creating implies that students will produce new work about a topic or standard. While there are plenty of ways to encourage higher-level thinking, there are certainly creative ways to support these objectives using technology. Students can use tools such as Create a Graph, which can be found at the the National Center for

“

In education's ever-changing atmosphere, adaptability is needed more than ever. One of the most important tools to address change is the creative incorporation of technology into instruction.

Education Statistics' website to create diagrams or more organized outlines to analyze. (Visit nces.ed.gov/nceskids/createagraph/.) They can also use applications such as Pear Deck or Poll Everywhere to apply what they know about a subject anonymously and can produce work that showcases newfound knowledge in online portfolios, on free websites such as Weebly.

ADAPTABILITY

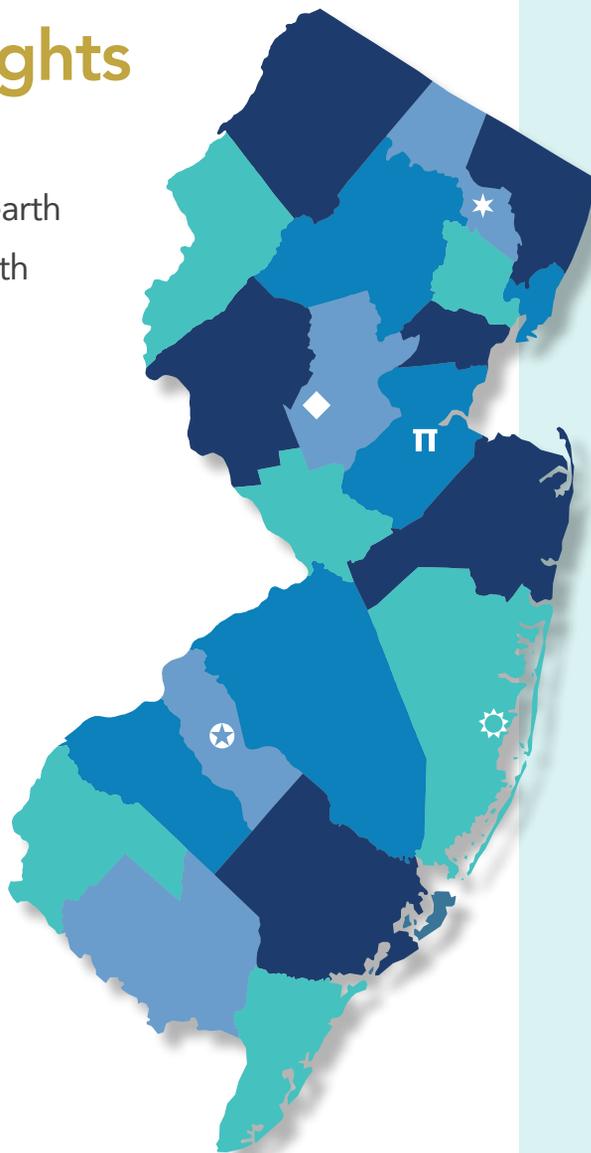
Teaching is an exciting profession that requires dedication, empathy, and adaptability. In education's ever-changing atmosphere, adaptability is needed more than ever. One of the most important tools to address change is the creative incorporation of technology into instruction. The rapid advancement of technology means that teachers need to constantly adapt to new circumstances and be prepared to integrate new apps and programs in lesson plans and curricula. Adaptability, especially when applying technology skills, greatly benefits our students. 🏠

SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

Workshops and conferences

highlights

Cultural sensitivity, earth science, math and more



★ WILLIAM PATERSON OFFERS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

William Paterson University is offering professional development workshops for its spring semester. Highlighted below are two of many workshops.

Cultural Sensitivity: Improving Cross-Culture Communication and Broaching Difficult Topic

Date: March 31, 9 a.m.-noon

This workshop will review cultural commonalities among diverse populations and highlight key considerations for cross cultural communication. Participants will discuss various types of micro-aggressions and how to effectively repair them. Lastly, participants will discuss the importance of advocacy for new cultures in their school environment and how schools can become social justice advocates.

Presenter: Dr. La Shauna Dean, Associate Professor, Dept. of Special Education & Counseling

To register for this and all other workshop listings expect the one below visit bit.ly/wpupdnj. Note that each course is listed twice on the registration form. If your district is in a professional development partnership with WPU, select the “PDS Schools Only” option. All others, select “Non-PDS Schools Only.”

African American History for Educators

Date: March 27, 8:30 a.m. to 3p.m.

(Continental lunch included.)

Explore in breakout sessions critical periods of African American history, N.J. Content Standards and NAEP results. Participants will also discuss creating supportive learning environments, leading constructive conversations around challenging topics and incorporating local history into your classroom.

Presenters: Sankofa Collaborative

Registration: bit.ly/wpunjqualtrics (Note that while this workshop is primarily for schools in a professional development relationship with WPU, interested members may email Nancy Norris-Bauer at norrisn@wpunj.edu for available seats for educators from Non-PDS Schools.)

★ "AMERICA TO ME" FILM SERIES HOSTED BY WPU

"America to Me" is a 2018 American documentary television series directed by Steve James, produced by Kartemquin Films and Participant Media. The 10-episode series was filmed during 2015-16 school year at Oak Park and River Forest High School located in Oak Park, Illinois. The series chronicles the daily life of 12 students spanning all the grades and all the tracks within the school.

The series has been praised for its "detailed look at inequality in America through the lens of a storied high school near Chicago," for "bitingly honest mediation of the ways race, class, and equity play out in Chicago's progressive suburb of Oak Park," and was pronounced a "testament to how individuals can persevere within a broken system, and how much harder that system makes it for some of them."

The series will be screened on March 3, 10, 24, 31; April 21, 28; and May 5. Screenings run 5-7 p.m. at the Valley Road Auditorium, William Paterson University.

No registration required. For additional information contact stansfields2@wpunj.edu.

◆ NEW JERSEY EARTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE EDUCATOR'S INSTITUTE: CONNECTING MODELS AND EVIDENCE

Join Model-Evidence Link (MEL) team for the Connecting Models and Evidence Institute June 24-26, 2020 at Duke Farms in Hillsborough, NJ. This institute will provide professional development in the use of MEL activities centered on current Earth science topics. These three-dimensional (core ideas, practices, crosscutting concepts) instructional scaffolds facilitate critical thinking, evidence-based reasoning, construction of scientific explanations, and collaborative argumentation to support scientific reasoning within challenging Earth science topics.

This three-day institute is free, and a stipend is provided. Applications are open to middle and high school Earth and Environmental science teachers in New Jersey and nearby states. Pairs of teachers from the same school who teach the same subject are encouraged to apply. Those teaching Earth science content in their courses are also encouraged to apply.

The application deadline is March 9. Applicants will be notified of a decision by March 23. For more information and to apply, visit bit.ly/melpdatduke.

⚙ 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 our open house, which 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 www.soildistrict.org/educational-programs/roundtable.

▮ 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 April. Direct online registration for all workshops can be accessed at tinyurl.com/AMTNJ-DIMACS-2019-2020. Workshops in May can be reviewed at the indicated websites:

High school workshops

April 2 – Teaching and Learning in a Heterogeneous Math Class: "Is it really possible?"; Grades 9-12

April 3 – Differentiated Instructional Strategies for Teaching Math, Grades 7-12

April 17 – Creative Differentiated STEAM Projects for Middle and High School Students, Grades 5-12

April 27 – Teaching Algebra, Precalculus and Calculus with GeoGebra, Grades 9-12

Registration and information: tinyurl.com/AMTNJ-DIMACS-HS-2019-2020A

Middle school workshops

April 3 – Differentiated Instructional Strategies for Teaching Math, Grades 7-12

April 15 – Algebraic Thinking, Grades 6-8

April 17 – Creative Differentiated STEAM Projects for Middle and High School Students, Grades 5-12

Registration and information: tinyurl.com/AMTNJ-DIMACS-MS-2019-2020A

Elementary school workshops

April 24 – Differentiated Instructional Strategies for Teaching Math, Grades K-6

Registration and information: tinyurl.com/AMTNJ-DIMACS-Elem-2019-2020A

For more information or questions, email AMTNJ@amtnj.com.

★ CAMDEN CC OFFERS FREE LECTURE SERIES

The Camden County College Center for Civic Leadership and Responsibility (CCLR) is offering CCLR offers a free lecture series and special events at its Blackwood and Cherry Hill campuses.

For more information, visit www.camdencc.edu/civiccenter or call 856-227-7200, ext. 4333 for details.

Middle East: New Perspectives – Blackwood

- March 5 – A Musical Journey in Central Asia
- March 18 – Syria's Civil War and the Political Dynamics of Refugee Return
- April 12 – China and the Middle East: Changes and Continuities in Contemporary Policy
- April 22 – The Iranian Nuclear Issue: A View from History

Healthy Living Lecture Series – Cherry Hill

- March 9 – Shingles, Vaccines and You: What You Need to Know
- March 16 – Less Invasive Hip & Knee Care
- March 23 – Hooked on Sugar? How to Cut Back
- March 30 – Is There Life after Menopause?
- April 6 – "Forever Young" The Secrets to Living to 100 and Beyond

Autism Awareness Lecture Series – Blackwood

- April 7 – A Basic Introduction to Autism
- April 14 – Executive Function Strategies for Individuals with ASD
- April 21 – Effective Estate Planning with Special Needs Trusts, and Guardianship
- April 28 – Difficult Conversations with Parents and Staff
- May 5 – Understanding the Complex Needs of Neurologically Complex Children

Addiction Awareness – Blackwood

- March 19 – Gaming/Gambling, Youths and Gaming Addiction
- April 17 – The Evidence is: Harm Reduction Works!

Special Events

- March 23 – A World War II Presentation: The Merchant Marine in World War II - Blackwood
- April 20 – Teaching Hinduism: Ideas, Challenges, Politics – Cherry Hill

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FOSTERING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

WITH YOUR CO-WORKERS

BY JANET L. ROYAL

You are born into your family and have the luxury to choose your friends, but you usually cannot choose your coworkers. No matter what position you hold in your school or district, you will likely work with people who don't look like you, share your cultural values, have the same political affiliation, live where you live, or even speak the same first language as you do. Because we spend most of our day with our co-workers, we all play a role in making sure that our work environments are the best they can be.

NEVER HESITATE TO ASK QUESTIONS

How you do your job will have an impact on your colleagues' ability to do their jobs effectively. If ever you are uncertain about your responsibilities or what is required of you, ask your supervisor. Confirm exactly what is expected. If you're unsure of how the question may come across, discuss it with your local association building representative first.

Asking questions avoids misunderstandings. Often, the only silly question is the one that is not asked. And remember that colleagues who have been in your school district long before you are often your best resource for understanding the culture, the climate and the history of your workplace.

Janet L. Royal is an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division and is the coordinator for the annual NJEA Convention. She can be reached at royal@njea.org

AVOID GOSSIP

When your colleagues see you talking about others, it can leave them with a bad taste in their mouths. They are likely assuming that you are talking about them as well. You will lose their trust when they realize what you are doing. Gossip is destructive and harmful to others. Remembering what you may have been told by your own parents, if you don't have anything pleasant to say, don't say anything.

STRIVE TO LISTEN WITH INTENT

Do your best to be a team player. This may not always be possible depending on your position, location, or even the project at hand. It takes the commitment of every employee to help make the school, the district and your local association successful. Lend your expertise when you can, and always be ready to listen to others' points of view. Listening is one of the hardest but most important things you can do. Don't be so anxious to jump in with your thoughts and response, wait for your colleagues to finish before you respond.

FOCUS ON THE THINGS YOU HAVE IN COMMON

It's so easy to point out differences in people rather than seeing all the ways that we are the same. You may be pleasantly surprised with the interests, hobbies, and past-time activities you have in common. There is always a respectful way to have such conversations that is not invasive and a way to share that is not imposing or tiresome.

Humans are very social by nature and many people feel good when you take an interest in what's important to them.

GIVE YOURSELF WAIT TIME WHEN COMMUNICATION SEEMS FRAUGHT

With email, it can be too easy to speculate on the tone or intent of the sender. Many times, we are way off in our interpretation. When in doubt, reach out to the sender outside of email to make sure you aren't reading anything that isn't there. The same holds true for when you encounter a colleague who may appear impatient with you, or seems to ignore you. If this is not typical for them, they could simply be having a bad day. Avoid judgement and give them some latitude.

If you must to confront a colleague, use "I" statements instead of pointing the finger. If your tone comes off as accusatory, you may send your colleague into a defensive mode that will not be productive for either of you. Sometimes it may even be better to sleep on it as you may feel different when you've had time to reflect on your relationship with your co-worker. 



PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

NJREA SPRING LUNCHEON SET FOR APRIL 23

On April 23, NJREA will host its annual Spring Luncheon. Throughout this popular, member-exclusive event, retirees will learn more about what they can do to act on important issues, as well as how we can work together to continue to preserve the pensions and benefits public school employees—both active and retired— have earned.

This luncheon event is held in honor of Dr. Frederick L. Hipp, past executive director of NJEA. Hipp was instrumental in the formation of NJREA and was a leading advocate force throughout the state. In 1976, the *New York Times* named Hipp one of the eight “most powerful men” in New Jersey.

The luncheon will be held at the Nottingham Ballroom in Hamilton. The business agenda begins with the Delegate Council meeting at 10 a.m., followed by a “Member Information Session” at 11 a.m., where attendees will receive updates and ask questions.

The cost is \$33, which includes a continental breakfast, your choice of lunch, and all taxes and gratuities. Reminder: As per NJREA policy, only NJREA members may attend the business meeting and luncheon. Members wishing to sit with their counties should indicate this intention on the coupon form provided in the *NJREA Newsletter*. Reserved seating requests will only be honored if received by the April 9 registration deadline.

Can't stay for the whole event? For \$5, attendees have the option to join their fellow retirees for breakfast and sit in on the day's Delegate Council meeting and/or Member Information Session, but not stay for lunch. Should you wish to do so, indicate your intention on the coupon found in the March *NJREA Newsletter* and include your membership PIN.

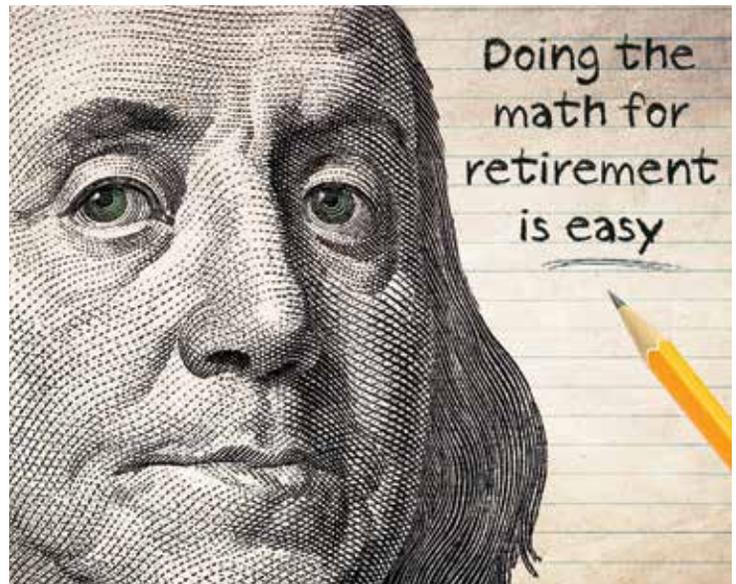


Need Caption

To register, send the coupon found in the March *NJREA Newsletter* along with your check (payable to NJREA) to NJREA First Vice President Joan Wright, 109 Bayberry Drive, Somerset, NJ 08873 by Thursday, April 9. Be sure to include your meal choice of flounder Florentine, chicken piccata or stuffed shells. All are accompanied by salad, rolls and dessert.

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Around the counties

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

ATLANTIC COUNTY REA'S

spring meeting/luncheon will be held on Tuesday, May 5 at the Mays Landing Country Club in Mays Landing. 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.

HUNTERDON COUNTY REA'S

next meeting/luncheon will be held on Tuesday, April 28 at the Mountainview Chalet in Asbury. To attend, call Ray Braun at 215-264-4624.

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 there will be an NJEA Member Benefits fair. 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.

The **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.

The OCEAN COUNTY REA

welcomes you to its upcoming meeting/luncheon on Thursday, March 12 at the Clarion Hotel in Toms River. The cost is \$28. To attend, call Janice Sovinee at 732-477-1711.

The 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 SOMERSET COUNTY REA

will hold its next meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, May 6 at the Elks Lodge in Bridgewater. Raritan Valley Community College theater staff will be the guest entertainment. The cost is \$25. To attend, call Diane Lebbing at 908-359-2870.

Join WARREN COUNTY REA

for its meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, April 1 at the Hawk Pointe Country Club in Washington. The cost is \$30. For more information, visit www.wcrea-njea.org. To attend, call Vicki Rhinehart at 908-319-1995.

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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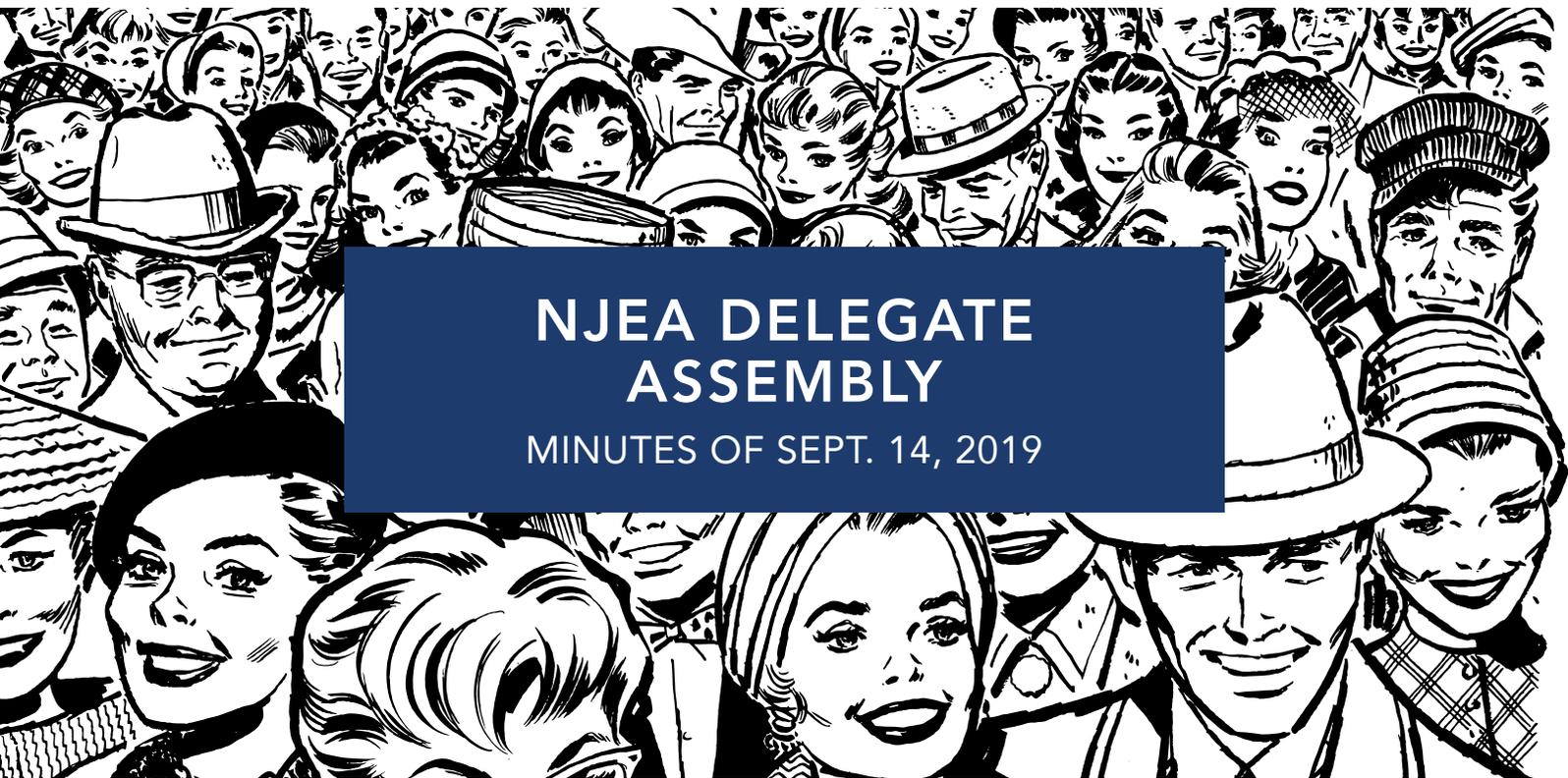
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NJEA DELEGATE ASSEMBLY

MINUTES OF SEPT. 14, 2019

The NJEA Delegate Assembly met on Sept. 14, 2019, at the Hyatt Regency, Princeton, N.J., at 9:30 a.m. President Marie Blistan presided.

Roll call was taken. There were 106 out of 126 delegates present. Alternates were seated as follows: Hurlley for Chau (Atlantic); Avallone for Buttafucio (Bergen); O'Malley for MacManiman (Burlington); Giannotti for Cannella and Knight for McCormick (Essex); Griffin for Dare (Gloucester); Crawford for Middlebrooks (Hudson); Hicks for D'Angelo (Mercer); Presty for Simonitis (Middlesex); Maher for Eschelbach (Monmouth); Finnen for Farrell (Morris); Griffin for Fox (Ocean); Tomaszewski for Ferrante (Passaic); Prior for Hall and Sharp for Zurka (Union); and Jones-Brown for Kruczek (Warren).

Absent were representatives Pildis (Camden), Fedele and Pastore (Hudson), Dlugosz (Middlesex), Koumouilis (Monmouth), Ryan (Ocean), Alston and Boyd (Union), Hodge (Higher Ed.), Shibli (Nonclassroom) and Spirko (Preservice).

John Zurka (Union) delivered the inspirational message and led the body in the flag salute.

Blistan asked if there was objection to adopting the DA Rules of Procedure. There was no objection. Blistan asked if there was objection to adopting the agenda with flexibility. There was no objection.

ESP OF THE YEAR

Blistan introduced Florence Talierno as the 2019 NJEA Educational Support Professional of the Year. Ms. Talierno presented brief remarks and received a plaque and bouquet of flowers from the NJEA officers.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Blistan presented her annual State of the Union report, reviewing NJEA's many challenges and accomplishments of the past year. She then introduced members of the statewide steering committee, who provided an update on NJEA's statewide legislative and organizing campaign to achieve relief from Chapter 78 and ESP job justice. Sue Butterfield (Passaic), Petal Robertson (Essex), Lois Yukna (Middlesex), and Anthony Rizzo (Burlington) reported on campaign activities in the Northwest, Northeast, Central, and Southern zones, respectively.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Ed Richardson reported on NJEA's negotiations with Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin and his team, which resulted in the speaker himself introducing new legislation providing relief from Chapter 78 while achieving savings for the state and local school districts. He also reported that Sen. Joe Cryan, the sponsor of NJEA's original Chapter 78 bill, introduced the new legislation in the Senate without being asked to do so, and was actively promoting it as a 'win-win' solution. In addition, there is growing interest among other legislators, including Republicans, in co-sponsoring the bill in both houses.

He indicated that the text of the new bill was just released two days ago, and NJEA would be working with the sponsors on any necessary technical amendments.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Vice President Sean M. Spiller emphasized that the lame-duck legislative session, following the November Assembly elections, is the target period in which NJEA

must get the new Chapter 78 legislation enacted, and get the ESP job justice bills through the Senate. He said that, in the intervening months leading up to the election, NJEA members would be asked to seek commitments from all legislators to sign onto the new Chapter 78 bill.

Spiller also emphasized that, if this effort is not successful, with a bill that not only provides relief for members but also savings for taxpayers, NJEA must be ready to fight those who stand in the way of achieving that solution.

He also gave an update on the State Board of Education, and the opposition of some board members to the New Jersey Department of Education's (NJDOE) proposed new student assessment regulations, which are supported by NJEA as well as other education and parent groups. He reviewed the content of the NJDOE's proposal and urged delegates and their colleagues to lobby the state board members in support.

Finally, Spiller reviewed materials provided to the delegates and urged them to encourage participation in the Teacher of the Year program among a diverse group of educators across the state.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT

Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty presented the financial report provided in advance of the meeting to the delegates.

NONDELEGATE SPEAKERS

Beatty suspended his report at 11:00 a.m. The following nondelegate members were provided an opportunity to address the body:

Theresa Fuller (Somerset) spoke about the need to organize behind the new Chapter 78 relief legislation

and to ensure that the legislation has a similar impact of both members who are and are not currently in the School Employees Health Benefits Program.

Chrissy Kosar and Kelly Morris (both Gloucester) jointly spoke about the need to organize behind the new Chapter 78 relief legislation, as well as the two ESP job justice bills.

Following nondelegate speakers, Beatty concluded his financial report, and presented information on recent correspondence, on NJEA's partnership with The College of New Jersey to enhance the diversity of educators, and on the development of new LGBTQ+ curriculum resources under a new law that NJEA supported.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

The body received a report without recommendations from the Elections Committee.

Committee Chair Roberta Rissling (Gloucester) moved the recommendation of the Editorial Committee, which did not require a second. The motion was approved.

Aileen O'Driscoll (NJEA staff) presented the report of the Affiliations Committee. Christine Onorato (Gloucester) moved the recommendation. The motion was seconded and approved.

Committee Chair Brenda Martin Less moved the recommendations of the Instruction Committee, which did not require a second. The motion was approved.

NEW BUSINESS

There were no new business items submitted for this meeting.

FOR THE GOOD OF THE ORDER

Stacey Salerno (Cape May) informed the body that online registration for the NJEA Convention was open, and she encouraged everyone to complete their registrations.

Kim Scott (Essex) asked for the return of bereavement cards that had been circulated.

Kerry Lee Farrell (Morris) asked if additional space could be provided between tables at future meetings.

At 12:13 p.m., Barbara Rheault (Atlantic), 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 welcomed **BRIELLE ALLISON** on Jan. 16 as a secretary in the Professional Development and Instructional Issues (PDII) Division. Allison has several years of work experience in the retail and food industries, and most recently as an agency temporary employee for Robert Half Staffing. She had been working at as a secretary in the NJEA PDII Division since November. Allison lives in Trenton with her son and loving family.



NJEA welcomed **ELISABETH YUCIS** on Feb. 3 as a temporary associate director in the Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. Yucis most recently worked as an English teacher at Collingswood High School in Camden County. She also served as chair of the Collingswood Education Association Evaluation Committee and the District Evaluation Steering Committee. Yucis has been a facilitator for several NJEA Conferences, most notably the NJEA Convention and the T.E.A.C.H. Conference, which was held in April 2019. She received a master's degree in English from Rutgers University-Camden and bachelor's degrees in English and women's studies from Penn State University. She recently obtained her principal's certification through the NJ-EXCEL program, which is administered by the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association. Yucis lives in Collingswood with her husband, Jason, and their son, Joe.



NJEA welcomed **ANGEL MCDERMOTT** on Jan. 16 as a UniServ field representative in the Region 5 office in Moorestown. McDermott is a retired speech/language specialist who, over the course of a career spanning more than 30 years, worked for the Gloucester County Educational Services Commission, Westampton Public Schools, and the Gloucester Township School District. She served as president of the Gloucester Township Education Association for 21 years. McDermott has worked as a UniServ Consultant in the Region 3 office in Camden County since August 2003. She received her master's degree in speech pathology from Trenton State College (now The College of New Jersey) and her bachelor's degree in teacher of the handicapped from Glassboro State College (now Rowan University). McDermott lives in Blenheim with her husband, Mark.



NJEA welcomed **JESSICA DENNEY** on Feb. 3 as a secretary in the Region 3 office in Voorhees. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Denney worked for 16 years as a principal's secretary in three New Jersey public school districts: Pine Hill, Clementon and Gloucester City. An NJEA member for all of those 16 years, Denney was an active member of the Pine Hill Education Association, having served as its president and vice president. She was also an NJEA Summer Fellow in 2017. Denney lives in Pitman with her husband, Steve, and three children, Steven, Christopher and Ava.

Employment Opportunities at NJEA



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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

4/27

Monday

Executive
Committee
Meeting

5/2

Saturday

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

4/3 Preservice Conference
Event date: April 18

4/3 Communications Tools
Workshop
Event Date: April 25

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The Trump-DeVos budget is hostile to public education

In the heat of an election year, it can be easy to get caught up in emotions of the moment rather than calmly engage in a thoughtful consideration of a candidate's positions, record, and public statements. This is especially true with the passions surrounding the upcoming 2020 election. When NJEA and NEA consider candidates for endorsement however, emotion is pushed aside. Candidates are evaluated on what they stand for and how that affects public education.

While there is plenty of emotion surrounding the current occupant of the White House, it is his record on public education among other issues, not his party affiliation, that should concern NJEA members. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 education budget proposal that President Donald Trump and Education Secretary Betsy DeVos released on Feb. 10 demonstrates their hostility toward the schools where you work—the very same schools that this year are ranked best in the nation by *Education Week* in its Quality Counts report.

The Trump-DeVos FY 2021 budget proposal would slash education program funding by \$6.1 billion—an 8.4% decrease compared to current levels. Funding through the Every Student Succeeds Act and several related programs will be repackaged into a proposed Elementary and Secondary Education for the Disadvantaged Block Grant. It would be funded at \$19.4 billion, which represents a reduction of \$4.7 billion from current funding levels for the programs absorbed into the block grant.

Programs such as Title I, Title II, English Language Learners, Full-Service Community Schools, rural education, literacy programs, charter schools, and competitive grants would be absorbed into the block at reduced overall funding. Programs outside the block, such as

Supplemental Education Grants, Indian Aid, and training and advisory services are frozen at FY 2020 levels.

Trump's hostility toward public education was dramatically demonstrated in his State of the Union address where his only direct references to public education described our students as “trapped in failing government schools.”

As he awarded what he termed an “Opportunity Scholarship” to a fourth-grade

funding to \$2.1 billion. The budget also increases funding to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) by \$100 million. This 0.8% increase is still a far cry from full funding of IDEA, which would require a 300% increase. To be fair, no administration has ever fully funded IDEA.

NJEA Preservice members would fare poorly under the Trump-DeVos education budget. It cuts funding for the Federal Work-Study program by more than half and eliminates Public Service Loan Forgiveness and Subsidized Federal Student Loans.

Outside of the education budget, but affecting our students and low-income members, Trump is proposing a \$180 billion cut to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) over 10 years—a nearly 30% cut—and a \$20 billion cut to Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Trump's proposed budget also puts NJREA members—and future NJREA members—at risk. In his State of the Union speech, Trump emphatically declared “We will always protect your Medicare, and we will always protect your Social Security. Always.” In reality, he's proposing to cut Social Security by \$30 billion over 10 years, Medicare by \$850 billion over ten years and Medicaid by \$1 trillion over 10 years.

Congress will undoubtedly reject much of the Trump and DeVos education budget proposal, but the president's and secretary's hostility toward public education should not go unnoticed. Opposition to Trump by educators is not because he is a Republican. It's not because he's “Trump.” It's because his positions, his record, and his public statements are harmful to public schools, the children who attend them and the educators who work there. [🔗](#)

“

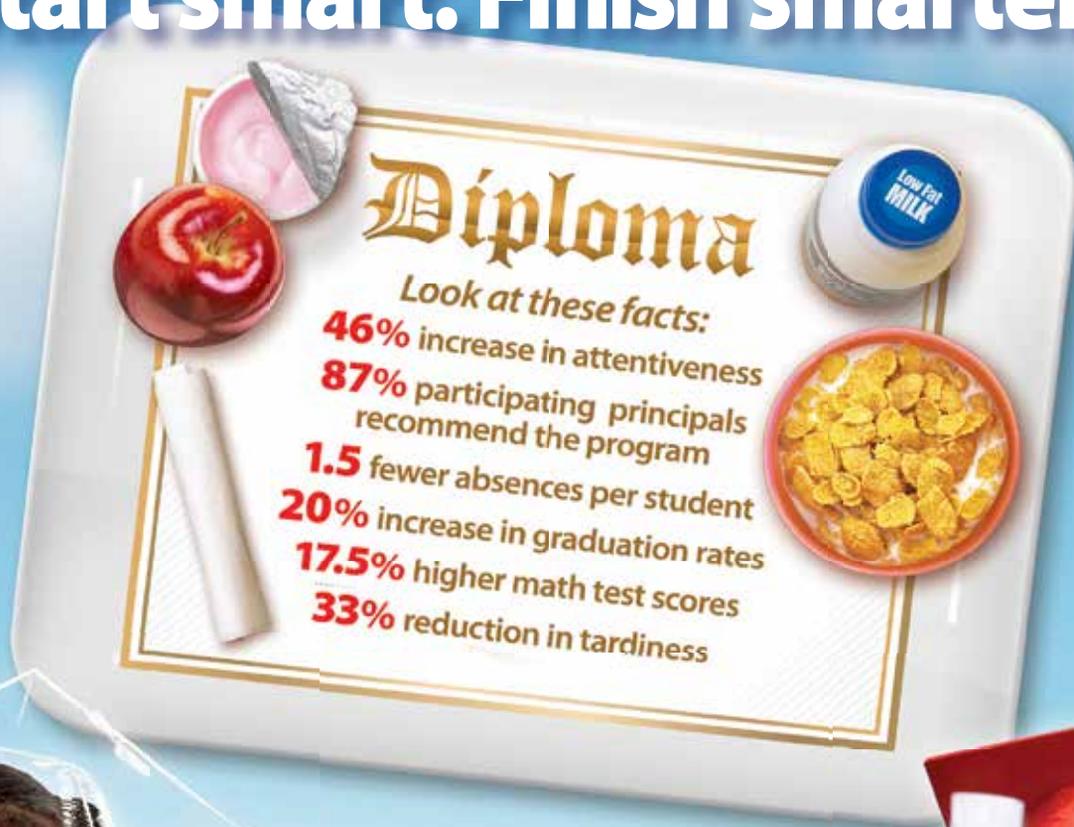
Congress will undoubtedly reject much of the Trump and DeVos education budget proposal, but the president's and secretary's hostility toward public education should not go unnoticed.

student from Philadelphia, Trump called on Congress to support his proposed “Education Freedom Scholarship” program. The program would divert \$46 billion away from public schools over 10 years—up to \$5 billion a year to fund private school vouchers. It's no coincidence that this isn't far from cuts to ESSA and other education programs.

The Philadelphia Inquirer later reported that the fourth-grader is not receiving a scholarship. DeVos is personally paying her tuition. This illustrates the cynicism of the voucher programs such as the one proposed by the president. They slash education funding for the more than 85% of American children attending public schools to provide a private or religious school education to a small percentage of students.

The only “bright spot” in the budget is a \$763 million increase in funding for Career and Technical Education, increasing the total

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For any additional questions, please contact Janet Bush at jbush@njea.org or 609-310-4249.