

NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

REVIEW

MAY 2020
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20

MUSIC THERAPY BRINGS JOY AND HEALING

24

SCHOOLS MAKE MAGIC

28

MAKING SURE EVERYONE IS COUNTED

32

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Like many local associations across the state, the Highland Park Education Association in Middlesex County held its March Rep Council meeting virtually.

Rahway Education Association (REA) member David Brighthouse, opens the 10th annual African American History Conference at Rahway High School on Feb. 21. The event included academic presentations, the recitation of poems and speeches, and performances directed by REA members Robert VanWyk, Simone Smith and Jensyn Modero. The audience included students, staff, families, school board and town council members, and representatives from the Rahway branch of the NAACP. The post-conference REA-sponsored gathering was funded through an NJEA Pride in Public Education grant.

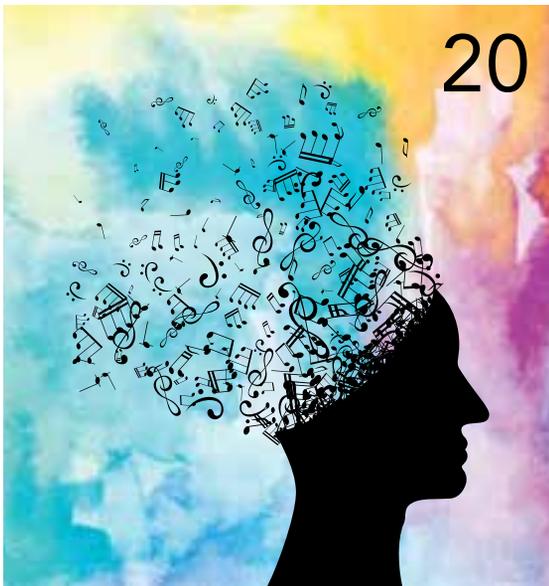


Members of two local associations in the city of Passaic, the Passaic Maintenance, Custodial, Janitresses, Cafeteria Workers Association (PMCJCWA) and the Education Association of Passaic (EAP) practiced social distancing as they safely distributed student meals while school buildings were closed. Over 12,000 Passaic students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

The NJEA Priority Schools Initiative (PSI) continues to meet students' needs during the statewide closure of schools. NJEA PSI Consultant Carolyn Schultz (upper left) confers virtually with her Irvington team. See Page 16 for more about NJEA PSI.



FEATURES



20 | MUSIC THERAPY BRINGS JOY AND HEALING

Alyssa Cop's classroom doesn't have any desks. A smartboard displays music and lyrics. There is a piano, several guitars, and an African drum collection that is nearly irresistible to children's hands. Posters of past musicals line the walls, and a colorful carpet dominates the center of the room. Cop has seen a profound impact of music on her students.

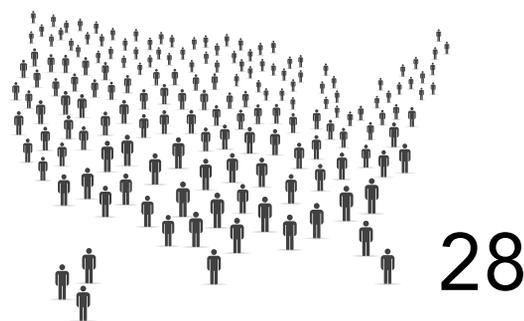
BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



24 | SCHOOLS MAKE MAGIC

The 2018-19 Somerset County Teacher of the Year, Viktoria Wargo, encourages all who work in schools to appreciate the rhythm of the school day. In a time when most of us are not physically in our buildings, Wargo reflects on the magic present in the daily routines of a school day.

BY VIKTORIA WARGO



28 | THE U.S. CENSUS: MAKING SURE EVERYONE IS COUNTED

The stakes are high. The size of New Jersey's congressional delegation in Washington, D.C., and federal funding for our schools, for Medicare, Medicaid, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are all determined by the census. Population statistics use census data to determine rates of disease, poverty, employment and crime. Accuracy depends on a complete census count.

BY JULIE GIORDANO PLOTKIN



32 | NJEA TOGETHER

NJEA created a website, njeatogether.org, as one way to support members and the families they serve. It offers a virtual place to find resources for your instruction, to find information on COVID-19, to discover resources for your own physical and mental health, to connect with your fellow members, to ask questions, and to share your story. On these four pages are a sampling of the many photos that have come into NJEA from that website and the stories behind them.

COLUMNS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 7
We go on together

THE ADVOCATE 8
Know. Lead. Act.

THE LAW AND YOU 9
Special ed during the crisis

THE BULLETIN BOARD 10
Cool stuff to check out

THE NJEA REPORT 12
Education in the news

HEALTH AND SAFETY 36
Cleaning for COVID-19

PRESERVICE MEMBERS 43
Self-care techniques

SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY 44
Workshops and conferences

RETIRED MEMBERS 45
News and events

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 47
Learning advocacy continues

MEMBER BENEFITS 49
Get your money's worth

FINAL EXAM 54
Grading for remote learning

The number
2,516

The number of schools in New Jersey that in less than one to three days switched instructional delivery from inside their walls to the homes of their educators.

Source: NJ Department of Education, nj.gov/education/data/fact.htm.




GOOD NEWS

New Jersey is among the top three states in the nation in the percentage of 3-year-olds who are enrolled in public preschool.



Source: The State of Preschool 2018: State Preschool Yearbook, National Institute for Early Education Research.

On the cover



In mid-March, educators across New Jersey switched from face-to-face instruction in their classrooms to remote instruction from their homes, often in less than 24 hours. Local and county associations held rep councils remotely as well.

IMAGES COMPILED BY JENNIFER MARSH

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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*.



WE GRIEVE, AND GO ON, TOGETHER

By the time you read this, the number of people who have been lost due to the global coronavirus pandemic will have increased dramatically. Here in New Jersey, and around the world, this virus is devastating families and communities. Even doing everything that government officials and public health experts recommend cannot prevent human loss and suffering. It can only attempt to limit it.

We have already seen too many precious lives lost, and we take this moment to recognize them, think of them, and honor them. Perhaps more than ever, we really see how connected we are, and we grieve with all those who have lost loved ones.

Each day that we are given, we are responsible for making the best of our circumstances, and I have seen so many stories of NJEA members going above and beyond to care for each other.

NJEA members are volunteering at COVID-19 testing sites. They are stepping up to ensure that students and their families do not go hungry. They are consoling parents and students who are afraid. They are encouraging their colleagues who are struggling with new work demands, even as they deal with new challenges confronting their own families. They are making funny videos, reading storybooks online, hosting yoga classes and dance parties, and posting pictures of their pets to encourage their students and help them manage their anxiety.

I have always been proud to be an NJEA member and to have been elected president of this association, but seeing the outpouring of support, compassion, and excellence that you have displayed during these last few months, I can honestly say that I have never been prouder to be so connected to all of you.

Thank you for being a shining light in a terrible time.

Marie Blistan



As school buildings closed statewide, NJEA President Marie Blistan and her fellow officers shared videos with words of encouragement. The videos can be found on njea.org embedded in an article titled "NJEA Guidance on Assessment, Evaluation and COVID-19."

OFFICERS ONLINE

MARIE BLISTAN

Facebook

@Marie.Blistan: Our NJEA school nurses are AGAIN selflessly dedicated to helping our community and state during this medical crisis. THANK YOU, Morris County, Rockaway Township EA presidents Brian Adams & Tara Van Orden, Bus Drivers Association President Tina Richardson, RTEA members, and a special call out to RTEA school nurses for your work! Our students are also volunteering at these sites, and we commend you and express our sincere gratitude for all that you are doing! YOU are OUR NJEA HEROES and we all thank you!!

NJEA President Marie Blistan posted a story from the NJEA website about members Karen Jordano and Regina Adamson, school nurses at Copeland Middle School in Rockaway Township. They, like many school nurses across the state, volunteered to work at a COVID-19 screening station.

SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

@SpillerForNJEA: Of course, members should reach out for help with anything, but let's also be specifically mindful of everyone's mental health during this stressful time. Keep physical space, but stay connected emotionally and socially (virtually) as much as possible. For those who need a little more assistance call: AID-NJEA (1-866-243-6532).

NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller encouraged members to remember to take care of themselves in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. AID-NJEA is a free, confidential 24-hour telephone helpline for school staff members and their families. The helpline is staffed by active and retired educators and school counselors who are trained to counsel and support their colleagues. Mental health professionals are also available at AID-NJEA, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: Watched four episodes of NJTV Learning Live yesterday, and I am just blown away (again) by the ingenuity, empathy, and general awesomeness of our fellow NJ educators!! Thanks to all that took the time, and their families who participated—filming, flipping, rapping—to keep our students engaged. And thanks to the New Jersey Department of Education & Kimberly Dickstein Hughes, our NJ Teacher of the Year, for their efforts in making this work.

NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty shared a link to special programming on NJTV featuring lessons from New Jersey public school teachers for grades 3 to 6 and airing from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. every weekday during the closure of school buildings statewide. All lessons are archived at njtvonline.org/programs/njtv-learning-live, which also livestreams the lessons. NJEA and the NJDOE partnered with NJTV to make the program possible.

KNOW. LEAD. ACT.

GIVE THE GIFT OF BELONGING!

Purchase NJREA membership for a retiree-to-be

Do you know an NJEA member who is retired or about to retire? The move to retirement can be an exciting time, but it's even better when the New Jersey Retirees' Education Association (NJREA) has your back.

NJREA is a diverse, vibrant organization that helps retirees transition to an exciting time in their lives. From social events and activities to information, resources, money-saving opportunities and travel discounts, NJREA membership is an essential tool to make the most of your retirement.

NJREA dues varies by county, as each county association sets its rate; however, the average annual dues for a retired professional is \$100 or less. For more information, or to purchase a membership as a retirement gift, Mother's or Father's Day present, or just because, contact the NJEA Membership Division at 609-599-4561, ext. 4123.

To learn more about NJREA, visit njea.org/njrea.

NONTENURED? KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

By May 15, all nontenured teachers must be notified of re-employment. If the school board fails to notify nontenured teachers, they are entitled to continued employment for the next year.

In addition, many locally negotiated contracts include similar requirements for educational support professionals (ESP).

If a nontenured teacher wishes to accept employment, they must notify the board in writing on or before June 1. ESP staff members should consult their collective bargaining agreements to determine if they have similar response requirements.

Members who have been notified of their nonrenewal should contact their local president.

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY MEETING NOTICE

Two meetings of the NJEA Delegate Assembly are scheduled:

- Saturday, May 16 at 9:30 a.m.
- If needed, Wednesday, June 10 at 6 p.m.

It is anticipated that both meetings will be conducted electronically. Information concerning how to join the meetings will be emailed to delegates and posted at njea.org/da. Members should also check njea.org/da prior to June 10 in case that meeting is not needed and is cancelled.

CHANGING SCHOOL DISTRICTS? SALARY GUIDE PLACEMENT IS NEGOTIABLE

Did you know that placement on a salary guide is negotiable for members moving from one school district to another?

According to Statute 18A: 29-9, "Whenever a person shall thereafter accept office, position, or employment as a member in any school district of this state, his initial place on the salary schedule shall be at such point as may be agreed upon by the member and the employing board of education."

In other words, if you are leaving School District A for School District B, you have the right to negotiate placement on your new salary guide with the board of education. Some locals have contract language to this effect. Contracts may require the board to give full credit to an employee moving from one district to another while other contracts may spell out limitations.

If you are accepting employment in a different school district, you may want to contact the local president there before you agree on salary guide placement.



The New Brunswick Education Association and the New Brunswick School District, like all association members and districts across the state, worked together to keep students fed during the pandemic. During one day's food distribution, before stricter social distancing requirements were in place, New Brunswick Superintendent Dr. Aubrey Johnson and NBEA President LeShaun Arrington stepped in for a quick selfie and immediately stepped back.

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.

SPECIAL EDUCATION DURING THE COVID-19 SCHOOL CLOSURE PERIOD

BY AILEEN O'DRISCOLL

As the result of the statewide school building closures in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the teaching environment has changed dramatically for every public school student, including students with special educational needs. Since early April, there have been several major developments that are intended to ensure the continuation of services for students with special needs.

The New Jersey State Board of Education recognized remote teaching practices conflict with regulations that address services for students with special needs. At its April 1 meeting, which was itself held virtually, the SBOE passed an emergency measure that temporarily allows for special education and related services to be delivered remotely. The services provided should be appropriate and consistent with the student's individualized education program (IEP) to the greatest extent possible.

TELEHEALTH, TELEMEDICINE AND THE LAW

The SBOE emergency regulations apply to services provided in schools. In 2017, however, the New Jersey Legislature passed S-291—a law that permits those professionals licensed under Title 45 to practice telemedicine. S-291

applies to psychologists, clinical social workers, professional counselors, speech pathologists, and nurses, but does not address the delivery of these professionals' services by their school-based counterparts. Further, this law does not apply to physical and occupational therapists.

Based upon S-291, however, some districts are requiring counselors and speech therapists to provide services virtually. School psychologists, social workers, and speech therapists do not have to be licensed under Title 45 to deliver their services in schools, provided they have the proper NJDOE certifications. The NJDOE will allow these individuals to provide teleservices, rather than in-person services, in the current exceptional circumstances.

An initial review of S-291 appears to allow these practices without endangering licensure status. Members, including physical and occupational therapists, should reach out to their professional associations for guidance.

TELESERVICES IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

While S-291 does not speak specifically to the school context a proposed new state law would.

A-3904, would add to school law explicit authorization to deliver speech language services and counseling services “to special education students using electronic communication or a virtual or online platform, as appropriate” during states of emergency such as the current one.

A-3904 has passed in both houses and, as of press time, is awaiting the governor's signature.

For districts that are requiring teleservices, local associations and members should inquire into the district's plan for providing those services. Critically, privacy and patient confidentiality laws and regulations still apply to teleservices, both state and federal, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Local associations should push districts to meet their responsibilities to ensure the platforms and methods for delivering teleservices comply with all privacy laws. Locals should also negotiate any impact on caseload and demand the appropriate materials and training for affected staff.

As of press time, the NJDOE has not issued additional guidance on these issues, though it is expected. As a general note on special education services, the NJDOE has advised that when school is back in session, child study teams will have to evaluate the services provided during school closures and make provisions for any necessary compensatory services. 📌

Aileen O'Driscoll is the managing attorney in NJEA's Legal Services Division. She can be reached at aodriscoll@njea.org.

COOL STUFF

TABERNACLE EDUCATOR NAMED IN SHORTLIST FOR \$1 MILLION GLOBAL TEACHER PRIZE



Michal Dunlea is one of 50 educators named worldwide, one of five in US

Tabernacle Elementary School teacher Michael Dunlea is one of five American teachers included in the top 50 shortlist for the Varkey Foundation Global Teacher Prize 2020 in partnership with UNESCO. Now in its sixth year, the \$1 million award is the largest prize of its kind.

The Burlington County educator, along with visual arts teacher Dr. Angel Mejico from El Cerrito Middle

School in California, STEM teacher Jeff Remington from Palmyra School District in Pennsylvania, English teacher Kimberly Eckert from Brusly High School in Louisiana, and English teacher Leah Juelke at Fargo South High School in North Dakota, are shortlisted for the Global Teacher Prize 2020, selected from over 12,000 nominations and applications from over 140 countries around the world.

The Global Teacher Prize was set up to recognize one exceptional teacher who has made an outstanding contribution to the profession as well as to shine a spotlight on the important role teachers play in society. By unearthing thousands of stories of heroes who have transformed young people's lives, the prize hopes to bring to life the exceptional work of millions of teachers all over the world.

With 10 years to go to meet U.N. Sustainable Development Goal 4—providing a quality education for every child—the Global Teacher Prize has partnered with UNESCO to ensure teachers are right at the top of governments' agendas.

"Every child in the world deserves an inspiring teacher and inspiring teachers deserve wide social recognition," said Stefania Giannini, Assistant Director General for Education at UNESCO. "Now, more than ever, in a world of competing priorities, governments throughout the world must invest in teachers to meet their commitments to deliver universal quality education by 2030."

Dunlea's classroom

Dunlea's classroom is arranged like a traditional home living room, creating a reduced stress environment where struggling learners feel supported. He also uses tactile, kinesthetic, auditory and visual activities to aid all areas of study, and brings in music, food and smells to make learning experiential

and physical. In 2017 and 2018 nearly three-quarters of his students exceeded their expected results in mathematics and reading.

Dunlea uses classroom technology to take students on virtual field trips around the globe, last year connecting to 15 countries. He has also been leading the Empatico/National Network of State Teachers of the Year Fellowship, connecting 42 states, five countries and more than 1,000 students interacting with their peers across cultures.

As school buildings statewide are closed to slow the spread of COVID-19, Dunlea quickly wrote and submitted to njea.org a list of suggestions for educators as they implement remote learning titled "When A School Year Starts Twice."

In 2018, Dunlea was recognized with the Presidential Award of Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching, for New Jersey K-6 Mathematics. In 2011, while teaching in the Stafford Township School District, Dunlea was named the Ocean County Teacher of the Year.

Winner to be honored in London

The top 50 shortlist has representatives from 37 countries and by highlighting their stories the Varkey Foundation hopes that the public will be able to join in passionate debates about the importance of teachers. The winner will be announced live on stage at a red carpet ceremony taking place at the Natural History Museum in London on Oct. 12, 2020.

"Our recent Global Teacher Status Index finally gives academic proof of something that we've always instinctively known: the link between the status of teachers in society and the performance of children in school," said Sunny Varkey, founder of the Varkey Foundation and the Global Teacher Prize. "Now we can say beyond doubt that respecting teachers isn't only an important moral duty – it's essential for a country's educational outcomes."

The top 50 shortlisted teachers are narrowed down to ten finalist teachers by a Prize Committee, with that result announced in June 2020. The winner will then be chosen from these ten finalists by the Global Teacher Prize Academy. All ten finalists will be invited to London for the Award ceremony at the Natural History Museum on Monday 12 October 2020, where the winner will be announced live on stage.

For more information about the top 50 shortlist, visit globalteacherprize.org.



HEALTH AND PE IDEAS FOR HOME INSTRUCTION

The New Jersey Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (NJAHPERD) has compiled resources to help educators, students, and their families continue their physical education at home. Visit their resource page and check out their Twitter hashtag #HPEatHome where educators are sharing their ideas. NJAHPERD's national organization, SHAPE America started this initiative. Additional resources are available on the SHAPE America website.

Visit njea.org/homepe for all the links and ideas.



DISPLAY BOOKS YOU'VE WRITTEN AT THE NJEA CONVENTION

The authors' area at the NJEA Convention is a space on the exhibit floor that provides active, retired and preservice NJEA members a chance to showcase materials they have published that enhance and add value to the teaching profession or that can serve as useful educational resources for teachers and parents. Members interested in exhibiting in the authors' area must be willing to offer members advice on how to go about publishing their authored works. Submissions must meet NJEA criteria.

The 2020 NJEA Convention will take place on Thursday, Nov. 5 and Friday, Nov. 6, in Atlantic City. Member authors will be responsible to exhibit on both days of the convention—during all show hours—displaying and selling their published works and conversing with members. The cost to participate in the authors' area is \$50.

The application to reserve your space can be found at njeaconvention.org. Slide over "Program" and click on "Authors' Area." The application must be printed, completed and returned with your submission(s) and a check for \$50 made out to NJEA/Author's Alley. For questions, call Felicia Davis at 609-599-4561, ext. 2260.

NJEA must receive your space reservation by June 30, 2020.

NJ STATE BAR FOUNDATION ONLINE LEARNING RESOURCES

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation's three blogs are great resources for teachers who are teaching remotely during the COVID-19 virus crisis.

The posts on all three blogs—The Informed Citizen, The Legal Eagle Lowdown and The Respect Rundown—contain discussion questions and relevant glossary words for ready-made lesson plans that start a conversation. Written in plain language, these posts help students better understand the subject matter and enhance class discussion.

On the Informed Citizen, NJSBF's civics blog, there are more than two dozen civics-related topics, including democratic norms, origins of political parties, equal justice under the law, primaries and caucuses and impeachment.

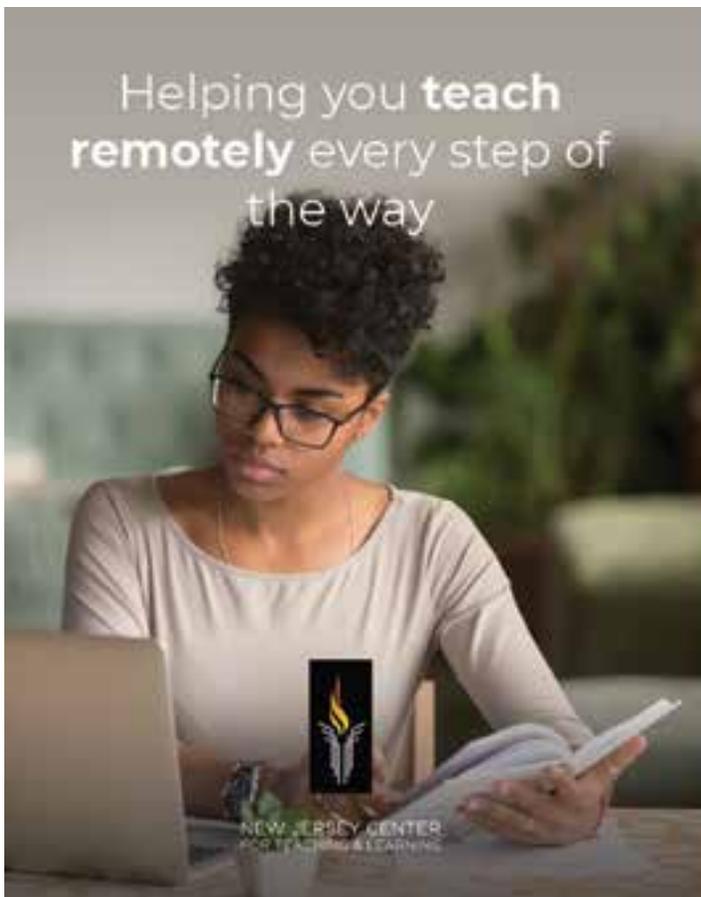
For links and details, visit njea.org/homenjsbf.



ASK A GEOLOGIST

The Rutgers Geology Museum has launched a new livestream web series called "Ask A Geologist." This webinar will be held twice a week for the duration of the self-isolation period to help provide parents and educators with some exciting geology and science content.

For more information, and the schedule, visit njea.org/ask-a-geologist.



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NJEA Report

Senate overwhelmingly passes Ch. 78 relief



Members have been fighting for Ch. 78 relief for a long time. This photo from a Jan. 24, 2019 Lobby Day, shows members meeting with Asm. Wayne DeAngelo, D-Mercer.

The New Jersey Senate on March 24 passed legislation, by a vote of 34-0, to provide relief to both public school employees and taxpayers from ever-rising health care costs. The Senate also overwhelmingly passed two bills known as the ESP Job Justice bills. (See Page 13.)

The bill addressing health care costs, S-2273, provides NJEA members with long-sought relief from Ch. 78, while also lowering costs for local education employers and the state. Ch. 78, a pension and health insurance law passed in 2011, imposed unsustainable and ever-growing health care costs on educators.

Senate President Steve Sweeney and Sen. Joseph Cryan (D-Union) were the primary sponsors of S-2273. The legislation was the result of a landmark agreement between NJEA and Sweeney announced in a March 9 press conference with NJEA President Marie Blistan and the Senate president.

“Today marks a milestone in our campaign for relief from Ch. 78 and Job Justice for our ESP members,” Blistan said. “I thank Sen. Sweeney for moving these bills quickly once we reached an agreement. This has been a long time coming, but what happened today is the result of our members’ willingness to stay engaged in the process and to fight for what’s right.”

“Thanks to the Senate’s 34-0 vote today, as well as the passage of our ESP Job Justice bills, a career in public education in New Jersey is on a path to once again becoming an attractive option for those who want to serve the state’s children,” said NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller. “With the passage of S-2273, our members and future educators are receiving the message that their work is valued by this state.”

“Today, the New Jersey Senate recognized the important work of our educational support professionals by providing the job security they need to focus on doing what they do best, serving the children of this state,” said NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty. “Due process and the protection

against the subcontracting is the right thing to do for our custodians, bus drivers, food service professionals, school secretaries, paraprofessionals and every other member of the school team.”

WHAT’S IN S-2273

Under S-2273, new health care options will be added to the School Employees Health Benefits Program (SEHBP): the New Jersey Educators Health Plan and the Garden State Plan. Members who opt for one of these plans will finally be relieved of the onerous payroll deductions that were tied to a percentage of ever-rising health care premiums.

Under the New Jersey Educators Health Plan and the Garden State Plan, payroll deductions would be associated with a percentage of salary—resulting in greatly reduced health insurance contributions, in many cases thousands of dollars less.

As of when the *NJEA Review* went to press on April 15, the bill had not yet passed through the Assembly. Both the Senate and Assembly are convening by electronic means during the COVID-19 outbreak. Once passed by the Assembly and signed by the governor, the New Jersey Educators Health Plan is slated to be available to members by July 1, or as soon as possible after that. The Garden State Health Plan would become available in the following year.

Access to services and providers would not change, and members will see little or no increase in out-of-pocket expenses for in-network services. Members will have better access to wellness services, and the plan will be working to expand access to lower-cost Direct Primary Care services

Current members who are not in school districts covered by SEHBP will continue to choose among the health care plans their local associations have negotiated with their school boards. However, their school districts will be required to offer the New Jersey Educators Health Plan through their private carriers with employees’ contributions calculated as a percentage of salary—resulting in greatly reduced health insurance contributions, in many cases thousands of dollars less.

For more details on both plans, visit njea.org/justice.

RETIREES WHO PREMIUM-SHARE WILL SAVE UNDER S-2273

Under S-2273, all current and future non-Medicare retirees will be enrolled in the New Jersey Educators Health Plan.

S-2273 does not affect those retirees receiving Medicare. There will be no increase in how much any retiree pays for premium sharing. Retirees who do not pay a premium share will continue to pay nothing toward their premiums. Retirees who are required to pay toward their premiums will find that cost will stay the same or, more likely, decrease. Under S-2273, the retirees’ contribution will be calculated as a percentage of their pension benefit, not a percentage of the premium, unless a percentage of premium results in a lower contribution.

For details, visit njea.org/justice.

Senate passes ESP Job Justice bills



Members lobbied hard for ESP Job Justice at the Union County Legislative Dinner on April 3, 2019. From left: Union County EA (UCEA) President Lisa Palin, NJREA Rep Leonard Sobel, UCEA 1st VP James Frazier, Union County Freeholder Al Mirabella, UCEA GR Co-Chair Nancy Lucas-Miller, Asw. Linda Carter, Asm. John Bramnick, Freeholder Sergio Granados, UCEA GR Co-Chair Frank Stebbins.

The Senate overwhelmingly passed S-993 and S-1928 on March 24, two bills that provide ESPs with due process rights and fair protections against subcontracting during the term of a negotiated contract. The Senate also overwhelmingly passed S-2273, which provides relief to both public school employees and taxpayers from ever-rising health care costs. (See Page 12.)

S-993, sponsored by Sens. Anthony Bucco (R- Morris) and Troy Singleton

(D-Burlington), passed in the Senate by a vote of 32-2. Once passed by the Assembly and signed by the governor it will extend to nonteaching school employees the right to submit to binding arbitration any dispute regarding whether there is just cause for a disciplinary action up to and including the lack of continuation of employment. The bill protects ESP from being dismissed from employment without just cause.

S-1928, sponsored by Sens. Linda Greenstein (D-Mercer), Troy Singleton (D-Burlington), Nia Gill (D-CCC) and Shirley Turner (D-Mercer), passed by a vote of 31-3. Once passed by the Assembly and signed by the governor, it will prohibit employers from entering into a subcontracting agreement that affects the employment of those covered by an unexpired collective bargaining agreement. Once a collective bargaining agreement expires, an employer would be permitted to enter into a subcontracting agreement only if the employer provides written notice to the local associations in each collective bargaining unit and to the New Jersey Public Employment Relations Commission at least 90 days prior to any effort to seek a subcontracting agreement.

Under the legislation, school boards will be required to give local associations the opportunity to meet and discuss the decision to subcontract and negotiate over its impact. Each employee replaced or displaced because of a subcontracting agreement would retain all previously acquired seniority and would have recall rights if the subcontracting terminates.

As of when the NJEA Review went to press on April 15, the bills had yet to pass through the Assembly. Both the Senate and Assembly are convening by electronic means during the COVID-19 outbreak.

For more details on both ESP Job Justice bills, visit njea.org/justice.



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Belvidere coaches win tenure battle



With association and community support, BEA Members Daniel Dempsey (l) and Andrew Poyer, fought successfully to protect their reputations and have their tenure reinstated.

By Christy Kanaby, NJEA Staff

In the world of sports, teams work together with a common goal: to emerge victorious. Every coach knows that the winningest teams are the ones who follow the rules, fight fair and never give up. And, as Belvidere educators and coaches Daniel Dempsey and Andrew Poyer will tell you, they achieved victory because they had a dedicated NJEA and Belvidere Education Association (BEA) team on their side.

In the fall of 2018, Dempsey and Poyer, the Belvidere School District's head and volunteer assistant boys' soccer coaches, respectively, were accused of stealing monies from a fundraiser that had been earmarked for the soccer team with the approval of the booster club. Like other district coaches before them, they used SnapRaise—an online fundraising system—to generate funds for team needs and eventually raised over \$6,500, which was provided to the team's booster club for it to determine how it would be used.

In addition to the various team-based items the booster club voted to fund with the monies raised, the booster club decided to present Poyer with a check in appreciation for his dedication as a volunteer coach. Upon learning this, Belvidere Superintendent Christopher Carrubba accused the coaches of failing to gain district approval to hold the fundraiser—which the district athletic director disputed—and of using the money solely to provide Poyer a stipend for the volunteer position.

Believing the booster club didn't have its own tax identification numbers, Dempsey gave the check to district officials, following long-standing district procedures, and the monies were mistakenly placed into boys' soccer student account instead

of provided to the booster club. Despite multiple requests from the booster club to the Business Administrator Rochelle Tjalma to transfer the money, the money was never transferred, and remains unreturned to the booster club to this day.

TENURE CHARGES FILED

Amid the chaos—and without regard for the booster club's emphatic testimony that they alone made the decision to gift Poyer—Dempsey and Poyer were suspended in December 2018, prohibited from school property, and eventually served with tenure charges on Feb. 22, 2019, with the Belvidere Board of Education voting to move forward with the charges the following month.

"My initial reaction was that of shock, which was compounded by the fact that I was not allowed to tell my story," said Dempsey. "Instead, the district allowed rumors and slanderous comments to run rampant, and our characters were dragged through the mud."

No one would have blamed either coach if they chose to walk away. Being accused of theft and deception had taken its toll, and both knew they'd remain suspended without pay as the case made its way through the legal process. However, as veteran district educators and award-winning coaches, Dempsey and Poyer saw this as an opportunity to take a stand.

Throughout the ordeal, they both worked closely with BEA President Judy Black and their NJEA UniServ field representative, Kim Cowing, who began to create a team of experts to assist. Cowing immediately brought in her colleague, NJEA UniServ Field Representative John Ropars, who has extensive experience in arbitrating cases.

"it was clear to us that Dan and Andy were not guilty of the charges brought against them by the board," said Cowing. "From the beginning and throughout our investigations, we could not understand why the board was continuing to pursue tenure charges. The interviews, documents and testimonies that we gathered in preparation for the arbitration all pointed toward the vindication of both members."

PARENTS SUPPORT COACHES

The story soon spread throughout the district, and the soccer parents stood up for the men, furiously expressing their outrage at the board's action to the athletic director, the superintendent and—eventually—the board. As the weeks went by, it became clear that the administration and the board chose to ignore the pleas of the booster club leaders, most notably that it was the club's clear declaration that they and they alone decided to gift Poyer for his time with the team—a practice that is also done for volunteer coaches in other

district sports.

"I was in disbelief when I learned that the Booster Club parents were ignored," said Poyer. "This situation could have been cleared up well before the prosecutor's office was involved, along with the tenure charges that were later issued, if the school district just took the time to show a little respect and listen."

WITH BEA, NJEA UNISERV AND LEGAL SUPPORT, TENURE REINSTATED

Through the work of NJEA network attorney, Sanford Oxfeld, Esq., the case went before an arbitrator in November 2019. In his arguments, Oxfeld maintained that none of the district's investigation into the matter was conducted objectively, and without prejudice.

"To be clear, neither Dan nor Andy had done anything wrong whatsoever," Oxfeld declared. "Yet, as emphasized by the Booster Club leaders, their names and reputations were being defamed throughout the community."

Despite this, Dempsey and Poyer staunchly believed that justice would prevail, and their patience was rewarded in January. The arbitrator assigned to their tenure case dismissed the charges and reinstated the employees, making them whole for all lost wages and benefits.

"We were all extremely pleased with the award; it's always great to see the good guys win," said Cowing. "Both Dan and Andy had their lives turned upside down. They didn't deserve this treatment, but they did deserve to get their jobs back."

"While it is always gratifying to win a significant case, it was even more so in this matter," Oxfeld added. "That the charges were premised on arguably fraudulent allegations against them also made this victory even sweeter."

The Belvidere School District did not see it that way, and it kept the men suspended—with full pay—as the district considered appealing the decision. Ultimately, the board decided not to pursue it as no possible basis for an appeal existed for an appeal, and Dempsey and Poyer returned to their classrooms in February.

"Since we were gone for over a year, the return to work was not simple," said Dempsey. "We were concerned about how we would be perceived. To our amazement, we were greeted by a standing ovation in the auditorium and a celebration with our peers in the faculty room."

"It was nice to know that the staff was happy to have us back, and that they were supportive of Dan and me," Poyer stated. "It helped ease our transition back to work."

Gov. Murphy signs executive order on testing and educator evaluation

Gov. Phil Murphy signed Executive Order No. 117 on April 7 to suspend the exit-testing requirement for the Class of 2020. There are approximately 13,000 seniors in the state of New Jersey who have yet to meet the exit-testing requirement. If these students have met all credit, attendance, and local graduation requirements, pursuant to N.J.A.C. 6A:8, they will be eligible to graduate without fulfilling the exit-test requirement.

The executive order states that the “statutory graduation assessment requirement mandated by N.J.S.A. 18A:7C-1 et seq. is waived for any 12th-grade student who is expected to graduate in the class of 2020 but, as of March 18, 2020, had not met said graduation assessment requirement.”

Over the past few weeks, NJEA has been working with the governor’s office and the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to advocate for the suspension of statewide standardized testing and exit-testing requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ORDER ADDRESSES EDUCATOR EVALUATION

Executive Order 117 gives the commissioner of education permission to “waive, suspend, or modify any existing rules” within Title 6A of the New Jersey Administrative Code in order to protect the public welfare during the COVID-19 crisis.

The executive order waives the “statutory requirement of three observations and evaluations for all nontenured teaching staff.” Based on this information, it is NJEA’s position that this school year will count toward the accrual of tenure for nontenured teaching staff members even if they have not been

observed three times. This executive order, however, does not alter districts’ discretion to non-renew nontenured teaching staff members. Likewise, teaching staff members on provisional certifications may continue their path toward standard certification.

The executive order also states that “student growth data shall not be used as a measure of educator effectiveness in the overall evaluation of any educator.” Therefore, teaching staff members cannot be directed to administer or submit student growth objectives (SGOs) as a portion of their annual summative rating. With the cancellation of statewide assessment, median student growth percentile (mSGP) data will likewise not be available to include in teaching staff member evaluations for 2019-20.

As the *Review* went to press on April 15, NJDOE has announced that tenured teachers in good standing will be given ratings of NE for “Not Evaluated.” The NJDOE also communicated a process for calculating scores for nontenured and provisionally certified teachers as well as teachers with corrective action plans (CAPs). The NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division immediately began analyzing the NJDOE’s interpretation of the executive order and issued an advisory to association field staff in order to assist local associations. Go to njea.org/covid and scroll down to the “NJEA Professional Development Guidance” section for that advisory and the latest information. Should you have any concerns about how your evaluation is being handled, contact your local association president.

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NJEA Priority Schools Initiative evolves

By LeShaun Arrington,
NJEA Communications Consultant

NJEA members and school administrators who are part of the NJEA Priority Schools Initiative (NJEA PSI) spent Saturday, March 7 attending a conference at the Hyatt Regency in New Brunswick. This was no ordinary conference; a palpable energy radiated from the room.

When the NJEA PSI was launched in 2012, it focused on improving instructional practices by encouraging collaboration through data analysis, job-embedded professional development, a leadership team, resource assistance, and strong professional learning communities. The initiative was established to be a model program where all educators work in a collaborative environment that empowered shared leadership and inspired all students to excel.

School districts and their local associations participate in the initiative in three-year cycles. The collaborative teams at the schools are supported by an NJEA PSI consultant. These are retired educators who work with their teams during and outside of the school day.

THE IMPACT OF ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

The goals of the initiative evolved as Amanda Adams, NJEA associate director for Professional Development and Coordinator of the PSI, observed the obstacles that the PSI consultants had to overcome to support their teams. Teachers often expressed how overwhelmed they were with the changing demands from their districts' central offices, student behaviors and low parental involvement.

About four years ago, Adams met Dave Ellis, a master trainer for ACE Interface at the NJEA Convention. She realized that NJEA members needed to learn about how adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) affect their students, parents and themselves.

Adams determined students' exposure to trauma had to be addressed through the initiative. To remove the barriers of student learning, healing techniques needed to be incorporated. Improving instructional practices combined with working to remove the barriers by creating healing communities would transform the whole student and increase student achievement.

ADDRESSING SOCIAL TOXICITY

As the room buzzed with energy and excitement keynote speaker Dr. Shawn Ginwright walked to the podium. Ginwright is a professor at San Francisco State University, has authored several



On March 7, prior to when school closure and social distancing procedures were implemented, NJEA members and school administrators gathered for the NJEA Priority Schools Conference including staff from North Main Street Elementary School in Pleasantville. From left: Teachers Mark Santanello and Brian Kavanagh, Principal Teresa McGaney-Guy, and teacher Kia Allen.

books, including *Hope and Healing in Urban Education* and is one of the nation's leading scholars on African American youth, youth activism and development.

Ginwright spoke about social toxicity. Not only do our students experience social toxins, but educators are exposed to them as well. Some examples of social toxins are insecurities, anxiety, fear and inequality. As educators, Ginwright said we should make sure that we are well and take care of ourselves mentally and physically. If we are not well, how can we support and work with students?

Ginwright talked about recognizing trauma and engaging in activities that center on healing. He said that districts should hold "human development" trainings rather than "professional development" sessions. He explained that professional development addresses only a part of who we are, human development would develop the whole person.

Ginwright also spoke about two types of relationships that are present in a school community: transactional and transformative. Transactional relationships are the functions of our titles; educator, student, administrator, and our school interactions are based on the functions of our titles. Transactional relationships are efficient, but not enough for healing and transformation.

In transformative relationships we show up for each other as human beings regardless of our titles. We know each other beyond our titles. Transformative relationships take longer to develop. Time and space must be created to cultivate these bonds, but they are necessary to be agents of change.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS FOSTER DEEPER LEARNING

Following Ginwright's keynote members chose from various breakout sessions covering topics such as adverse childhood experiences, trauma and resilience, restorative practices using mindfulness with parents and students, and other topics. Presenters included Ginwright, NJEA Priority Schools Initiative consultants, and NJEA members who have completed their three-year cycle in the initiative.

When the afternoon session ended, attendees reconvened in the ballroom. Conference attendees spoke to one another about the benefits of being part of PSI, such as the support and sense of security that working collaboratively brought them—the realization that they were not alone. Others spoke of how a deeper understanding of ACEs changed their teaching style.

"The support, information, and professional development that we provide are not a series of one-and-done sessions," said PSI Consultant Angela Coxen. "They are an evolution that is organic to the environment."

Plainfield Education Association President Charisse Parker views the Priority Schools Initiative differently from similar programs seeking to meet the same objectives.

"This is more of a family," Parker said. "It creates a sense of capacity among a group of people. You have a consultant who is assigned to a school and is dedicated to the success of that school. Over time, a level of trust is built between members and their consultants. Members know their consultant is there for them. They know that their consultant is going to give them the best support, modeling, and advice possible for them to be successful. It's building a family."

Salem County students take the lead in diversity discussion

By Kevin Parker,
NJEA Communications Consultant

Adult conversations around diversity took a pause to hear children’s perspectives at a Feb. 13 event in Salem County. Students from across Salem County presented, in art and words, their viewpoints on diversity—what it means to them, what it looks like and why it’s important.

The Salem County Council of Education Associations (SCCEA) hosted a dinner for the contestants, their families and NJEA members at JG Cook’s Riverview Inn in Pennsville. As everyone enjoyed a fireside dinner while the sun set over the Delaware River, SCCEA Vice President Carmen Porter announced the contest winners: Megan Morris for her art and Raegan Wilson for her writing. Megan’s artwork included a series of five connected pieces, each attached to a different statement about diversity. In her essay, Raegan described how diversity looks in the classroom, the forms it can take outside of the classroom, and its significance to her personally.

Selecting the winners, Carmen admits, was extremely difficult.

“I knew they were going to be great, but I was

surprised to see how amazing and different each piece was,” Porter said. “It made our decision very hard when it came to picking the winners.”

The event was Porter’s brainchild.

“Diversity is one of the main topics that teachers discuss,” Porter said. “We discuss it because we understand our classrooms consist of students with many differences. I wanted to see how the students saw diversity. I thought if I could have a conversation with students about diversity, maybe the students would have more of a respect for the differences they saw in their classrooms.”

Porter, who is also the SCCEA Pride chair, first met with the students and their parents to review contest rules. While she talked to them about the importance of diversity, she engaged them in conversation, asking them to explain what they thought diversity was. Students were given three options to explore the topic of diversity and showcase their artistic expression: a poem, a longer written piece or a piece of art.

“As county president, I have to say that when Carmen first brought this idea to me, I thought immediately it was one of the best things I’d ever heard,” recounted SCCEA President Sue Maniglia in her speech. “Diversity has become a really big

deal with us because it encompasses everyone—not just our staff, but our students as well. And we need to embrace that.”



Mannington eighth-grader Raegan Wilson displays her winning essay on diversity.

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Federal stimulus package provides aid to schools

Sens. Bob Menendez and Cory Booker spoke on an April 8 conference call with NJEA's state, county and local leaders and NJEA staff to discuss the implications of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act to New Jersey's schools. The act aims to help stabilize workers, families and the economy during the COVID-19 public health crisis. It was signed by President Donald Trump on March 27.

NJEA President Marie Blistan, Vice President Sean M. Spiller and Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty hosted the call and fielded questions for the senators from those on the call. Menendez addressed the time it took to ensure funding would be equitably distributed before final passage of the CARES Act.

"The CARES Act would not have had money for education, the level of support it has for the unemployed, small business protections, and would not have had a Marshall Plan for our hospitals, had we not fought hard for it," Menendez said.

Sen. Booker indicated that the CARES Act was not the last word on support in the health care and economic wake of COVID-19.

"Although the bill represents a critical step in the right direction in helping individuals most impacted by COVID-19, more work remains," Booker said.

In addition to support for education, the CARES Act also provides money for direct payments to individuals and families, and financial support and resources small business, health care systems, state agencies such as NJ Transit, counties and municipalities, and affordable housing, among other provisions.

EDUCATION STABILIZATION FUND

Of the \$2 trillion in the CARES Act, \$30.75 billion is budgeted for the Education Stabilization Fund. Sens. Menendez and Booker reported that from that, for education, New Jersey is set to receive \$695.6 million, including:

- \$310 million for the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund.
- \$316 million for the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund.
- \$69 million for a Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund to provide support to school districts and institutions of higher education hardest hit by COVID-19.

The CARES act will also distribute to New Jersey, \$62.6 million for Child Care and Development

Block Grants (CCDBG) to help provide access to high-quality child care for front-line workers such as health care sector employees, emergency responders, sanitation workers, and others deemed essential during the response to the coronavirus, and to provide continued payments to child care facilities that face closure or decreased enrollment due to COVID-19.

“

Although the bill represents a critical step in the right direction in helping individuals most impacted by COVID-19, more work remains.

STUDENT LOAN RELIEF

The CARES Act also provides for a six-month suspension of federal student loan payments and interest accrual through Sept. 30. The suspended monthly payments will be considered as qualified payments toward achieving Public Service Loan Forgiveness. It protects student borrowers from any involuntary collections, wage garnishments, reduction of tax refund, or reduction of federal benefit payment during the COVID-19 public health crisis.

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NJTV Learning Live features daily on-air lessons



NJTV, in partnership with NJEA and the New Jersey Department of Education, launched a new series of on-air instruction called NJTV Learning Live on April 6. Hosted by New Jersey State Teacher of the Year Kimberly Dickstein Hughes, on-air classes are taught daily for grades three through six from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

“Nothing is better than face-to-face instruction given by a teacher in the classroom, but while we are all doing our part to flatten the curve, NJEA members are also looking for every opportunity to help students keep learning,” said NJEA President Marie Blistan. “These lessons will provide valuable enrichment and supplement what students are already getting from their own teachers. They will also showcase the amazing work that our educators continue to do every day, even in the middle of a pandemic.”

“At this most unique time in our state’s and our country’s history, public media is poised to help more than ever before,” said NJTV General Manager John Servidio. “NJTV Learning Live perfectly aligns with NJTV’s mission to serve our community, and only our unique broadcast reach, which reaches into all 21 counties of the state, makes this possible.”

“This is a great example of how New Jerseyans are coming together, from educators to broadcasters, to help improve student learning throughout the state,” said Education Commissioner Lamont O. Repollet. “This partnership demonstrates the kind of commitment and idealism we see throughout New Jersey’s school community.”

NJTV’s on-air classroom lessons will be livestreamed at njtvonline.org/live and archived on the network’s website, on the NJTV Learning Live program page at njtvonline.org/programs/njtv-learning-live. Dozens of teachers from across New Jersey have been recruited to help deliver and prepare content in multiple subject areas, including math, science, English language arts, social studies and physical education. The network is prepared to provide up to 10 weeks of remote learning programming.



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JOY AND HEALING THROUGH MUSIC THERAPY

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



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.



In group music therapy, Bankbridge Elementary students participate in a traditional drum circle.

Alyssa Cop’s classroom at Bankbridge Elementary School in Sewell doesn’t have any desks. There is a smartboard, but it displays music and lyrics, not equations. There is a piano, several guitars, and an African drum collection that is nearly irresistible to children’s hands. Posters of past musical shows line the walls, and a colorful carpet dominates the center of the room.

Cop is a music therapist at Bankbridge, which is part of the Gloucester County Special Services School District. The district serves students from preschool to age 21 who are dealing with a range of challenges, from multiple disabilities to behavior issues.

Cop has been with the district for 16 years, and she sees 17 classrooms weekly for 30-minute sessions. In addition, she works one-on-one or in small groups with students who are referred to her by the school social worker, Cindy Fornes, other teachers such as frequent collaborator Jennifer Hansbury, or through her own observation of students.

“I have been a musician my entire life,” Cop says. She began piano lessons at age 3 and cello lessons at age 6. Today, she is a classically trained pianist who sings and plays the cello, the guitar, and drums.

Cop knew from an early age that she wanted to work with special education students.

“My mother was a special education teacher in Southampton and, beginning in middle school, I would visit her classroom to sing or play the piano,” Cop says. “I loved it!”

A friend of Cop’s mother suggested that Cop consider a career as a music therapist in the public schools. She shadowed a music therapist in an area school and knew she had found the right fit.

“By my junior year of high school, I knew what I wanted to do,” Cop recalls. “I applied to Immaculata University early in my senior year and had to audition for the music school. The school wants to make sure the people in the music therapy program are serious musicians; you can’t just decide that you like music and think that you will be successful working with students in this way.”

MUSIC’S PROFOUND IMPACT

Cop has seen a profound impact on her students. She has students with ADHD who struggle to sit still in a traditional classroom environment but who will happily sit and participate in a traditional drum circle for 45 minutes. She has students with language delays who sing beautifully in her class. Students on the autism spectrum with communication difficulties are able to use music to express themselves.

Andrew, a student of Cop’s, echoes her support for music therapy programs. “I like music therapy because it calms me when I need to relax, and I love music. I like to sing, and it inspires me to be a better person and inspires others to be a better person.”

Cop’s classes are very hands-on. Students are encouraged to play a variety of instruments, under Cop’s watchful eye. They learn to sing their favorite pop song, follow a beat with their classmates on the African drums, and even dance when the spirit moves them.

TEACHING REMOTELY DURING COVID-19

It stands to reason that the move to remote instruction—necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent mandatory school closings—has been challenging. Students do not necessarily have access to musical instruments at home, and certainly do not have the diversity of instruments Cop has in her classroom.

“Right now, we’re focused on connection for the students,” Cop says. “I’m making videos to supplement what we are able to do in real time.”

Cop is asking her colleagues to send her videos of themselves working from home, reading, playing music, and other activities to help her



A Bankbridge Elementary student plays the djembe.

students continue to feel connected to their teachers.

She is also working on a rainbow project so students, their families, and staff can produce rainbow pictures, take a picture of them and share them with Cop who will make a schoolwide video sharing the art.

Cop is focused on bridging the gap between school and home for her students. She knows that her students need to see that their teachers and staff are safe and to find ways to interact with them.

At the same time, families are struggling to provide the support, education and security that Bankbridge's students need—and that is a tall order in any time, but certainly true in a crisis.

"I've been sharing a song a day with our students and staff," Cop says, "And I've heard that people are sharing those videos out beyond our district, which is fine by me."

"I've seen other districts sharing videos of their staff singing along to a popular song from their home workspaces, and I think that is such a positive activity," Cop says. "It reassures and entertains the students and reminds us that, even though we cannot be together physically right now, we are always connected."

"I think music is so healing and inspirational and I really believe that it will help us get through this."

"Every night, I'm watching a live performance in my living room," Cop says. "If I can bring a piece of that to our students and our families, that would be tremendously healing." 🎵

ACCORDING TO THE AMERICAN MUSIC THERAPY ASSOCIATION:

- Research supports connections between speech and singing, rhythm and motor behavior, memory for song and memory for academic material, and overall ability of preferred music to enhance mood, attention and behavior to optimize the student's ability to learn and interact.
- Rhythmic movement helps develop gross motor skills (mobility, agility, balance, coordination) as well as respiration patterns and muscular relaxation. Because music is reinforcing, it can be used to motivate movements or structure exercises that are prescribed in physical rehabilitation.
- Involvement in music may provide a distraction from the pain, discomfort and anxiety often associated with some physical disabilities.

In addition, because people use a different part of their brain to process music, students may be able to absorb information and skills more easily when it is conveyed through music. Think of the Alphabet song as one nearly universal example of information mastered through music.

See musictherapy.org/assets/1/17/bib_Special_Education.pdf.



A musician her entire life, music therapist Alyssa Cop knew from an early age that she wanted to work with special education students.

THIS IS ME!

Cop and her colleague Jennifer Hansbury, who works with deaf and hard of hearing students have been collaborating for the past four years to make music/signing videos.

In the spring of 2018, they selected the song, "This is Me," after listening to the message, reading the words, and starting to visualize the signs and messages the students could express. Hansbury and the interpreters in the class took the lyrics and did a gloss, which means they used ASL signs to express the message of the lyrics. Then the group discussed the mood and message they wanted to share with their elementary school students. They wanted to be sure the message wouldn't be beyond their level. The interpreters and Hansbury then did another gloss that took the students' level, age, and experiences in mind.

In early 2019, they started working with the students on the song. They showed the students the original video, examples of others who had signed it, and they held a class discussion on bullying, empowerment, feelings about Deafness, knowing yourself and being proud, and what positive traits and abilities they felt connected to.

After this, they began working on teaching the students the signs and reviewing their meanings to connect with the lyrics and the song.

By March 2019, they were ready to schedule the videographer to capture their efforts. After all the parents signed off, Cop and Hansbury began to think of how they wanted to showcase their students' accomplishments in learning the song. They contacted neighboring Gloucester Institute of Technology, a high school district on the same campus, and arranged to have the Bankbridge students walk through a crowd of supportive high schoolers.

After a lot of practice, they were ready to film—but with one more important element.

Cop and Hansbury asked each of the students to choose a



The Deaf and Hard of Hearing students and staff at Bankbridge Elementary worked in group music therapy to create our signed interpretation of "This Is Me." with help from Gloucester County Institute of Technology students. You can view it at bit.ly/bankbridgedhh.

word they felt best described them. They then made a T-shirt for all of the Bankbridge students and staff participating in the video.

A few weeks later, the video was ready, and Cop and Hansbury worked with the district to share it. The outpouring of interest was overwhelming and affirming for everyone who participated in the project. All four local Philadelphia stations did stories on the video and two stations sent reporters out for more extensive coverage. Reporters from New Jersey-based media outlets also conducted interviews.

"This process was long, but fulfilling," Cop and Hansbury said. "We are amazed, honored, humbled, and excited for all the attention the video has received. This is always a fun project; the last two videos we did were exciting and our students were awesome. This video, its message, and the relatability to so many, is an anthem for all those who ever felt, or were made to feel, less than others. We believe this is why our 'This is Me' video has received so much positive attention."



Watch Alyssa Cop's students bring learning to life through music at njea.org/musictherapy.

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"I've seen other districts sharing videos of their staff singing along to a popular song from their home workspaces, and I think that is such a positive activity. It reassures and entertains the students and reminds us that, even though we cannot be together physically right now, we are always connected."

TO WORK IN A SCHOOL IS TO MAKE



Magic

BY VIKTORIA WARGO

Viktoria Wargo is a special education teacher at Triangle School in Hillsborough. She is the 2018-19 Somerset County Teacher of the Year. She can be reached at tori.wargo@hotmail.com.

Editor's note: As this edition of the Review went to press on April 15, it was not clear when school buildings would re-open. While closed, custodians sanitized buildings, cafeteria staff prepared meals and distributed them at the roadside, bus drivers delivered some of those meals, and teachers and paraprofessionals used every tool at their disposal to teach their students remotely. Secretaries, administrators and others worked from home to keep everything going. In many communities, teachers missed their students so much that they created ad hoc parades waving to school community families from their decorated cars.

All of this points to the magical places that schools truly are. A 2018-19 county teacher of the year, Viktoria Wargo has known this for a long time—penning this article early in the winter, long before anyone knew what late March would bring.

Have you ever planned a trip to Disney? I bet one of the things you look forward to is the “magic”! Do you imagine entering the park and seeing Mickey Mouse himself?

How about standing in line to interact with your favorite character? Even better—what about the magical moment you get a high five, fist bump, or best of all—an embrace! Wow, that is really something special, isn't it?

The funny thing is, I imagine our schools to be our very own version of Disney.

THE SUNRISE SYMPHONY

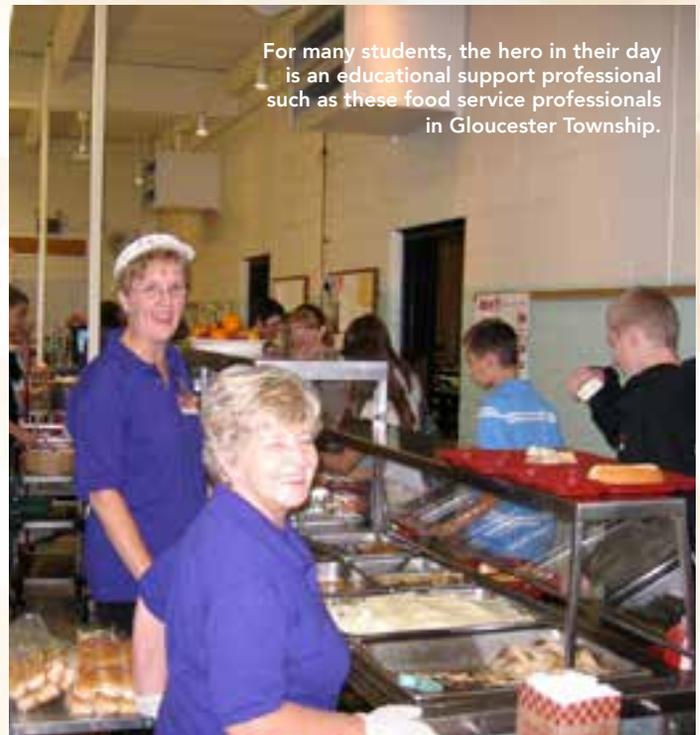
I teach in an elementary school. My favorite part of every single day is the morning arrival. I use my eyes and ears to enjoy these moments, but it is my heart that is truly touched. Every morning, teachers line up for what I call “The Sunrise Symphony.”

The first movement begins with the faculty and staff long before the buses even pull into the parking lot. Our custodians enter the buildings before everyone else. They unlock doors, turn on lights, and check the building to ensure safety for all. Then come the teachers, instructional assistants, therapists, case managers, secretaries, nurses and administration.

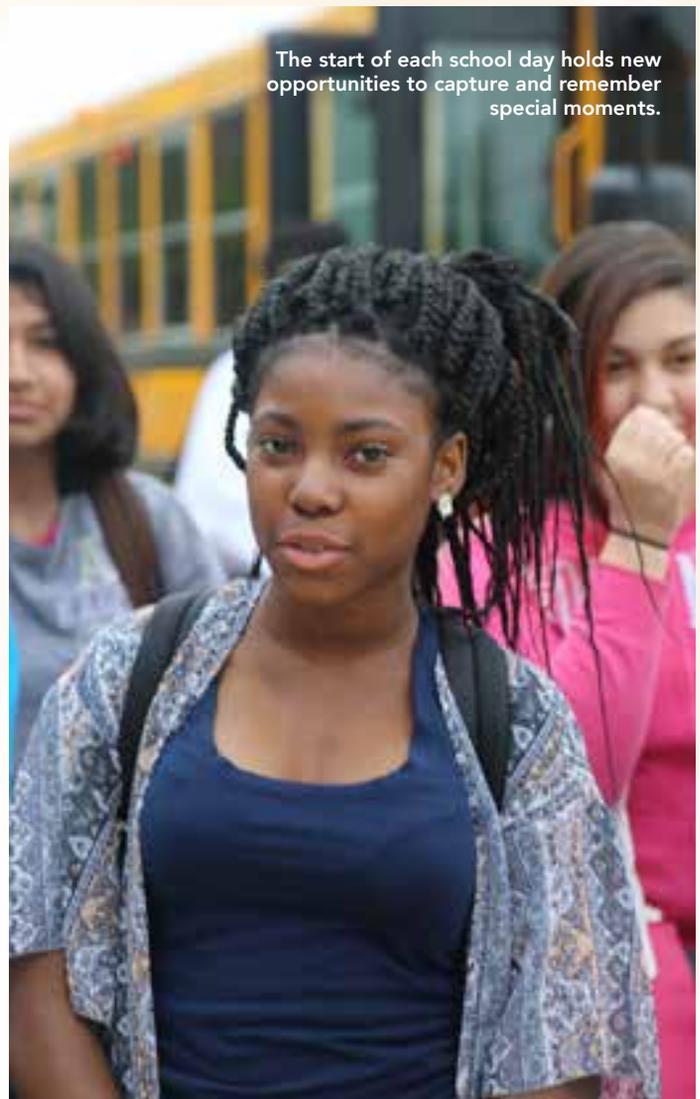
Upon arrival, all begin to prepare for the new day. Some work silently, while others enjoy a few moments to catch up on a colleague's prior evening. Photocopies are made, computers and projectors turned on, lessons are looked over one last time, emails are checked, and rooms are assessed to make certain all is in proper order to welcome our students. The hustle and bustle of a new day is on the horizon.



Jacqueline Kruzik, an instructional assistant in the Matawan Aberdeen Regional School District, with preschool students



For many students, the hero in their day is an educational support professional such as these food service professionals in Gloucester Township.



The start of each school day holds new opportunities to capture and remember special moments.



Magic moments happen throughout the school day. Cynthia Samuel, a school nurse in Irvington enjoys a “routine” moment with a student.

THE SECOND MOVEMENT

The second movement of our symphony begins with the “take your places for the curtain” line-up. Some teachers stand outside and greet the children, others have posts throughout the halls, while some stand at their classroom doors. Some have clipboards or photocopies in hand, some hold their morning coffee. Some are not teachers but are no less part of the magic as the curtain rises. All have beaming smiles on their faces from ear to ear.

I see children looking out their bus windows through the seasons. Sometimes there is sun, other times there is rain, and then there are few days in New Jersey when we have snow falling. If you stop for the briefest of moments to look at those faces through the windows, angelic and filled with anticipation, you may need to catch your breath as the magnitude of your job almost stops your heart. There are hundreds of children awaiting their “village” to provide for them.

The term “village” is important. Together, we are a village. With some students, we are a known and very large part of their village, and, with others, we may not even realize the profound impact we have made until years later. Whatever

your role for your students, be proud of your opportunity to be a part of their village.

The bus doors open, and the children exit. Of course, it’s not all glitter and rainbows. There are children who exit the bus with their heads down or with stoic faces. But the vast majority of our children skip off their buses, backpacks in tow, full of anticipation and wearing their biggest smiles. They giggle and chatter. Some hold hands while others engage in a little horseplay that just stays within the lines of having fun without pushing the limits.

It is also thrilling to see some children walking with their noses up to a book, engrossed in a story that they just cannot tear their eyes from. I honestly feel blessed to have the opportunity to witness this each day.

THE THIRD MOVEMENT

The smiles are just the beginning of the magic. Which leads us to our third movement, my personal favorite, the excitement and anticipation of the magical moments in full crescendo!

Students are greeted by their heroes. It may sound over-the-top, but let’s be honest and embrace the thought. Heroes are regarded as role

models, they are courageous, they have special abilities; heroes are humble, patient, caring and selfless. Those who work in schools hold all those qualities and more.

This is the time to really pause and embrace the moments. I imagine tapping the “SLO-MO” button on my phone’s video app. Everything is intensified into these extraordinary moments. I see them as small vignettes. Students running into the arms of their teachers for that embrace that can only be shared between them. For some students the hero is a beloved custodian, school secretary, nurse, counselor, or aide. The hero might be the bus driver who greeted them before they even arrived at school or those in the cafeteria serving breakfast and lunch. All are part of the symphony that is the school day.

In my elementary school, teachers bend at the knees and kneel to be at the same level with the children. Of course, at this age, there are unending hugs. For those who work in the intermediate through high school levels, the moments are likely more of a high five, pat on the back or fist bump.

The special part of this movement in the symphony is that it is completely kinesic, all communication through movements and

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My reason for writing this is to remind you to slow down and take a moment to look around.

gestures; no verbal exchanges are needed. Think about that for a moment. How many of these kinesic moments do we share a day with our students?

THE FOURTH MOVEMENT

Onto the fourth and final movement—making history! While it may sound far-fetched, every single day in your classroom, you are making history. In addition to the morning greetings, I love to walk through the halls and simply listen for the tiny snippets of a lesson or interactions between teachers and their students.

From these moments, I sometimes learn new information, other times I take away a different perspective on something I already knew. I also like to find a new classroom management strategy or mindfulness approach.

I am definitely the teacher who “steals” ideas. There are times I cannot help but giggle over something hilarious I hear from a teacher or student. From elementary school to intermediate and middle to high school, the exchanges one hears differ drastically, however the core is the same, and that is the beauty of education.

THE POSTLUDE

My reason for writing this is to remind you to slow down and take a moment to look around.

There will be days when we do not “feel” the magic; we are human and that is OK. But I want you to realize that these interactions that seem to be the norm should not be taken for granted. Never underestimate the value in the relationships that we create with our students. Appreciate those authentic moments.

Take pride in the job you do each day. Make sure you laugh—humor is cathartic. Simply put, change your perception and remember to focus on what is at the center of what we do: our students.

I recently heard a student comment that it was not until his senior year in high school when he had a teacher who connected with him. She took the time to get to know him. She was relatable, vulnerable and shared that she too was human. The reason he never skipped her class was that she made school feel like “home.”

On one side, I was saddened to hear that it took 12 years for this student to have a connection with a teacher. I sit here thinking that the interactions and relationships I observe everyday are the norm for all students; sadly, it is not. On the other side, I thought of how I personally have always called

my classroom my second home. I hope that there are millions of children who come to school and feel that safety and comfort.

We may not make the money that others do, but we do indeed make the magic. There are days that we face challenges with our students, but those days pale in comparison to the number of days that we laugh. We get to enjoy children who are honest, genuine, and amazing people. We laugh, at times we cry, we hug, we cheer, we celebrate, sometimes we yell, we work tirelessly, and we love unconditionally.

I have found myself dancing around my classroom to the song “Born to Be Alive,” or belting out “Let it Go” at the top of my lungs with my students on pajama day while saying to my colleagues, “Do you believe we get paid to do this?”

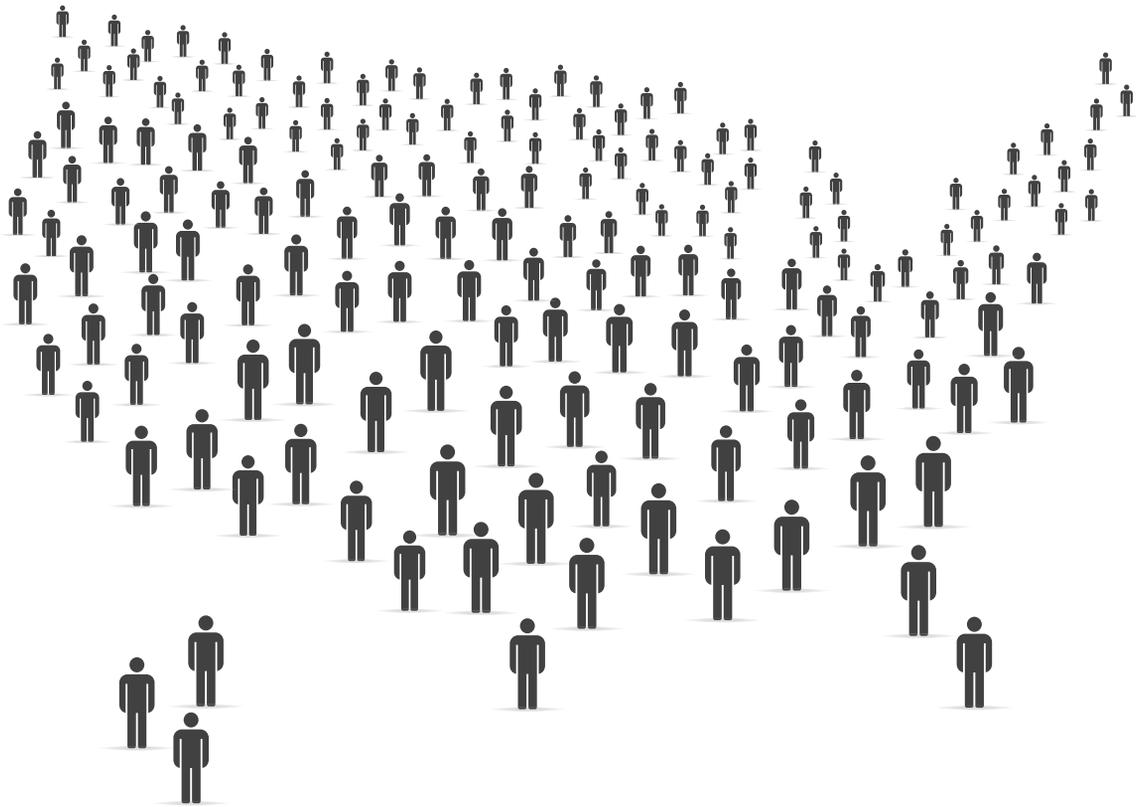
I feel blessed to be able to say that I truly love my job. There are not many people in the world who share this sentiment. I also feel like I can say with confidence, that despite the external challenges we face as teachers, once we are in our schools, doing what we are passionate about, we are richer than most. 🙏



Science, like every subject, offers countless opportunities to share joy for Brick High School chemistry teacher Maria DeBruin and her students, as in this lesson where surface tension and air pressure keep two young volunteers from getting soaked. She and her students were featured on Classroom Close-up, NJ in 2019.

THE US CENSUS: MAKING SURE EVERYONE IS COUNTED

BY JULIE GIORDANO PLOTKIN



April 1, 2020, Census Day, has come and gone. Census invitations and first reminders have gone out. The online survey site and call-in centers have been active for months, and by all estimates, this year's household participation rate, even prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 in mid-March, may be lower than at this point in the 2010 census. Areas of New Jersey where 2010 census participation was particularly low, are at greatest risk of being missed and, therefore, the most significant risk for harm.

The stakes are high. The size of New Jersey's congressional delegation in Washington, D.C., and federal funding for our schools, for Medicare, Medicaid, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are all determined by the census. Population statistics use census data to determine rates of disease, poverty, employment and crime. Accuracy depends on a complete census count.

NOW IS THE TIME TO GET OUT THE COUNT

Respond to the census, if you haven't done so already. Ask everyone you know to do the same. Consider including census-related topics in your lesson plans, and/or check in with your local Complete Count Committee to help ensure everyone in your community is counted.

If you have ties to a hard-to-count population, please consider getting involved. Your community's trust in you can make all the difference in someone's decision to participate.

HARD TO COUNT AREAS

Areas where a low percentage of residents completed and returned the 2010 census are considered hard-to-count areas. Cities can be the hardest to count with low participation rates as listed here for some of our state's largest municipalities: Irvington (50%), Atlantic City (55%), City of Orange (55%), Newark (55%), Asbury Park (56%), New Brunswick (56%), Trenton (59%), Jersey City (60%), Paterson (60%), and Camden (61%).

According to ACNJ Fact Sheets:

- **148,166** children under age 5 live in hard-to-count areas of New Jersey. That comprises **28%** of the total population of children under age 5 in the state.
- **190,008** Asian people live in hard-to-count areas of New Jersey. That comprises **21%** of the total Asian population in the state.
- **668,636** Black or African American people live in hard-to-count areas of New Jersey. That comprises **51%** of the total Black population in the state.
- **696,085** Hispanic or Latinx people live in hard-to-count areas of New Jersey. That comprises **40%** of the total Hispanic population in the state.



A census worker engaged in address canvassing to improve and refine the U.S. Census Bureau's address list in advance of the 2020 Census. Photo from census.gov/library/photos.html.



Federal funding for our schools, for Medicare, Medicaid, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the size of New Jersey's congressional delegation in Washington, D.C., and are all determined by the census. Accuracy depends on a complete census count.

HARD TO COUNT POPULATIONS

The U.S. Census Bureau considers populations hard to count if they are:

- **Hard to locate** – Populations can be both hard to sample and hard to identify by some characteristic of interest (e.g., nomadic peoples and those hard to identify because of stigma and motivated misreporting, sometimes for reasons of personal safety).
- **Hard to contact** – Once located, populations can be difficult to physically access (e.g., gated communities or populations experiencing homelessness).
- **Hard to persuade** – Once accessed, populations may be reluctant to participate in enumeration (e.g., political dissidents or those who feel that they are too busy to participate).
- **Hard to interview** – Once engaged, enumeration itself may be hindered by some barrier (e.g., lack of a shared language, low literacy or some form of disability).

Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) has identified five demographic groups in need of targeted census outreach: Asian, Latinx, Black/African American, children under age 5, and households with limited or no internet access. ACNJ has compiled detailed fact sheets and mapping tools, which can be found on the Complete Count page of the Fund for New Jersey's website. (See Resources sidebar.)

KEY DATES

Jan. 21: The U.S. Census Bureau began counting remote Alaska.

March 12- August 14: Public Self-Response Phase, extended by two weeks due to COVID-19.

April 1: Census Day is observed nationwide. By this date, every home should have received an invitation to participate in the 2020 Census.

April 15: Due to COVID-19, the U.S. Census Bureau suspended field operations until April 15, 2020.

May 28 - August 14: Census takers will interview households in person that have not responded online, by phone or by mail. Dates adjusted two weeks forward due to COVID-19.
December: The Census Bureau will deliver apportionment counts to the president and Congress.

ONLINE TOOLS

Response Outreach Area Mapper (ROAM)

This Census Bureau tool was developed to make it easier to identify hard-to-survey areas and to provide a socioeconomic and demographic characteristic profile of these areas using American Community Survey. Visit bit.ly/censusroom.

2020 Census Response Rate

Check out this map tool to see how your community is doing in real-time. Visit bit.ly/censusresponserate.

2020 Census Complete Count Committee

page with data visualization and contact info census.gov/2020ccc.



RESOURCES

NJ Census Facebook page:
[facebook.com/NJCensus2020](https://www.facebook.com/NJCensus2020)

NJ Census Twitter feed:
twitter.com/nj_census2020

Advocates for Children of New Jersey

Short on time? The most comprehensive NJ-specific census site is the Advocates for Children of New Jersey-sponsored "Census 2020 NJ," where you will find a list of upcoming census events (with links), toolkits, and handouts. Visit acnj.org/census2020nj.

Census Counts resources page

Census Counts is a coalition of 15 national organizations, including the National Education Association, and dozens of community partners in more than 30 states. The Census Counts resources page contains toolkits, fact sheets and webinars on everything from census basics to cybersecurity to outreach to specific populations, including Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities; African American communities; Arab American communities; people with disabilities; families with young children; Latinx communities; LGBTQ+ communities, and Native American communities. Visit censuscounts.org/resources.

NEA's 2020 Census Toolkit

The National Education Association's toolkit includes fliers to send home with students in English, Spanish and Vietnamese as well as posters and lesson plans. nea.org/home/75858.htm.

Complete Count NJ Resources page

This page has a list of "Get Out the Count Hubs," with links to organizations doing targeted outreach, including, but not limited to:

- American Library Association
- Arab American Institute Foundation
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC)
- Color of Change
- Fair Count
- Fair Immigration Reform Movement (FIRM)
- The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
- National LGBTQ Task Force
- NAACP
- National Urban League
- Partnership for America's Children
- Rock the Vote
- Yalla Count Me In (American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and Arab American Institute Foundation)

Visit fundfornj.org/census/resources.

FACTS THAT AFFECT A FULL COUNT

- New Jersey received \$45,851,273,000 of census-guided federal spending in Fiscal Year 2017 as reported in "Counting for Dollars: The Role of the Decennial Census in the Geographic Distribution of Federal Funds," by Andrew Reamer of George Washington Institute of Public Policy, April 17, 2018.
- The poverty rate and the percentage of population living in rural areas explain two-thirds of the differences in federal funding allocated to the states, according Andrew Reamer in the same report as above.
- New Jersey has lost a seat in Congress in three of last four censuses (1980, 1990, 2010).
- Cancer-cluster investigations begin with census-tract level data, according to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report," from Sept. 27, 2013.
- From 2014 through 2018, 13.4% of New Jersey's households had either no home internet subscription or dial up-only, according to the latest American Community Survey estimates from the U.S. Census and 5.9% of the state's households had a cellular data plan only, which can be costly to use for nonessential services.
- Young children are undercounted in the census at a higher rate than any other age group, according to William O'Hare in a 2015 report titled "The Undercount of Young Children in the U.S. Decennial Census."
- Approximately 22% of New Jersey's population was born outside the U.S., an estimated 1,968,060 people, according to the U.S. Census Bureau's "American Community Survey, 2014-2018."



Children under five years of age are among the population of residents considered hard to count.

SHELTER-IN-PLACE CENSUS ISSUES

Do you have a college student or young adult sheltering-in-place with you?

The U.S. Census Bureau says you should NOT include them as members of your household even if they were residing with you on April 1, 2020. College student and others should respond and count themselves where they "live and sleep most of the time." For more information, see 2020census.gov/en/who-to-count.html. 🏠

NJEA Together

One day longer, one day stronger

When schools across the state closed in mid-March in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19, teachers, educational support professionals, administrators and school boards had, in many cases, less than 24 hours to figure out how to run a school district and deliver remotely nearly everything a school provides. Custodians found themselves on the front lines to sanitize schools and many school nurses found themselves on the front lines at coronavirus testing sites.

NJEA officers, local and county association leaders, and staff found themselves on the front lines ensuring that members' incomes, rights and benefits were protected while members made sure their students were safe, fed and educated.

And everyone worked together while also struggling to make sure their own families were safe in the midst of this global pandemic.

NJEA created a website, njeatogether.org, as one way to support members and the families they serve. It offers a virtual place to find resources for your instruction, to find information on COVID-19, to discover resources for your own physical and mental health, to connect with your fellow members, to ask questions, and to share your story. There's even a place for the families you serve to take a moment to thank you.

On these four pages are a sampling of the many photos that have come into NJEA from njeatogether.org and the stories behind them. 🏠

Eighth graders from Dr. Walter F. Robinson Community School in Bayonne sent notes of praise and encouragement to local hospital staff, who sent this photo back as a thank you to them.

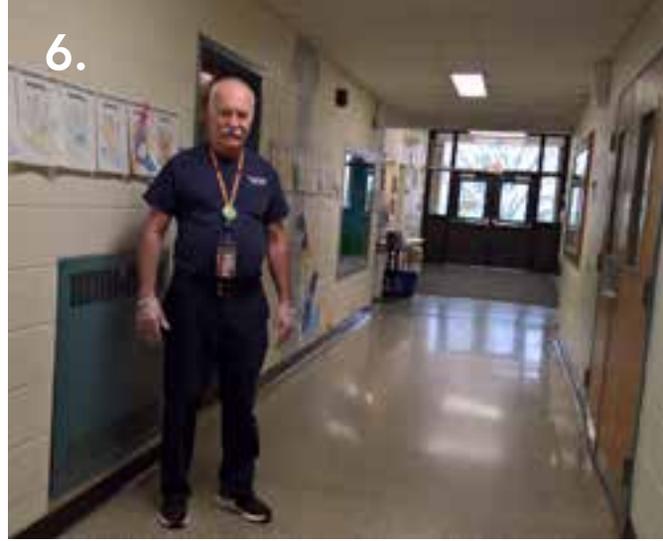




1. Joyce Farr, an ESL teacher from Monroe Township, Gloucester County, compiled resources for non-English speakers on COVID-19. The list can be found by searching njea.org using Joyce Farr's name.
2. In Pitman, food service professional Vicky Rumaker helps distribute a week's worth of meals every Monday to students who need them.
3. Egg Harbor City educator Heather Camillo shared her online art lesson titled, "Straight Outta Quarantine." Her K-3 students at Charles L. Spragg Elementary School were prompted to draw what they think their teachers will look like when they come out of quarantine in a time when no salons or barber shops are open.
4. The Carlstadt Education Association created a video to encourage students and families.



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5. Like dozens of school nurses across the state and the nation, Rockaway Township Education Association members Karen Jordano and Regina Adamson served at a COVID-19 screening center. This one is at the County College of Morris.

6. Jim Cox, a custodian at Woodfern School in Hillsborough for 31 years, shares his experiences at work during the first week school buildings were closed.

7. Carteret teacher Nikki Silva supports her own children's instruction while remotely teaching her students.

8. Byram staff drove through town for a parade to get a glimpse of their students. Parents responded with their appreciation.

9. NJEA ESP of the Year Stacy Yanko, a guidance secretary at Hopatcong High School and the president of the Hopatcong Office Personnel Association (HOPA), shares her experience of working remotely at njea.org.



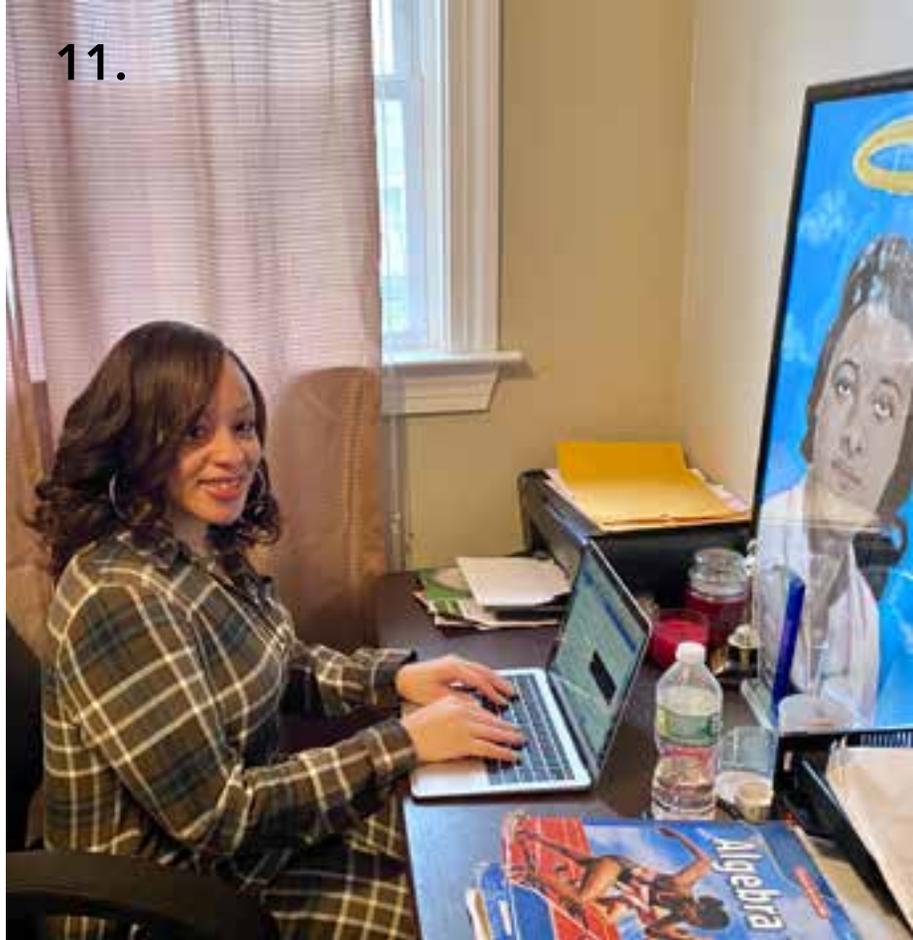
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12.

10. Thor is a trained therapy dog who visits Schuyler-Colfax Middle School in Wayne once a week. The dog belongs to special education teacher Lisa Klink. In late March, Klink opened a Google Classroom called "Virtual Dog Therapy with Thor," and invited the school's students and staff to join it.

11. Angel Boose, a third-grade teacher in East Orange, shared how her school handled the sudden shift to remote learning.

12. Keri Wilkes of the Ewing Township Education Association describes the challenges of educating her students remotely while supporting her son's teacher by keeping up with his schoolwork.

13. Kathy Gigantiello, "Nurse G" to the students in her charge in Medford, is sharing her love of yoga with children and families as they stay at home to help stop the spread of the coronavirus.



13.

CLEANING TO FIGHT COVID-19

IN SCHOOLS AND AT HOME

BY DOROTHY WIGMORE



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

The times are fascinating, scary and overwhelming, as the COVID-19 pandemic sweeps around the world. Like many other workplaces, schools are closed, and it is not clear, as of press time on April 15, when they will re-open.

Whatever we're doing, we hear "disinfect" a lot, as one way to reduce spread of the novel coronavirus. Too often, that advice ignores the hazards of common products and the protective measures needed for toxic ones. The differences between cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting are not often made clear.

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT CLEANING AND OTHER PRODUCTS

Whether you're a custodian still on the job, providing food to students, or a security guard, there are important things to know about cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. The same applies if you're at home.

1. Hazardous chemicals are common in cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting products. People using them, and those in the spaces where they are used, can get sick or develop diseases over time. Some cause or trigger asthma. Others harm reproductive health or may cause cancer. Some damage skin or other body systems.

For example, custodians using cleaning products (including disinfectants) are the most likely of any workers to get job-related

asthma. A California study found that four of five people with work-related asthma were in areas during or right after cleaning was done. Children are more easily affected by hazards, given their growing bodies and smaller sizes.

2. Cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting are different. See the box below for definitions of each. Disinfectants are widely misused and overused. Often, cleaning is all that's needed, even in a pandemic. It is always the first step before sanitizing or disinfecting; otherwise the latter efforts won't work.

Cleaner: Removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surfaces or objects. Works by using soap/detergent, water and friction to physically remove dirt and germs from surfaces. Cleaning before disinfecting reduces spreading infection more than disinfecting alone.

Sanitizer: Reduces germs on surfaces to levels considered safe for public health (usually 99.99%). Products must be EPA registered.

Disinfectant: Destroys almost all infectious germs, when used as the label directs on a surface. No effect on dirt, soil, or dust. Should be used where required by law, in high-risk and high-touch areas, or in case of infectious disease. Products must be EPA registered.

Just as important, products are designed for specific purposes.

- Surfaces matter. For example, what works on fabric may not work on stainless steel.
- Some disinfectants work on bacteria but not viruses. Not all anti-bacterial products kill viruses.
- Many products must be diluted.
- Some products are sprayed, which makes it more likely users will inhale the vapors. This may also be true of electrostatic sprayers.
- Is it certified for your purpose by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or a trustworthy organization (e.g., for viruses, not bacteria)?

3. There are other choices. It's good to start by asking "Is it necessary?" You don't need fragrances or "anti-bacterial" products. Both harm people and the environment and add little or nothing to the product's effectiveness.

"Environmentally preferable" products are better than others with the same purpose. For cleaners, Green Seal and Ecologo offer third-party certification labels with strict requirements. The EPA's Safer Choice program is another eco-label.

Disinfectants and sanitizers are supposed to kill viruses and bacteria, so they don't get those labels. Instead, they are regulated by the EPA as pesticides. Less hazardous ones are found in its Design for Environment (DfE) category. These kinds of certified "green" products can contain one-third fewer harmful chemicals than traditional ones.

To prevent COVID-19 spread, hand sanitizers are less effective than regular handwashing with soap for at least 20 seconds.

Using stricter criteria, San Francisco's Environment Department recommends registered disinfectants that are much less toxic. Unlike the EPA, their criteria say the products cannot contain quaternary ammonium compounds, sometimes called quats (look for "ammonium chloride"), or alkylphenol ethoxylates. Among other things, these chemicals can cause asthma and reproductive harm, respectively.

Resources

New Jersey Department of Education

- "School Preparedness and Emergency Planning," nj.gov/education/schools/security/plan
- "Novel Coronavirus (COVID-2019)," nj.gov/education/topics

New Jersey Department of Health

- "COVID-19: Information for schools and businesses," nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_schoolbusiness.shtml

Responsible Purchasing Network

- "Green purchasing: Opportunities and best practices," bit.ly/rpngreenpurchase
- Cleaners/disinfectants, bit.ly/rpncleaners
- Safer disinfectants on EPA's list of recommended antimicrobial products for use against novel human corona virus", bit.ly/deohs-clean

NEA and Healthy Futures

- "Cleaning, sanitizing, and targeted disinfecting school wide: tips for custodians and maintenance staff", bit.ly/nea-hf.

Healthy Schools Network

- "Green cleaning for healthy schools toolkit," bit.ly/healthyschoolsgreen

California Department of Public Health

- "Cleaning for asthma-safer schools," bit.ly/asthasafeschools

California/OSHA

- "Safety & health guidance. COVID-19 infection prevention in childcare programs," bit.ly/caloshachild
- Aerosol Transmissible Diseases standard, bit.ly/aerosolcalif

New York State

- "Green cleaning program", <https://greencleaning.ny.gov/Entry.asp>

Informed Green Solutions

- "The green cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting toolkit," informedgreensolutions.org/toolkit
- Other information about bleach, microfiber materials and cleaning for schools and child care, informedgreensolutions.org

Other resources

- "Single use, splash-resistant gloves," Health and Safety Executive, hse.gov.uk/skin/posters/singleusegloves.pdf (Removing gloves safely)
- "Coronavirus: Resources for workers," National Council for Occupational Safety and Health, nationalcosh.org/coronavirus

For homes

- Environmental Working Group (EWG): Guide to healthy cleaning. ewg.org/guides/cleaners
- Women's Voices for the Earth: Disinfectant overkill. bit.ly/disinfectant-overkill
- Women's Voices for the Earth: "Safer disinfecting at home in the times of coronavirus" (also in Spanish), bit.ly/wvesafercovid

For other issues, including stress:

- NJEATogether: NJEA's COVID-19 resources all in one place: njeatogether.njea.org
- AID-NJEA: The union's 24-hour phone line for professional or personal concerns, not just mental health/stress: njea.org/aidnjea

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To prevent COVID-19 spread, hand sanitizers are less effective than regular handwashing with soap for at least 20 seconds.

4. Data sheets can provide information. Good data sheets list all the ingredients, describe harm they can cause, and have specific protective measures and equipment required.

5. Protection to prevent or reduce harm may be needed. Before deciding about personal protective equipment (PPE), consider if the product is being sprayed or used on cloth (it can get on bare skin). Is it a concentrated form that must be diluted? If so, it's best to use a closed-loop system to dilute the product. PPE must fit and protect you from the chemicals. You also need to be trained about the hazards and its use and disposal.

SAFER WAYS TO CLEAN AND DISINFECT

What's best to use to clean, sanitize and/or disinfect in these pandemic times or in a school when it re-opens?

1. Choose the least toxic products or methods, for the health of children especially. The most hazardous ingredient should guide these decisions. Consider less toxic options.

For cleaning, use soap or detergent and water or microfiber materials instead of chemical products. With plain water, microfiber materials can get rid of 99% of bacteria. If you use microfiber materials, try a color coding system with multiple cloths/mop covers so you don't cross-contaminate (e.g., clean the bathroom, then another room).

For workplace options, use resources like San Francisco's SFApproved (sfapproved.org) and Informed Green Solutions (informedgreensolutions.org). They make it easy. They have reviewed cleaning products with eco-labels, and disinfectants/sanitizers with EPA's DfE approval, using more health-protective criteria. You can use those same kinds of products at home; also check SF Approved's Guide for Small Businesses and Homes, Women's Voices for the Earth and the Environmental Working Group. (See resources sidebar.)

2. Employers must provide information and training with the proper equipment for using the products or methods and preventing or reducing harm. People need to know the right way to use the products and symptoms of possible harm. Protective equipment—including gloves—needs to be right for the product. If information isn't on the data sheet, call the manufacturer for specific glove materials, or ask an occupational health specialist.

3. Develop a plan for regular cleaning, and criteria about when sanitizing or disinfecting is needed, and where. This applies whether it's a pandemic or not.

4. Carry out routine cleaning, especially for frequently-touched surfaces. They include classroom and lunchroom tables/desks and chairs, countertops, light switches, railings, door handles and push plates, shared equipment, equipment handles, and faucets. Use the regular products (hopefully less toxic ones). The New Jersey Department of Health says, "Schools should follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product."

If no one has been in schools after the last cleaning, sanitizing and/or disinfecting, they do not need anything more than a good cleaning when they re-open, unless mold is present. Use microfiber materials and/or the least toxic products possible.

"Return to school strategies are important," says Darryl Alexander with the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health (National COSH), and a former health and safety education union official. "They need appropriate general cleaning and disinfection using the latest guidelines. They don't need deep cleaning, whatever that means. If no one has been in the school, they don't need disinfection."

For food workers still on the job, the current advice is that the usual sanitizing and cleaning procedures should be fine even during the pandemic. Add extra hand-washing as required and physical distancing from others. Put food out in bags for pickup, and let those collecting them know you are practicing good hygiene. Set up and enforce plans about food delivery that respect distancing and hygiene practices, including disposable nitrile gloves (with an appropriate closed container for disposal).

5. When disinfecting (on frequently-touched surfaces only), start with products with EPA's DfE label. Use ones that attack viruses, not bacteria. If possible, use San Francisco recommendations for disinfectants with the "active ingredient" **hydrogen peroxide, citric acid, lactic acid, or caprylic acid.** They are effective and less hazardous for human



health and the environment. If possible, avoid quats and bleach (sodium hypochlorite), as they can cause/trigger asthma.

If nothing else is available, prepare 0.1% new bleach solutions daily using about one-third of a teaspoon of bleach in a quart of water, says the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control. Bleach harms textiles and metals, so it's best used on hard, non-porous surfaces. It also should never be mixed with ammonia or other chemicals; the resulting gases can kill.

"However, you can disinfect a surface, and it can be easily be contaminated by droplets from an infected person moments later," Alexander says. "I would say just clean a lot, with good nontoxic general cleaners and microfiber cloths."

More is not better. Follow instructions about diluting products. If products are in concentrated form, closed loop systems are best to prepare what's actually used. Otherwise, you need protective gear (e.g., gloves, respirator, goggles) to deal with possible spills and splashes.

Avoid spraying if possible. It gets chemical droplets in the air, increasing the odds you or others will inhale it, or it will irritate skin or eyes. This is particularly true for bleach, if anyone has breathing issues. Foggers are worse for workers than spraying, especially when they're used with products that are not designed to be applied that way or on surfaces that aren't right for that method.

"Fogging is a practice that shouldn't be used," Work Environment Council hygienist Dave Newman says. "It's like bombing the room with pesticide."

Always let the disinfectant stay **glistening wet** on the surface or air dry for the right dwell or contact time, according to the instructions. Otherwise, resistant germs will remain and grow. Most dwell times are from five to 10 minutes (e.g., bleach is 10).

Microfiber materials may be useful with small amounts of disinfectant to deal with viruses. They certainly can be used to wipe up after disinfecting.

"Remember these are pesticides," Newman says. There's a lot of bad pesticide use that's dangerous for people. Do a good cleaning and be really careful if you're using disinfecting products. Make sure you're using precautions for the workers, not leaving residues that could be harmful, doing it in a way that's approved, with the right contact time and on the surface for which it's been approved."

For food service, microfiber materials also are better for wiping food surfaces, along with cotton-cellulose cloths. They transfer many fewer viruses than nonwoven cloths or cotton terry bar towels.

6. Use the right PPE and get trained about putting it on and taking it off. Custodians should wear disposable nitrile gloves and a surgical mask, plus eye protection or a face shield. The last two help if people inadvertently touch their face with contaminated hands and fingers (gloved or not);

the mask will not protect you from the chemicals themselves.

Security guards and others who are at least six feet away from people generally do not need respirators or other protective gear—although they may decide to use nitrile gloves that can be changed regularly. Closer to people, they need a face shield, N95 or regular (elastomeric) respirator with a particle filter and nitrile gloves.

If you do wear a respirator, it needs to be tested on you to ensure it fits. Some types of facial hair stop them from working properly. The Centers for Disease Control provides a chart that offers guidance on facial hair and respirators. You can view it at bit.ly/maskfacialhair.

Taking gloves off safely to avoid contamination requires practice. See the resource list for specific instructions. It's a good idea to wash hands with soap and water before and after using gloves.

If the PPE fails in some way (e.g., gloves tear), stop work and report this to your supervisor.

"Always read the label," says Claire Barnett from the Healthy Schools Network. "Always make sure you've got gloves and the right protective gear. Insist on third-party certified green products for

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What's best to use to clean, sanitize and/or disinfect in these pandemic times or in a school when it re-opens?

hard surface cleaners to protect your health and that of others."

"At home, we recommend that they come up with a cleaning plan to clean frequently-touched surfaces, all around the house," Alexander says. "When they decide they need to disinfect an area, we recommend using a very mild disinfectant because this virus is easily destroyed, so they don't need to use a massive amount of disinfection." She also recommends opening windows.

WHAT LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS CAN DO

Local association leadership should work with health and safety committees to:

- Ask for the district's written pandemic response plan (the "emergency response plan"—required by New Jersey Administrative Code 6A:16-5.1—must be posted on district websites) and all written policies/procedures that may be relevant in a pandemic.

- Review the plan to ensure it effectively protects members who are expected to report to a school or district worksite, and that the district is not overly broad in its interpretation of who must report.
- Ensure anyone who is still reporting to a worksite has the necessary protective gear and supplies, including receptacles for disposal of wipes and tissues
- Ensure custodians and maintenance staff, and others still working on school properties are properly trained about the hazards of the products they use, the protective measures needed, instructions about how to use and clean/disinfect and dispose of them, and the fitting tests needed for respirator use (if required).

As local association health and safety committees consider what members may be facing right now and to prepare for an eventual return to school, they can:

- Find out what custodians and other district staff are provided for cleaning and disinfecting, and health and safety questions they have.
- Learn about, or brush up on, the relevant regulations including: OSHA bloodborne pathogens (bit.ly/oshabbp), OSHA personal protective equipment (bit.ly/oshappe), and Respiratory Protection Standard (bit.ly/osharps), and share the information with local leadership and members.
- Check manufacturers' websites for lists of cleaning ingredients and data sheets required under California law.
- Look for hazard information about specific ingredients at chemhat.org or ristciox.istas.net/en/ (also available in Spanish)
- Checking resources below for the least toxic products possible and support members getting and using them, as well as the PPE they need.
- Staying in touch and hold virtual meetings using Webex, Zoom, conference calls or other electronic means.
- In the longer-term, push districts to establish "responsible purchasing" and "environmentally preferable" policies for cleaning and other products (see resources sidebar).
- In costing those policies, demand employers include current protective measures and equipment, training, workers' compensation and replacement measures when someone gets sick or hurt, etc. (i.e., what does the "problem" cost).

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DAILY SELF-CARE TECHNIQUES TO AVOID BURNOUT

BY MARISSA REALDINE, STOCKTON UNIVERSITY

We have all had hard days. Some days it feels like the entire world is against you, and it would be better to stay in bed. Can you imagine feeling this way every single day? Many teachers and other school employees do. Even when there is plenty of evidence to the contrary, they feel that they are failing their students, colleagues, administrators and themselves. This makes them feel discouraged and insecure. They often doubt their ability to be a teacher.

We call this “teacher burnout,” and it is more common than you might think. In the current pandemic, with educators working remotely from their students and perhaps simultaneously homeschooling their own children, the stress is even greater. A 2017 survey by the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and the Badass Teachers Association (BAT) found that a staggering 61% of teachers and other school staff reported feeling stressed. Fifty-eight percent described their mental health as “not good,” a jump of 24 points from 34% in an AFT/BAT 2015 survey. (See bit.ly/aftbat2017.)

Educators cite a variety of possible causes for their symptoms: student behavior or lack of student success, lack of support from parents or administrators, lack of time to prepare lessons or grade student work, little to no budget to buy necessary supplies, and more.

Most teachers and other school staff are so concerned with the success of their students, they often forget to take care of themselves. Not taking proper care of your mind and body can have effects harmful both in and out of the classroom. Below are some activities that any teacher—or anyone who works in a school—can use to practice self-care on a daily, weekly, or even monthly basis.

ACTIVITIES THAT TAKE AN HOUR OR LESS

- Take a walk around your neighborhood
- Reorganize a closet, cabinet, or shelf
- Write in a journal
- Practice your favorite hobby—painting, reading, singing, cooking, etc.
- Take a bubble bath

ACTIVITIES ON A BUDGET:

- Call a friend or family member to catch up
- Go to a public library
- Watch your favorite movie or television show
- Listen to your favorite music or podcast
- Go to a park

Activities that can be practiced anywhere at (almost) any time

If you do not have much free time, whether you work another job, have children, or find that you have little time to yourself throughout the day,

here is a list of activities for you.

- Take deep, slow breaths
- Smile or laugh (you’d be surprised just how good you can feel smiling for no reason)
- Drink water.
- Take a moment to admire your surroundings.
- Stretch.

ACTIVITIES THAT SHOULD BE PRACTICED EVERY DAY

Here’s a list of activities that everyone should practice every day to take good care of their bodies.

- Get a full, good night’s sleep.
- Eat healthy, nutritious meals and snacks.
- Drink water. (This bears repeating.)
- Find three good things that happen each day.
- Find time to just breathe and let yourself feel whatever you feel, then remember that you have the greatest job in the world!

ACTIVITIES THAT COME FROM EXPERIENCED TEACHERS

Borrowed from conversations with teachers on social media.

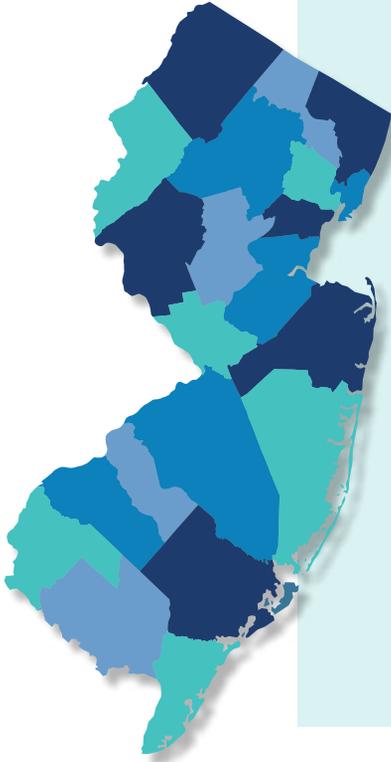
- Exercise.
- Indulge in your favorite meal or snack.
- Leave work at work—even when you’re working from your kitchen table—and enjoy your time away from that work.
- Forgive yourself if you do not achieve everything you wanted to achieve in one day.
- Have a fulfilling life outside of your career.

Although teaching is one of the hardest jobs, it is the most rewarding. Watching your students grow academically and emotionally is a feeling like no other, but it can take a toll. Remember that it is important to take care of you. Remember that you are doing your best in your situation. Remember that you are the safe space for many of your students. Remember that you are changing the world, one student at a time.

Lastly, remember that you cannot pour from an empty cup. For your students to be successful, you must feel confident that you can make them successful. To create a safe and healthy environment for them, we must create a safe and healthy environment for ourselves. Most importantly, remember: self-care is not selfish.

To read more about the self-care activities that inspired this article, visit weareteachers.com/classroom-self-care. 📖

SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY



NGSS SUMMER INSTITUTES FOR GRADES K-12

July 20-24 at RVC College (Branchburg)

Aug. 3-7 at Delran HS (Delran)

As we begin our fourth year of implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), many educators are ready to deepen their understanding of several foundational aspects of the NGSS:

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

The weeklong Institute is held twice: on July 20-24 at Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg and on Aug. 3-7 at Delran High School in Delran.

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

The Institute is led by Dr. Wil van der Veen, a nationally recognized expert on the NGSS and science education. Participants will work in small groups that are facilitated by experienced classroom teachers from our NGSS Teacher Leader Program.

The fee is \$300 for the Institute in July at RVCC College and \$350 for the Institute in August at Delran High School.

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

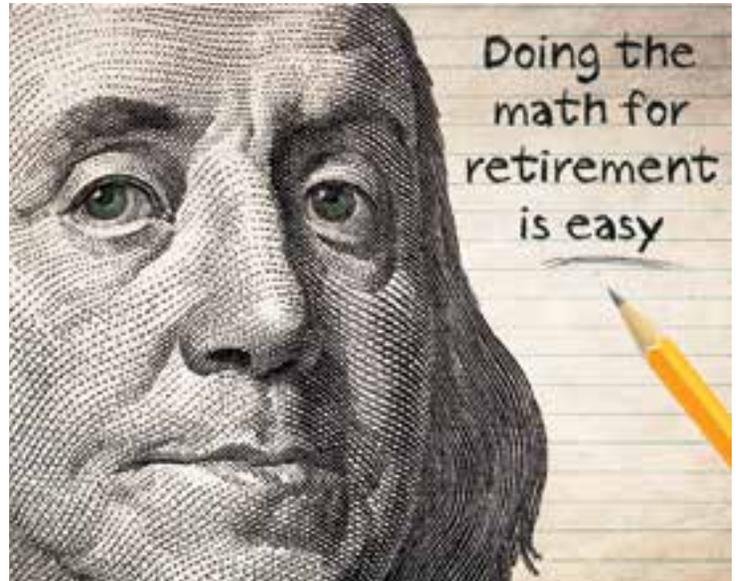
To develop a long-term NGSS professional development plan for your district, contact Dr. Wil van der Veen at wil.vanderveen@raritanval.edu.

To confirm that these programs are still scheduled to occur, contact Tina Ganda Rillas.

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Current NJREA annual members received their 2020-21 membership renewal forms last month. Retirees are urged to complete the renewal form and enclose a check for dues no later than Aug. 1 to ensure the benefits of NJREA membership continue uninterrupted. Remember: Your annual dues payment covers membership in NJREA, NJEA, NEA-R and your county retired education association (CREA). Frequently, mailings announcing September CREA and NJREA events are mailed during the last week of August. Please renew so you don't miss any vital information.

NJREA members also may pay their dues online at njea.org by selecting the automatic renewal option. Those who avail themselves of this

opportunity will be informed in advance of the dues rate for the membership year and will be charged automatically to avoid a lapse in their membership. Go green and consider automatic renewal today.

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP FOR RETIREES AVAILABLE

The NJREA membership renewal form also lists dues for those who want to become lifetime members. If you are a recent retiree, consider lifetime membership and avoid the annual renewal process and any future dues increase. Lifetime membership for retired members may be paid in a lump sum or in five installments. Interested retirees may contact the NJEA Membership division at 609-599-4564, ext. 4123, to set up a payment schedule.

PRE-RETIREMENT LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP FOR ACTIVES

Current active professional and support staff who intend to retire soon should also consider joining NJREA as a pre-retired lifetime member.

Lifetime dues would be calculated at the 2020-21 rate and then paid in ten installments, beginning in September. Interested in this option? Contact the NJEA Membership Division at the number listed above to get started.

MEMBERSHIP MAILINGS

The September issues of the *NJREA Newsletter* and the *NJEA Review* will be bundled together and mailed in early September to NJREA members who have renewed their membership by the Aug. 1 deadline. Membership cards will be mailed shortly thereafter.

Be certain your membership profile is up to date to receive important emails about issues that affect you.

Any current or future retiree with questions regarding membership may email njrea@njea.org.

Around the counties

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

CANCELLED EVENTS

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the following county REA (CREA) events have been cancelled:

- Atlantic County REA—May 5 meeting/luncheon
- Burlington County REA—May 14 meeting/luncheon
- Camden County REA—May 7 meeting/luncheon
- Essex County REA—May 20 meeting/luncheon
- Gloucester County REA—May 12 meeting/luncheon
- Mercer County REA—May 14 meeting/luncheon
- Middlesex County REA—June 4
- Monmouth County REA—June 9 60th Anniversary Jubilee
- Morris County REA—May 13 meeting/luncheon
- Ocean County REA—May 14 meeting/luncheon
- Salem County REA—May 18 meeting/luncheon

EVENTS STILL SCHEDULED

The following CREA events remained scheduled at the time of this publication:

The **CAPE MAY REA'S** next business meeting/luncheon will be held on Wednesday, May 20 at the Sunset Lounge in the Cape May-Lewes Ferry Terminal in North Cape May. The cost is \$25. To attend, call Sharon Popper at 609-602-0046.

Join **CUMBERLAND COUNTY REA** for its spring meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, May 13 at the Greenview Inn at Eastlyn Golf Course in Vineland. The cost is \$30. To attend, call Irene Savicky at 856-863-8424.

WARREN COUNTY REA will hold its next meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, June 3 at the Hawk Pointe Country Club in Washington. The cost is \$30. For more information, visit wcrea-njea.org. To attend, call Vicki Rhinehart at 908-319-1995.

Panasonic Student Eco Citizenship Project



Congratulations Student Eco Citizens!

During the 2019-2020 school year over 100 New Jersey schools took action and became active participants creating a sustainable global environment and society.

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Cicely Tyson Community School
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Compass Academy Charter School
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Cresskill Middle School
Davis Family School
DCF Regional School- Ocean Campus
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Dennis Township Middle School
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Dr. Henry H. Davis Family School
Dr. Martin Luther King
Dr. William H. Horton
Eleanor Van Gelder School
Ella G. Clarke School
Evergreen Elementary School
Ezra Nolan MS #40
First Avenue Elementary
Florence Avenue School

Frank R. Conwell MS # 4
Franklin Park School
Franklin Township Middle School
@ Hamilton Street Campus
Franklin Township School
Franklin School
George White Middle School
Glen Landing Middle School
Glenview Avenue School
Gloucester City Middle School
Good Intent Elementary
Green Brook Middle School
Grove Street School
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Hatikvah International Academy
Charter School
Hillcrest Elementary School
Hoboken Charter School
Indian Hill School
James W. Lilley School
Jersey City Global Charter School
Jefferson Elementary School
JIT Center for Pre-college Programs
Joseph H. Brensinger PS 17
Knowlton Township Elementary School
Lamberts Mill Academy
Long Branch Middle School
LEAP Academy Charter School
Lincoln Middle School

Lindeneau Elementary
Long Branch Middle School
Maple Place Middle School
Martin Luther King Elementary
Maurice River Township School
Memorial Junior School
Memorial Middle School
Menlo Park Elementary School
Nicolaus Copernicus School
NuView Academy
Oak Street School
Ocean Township Intermediate School
Olson Middle School
Pace Charter School of Hamilton
Passaic Arts and Science Charter
School
Paterson Charter School for Science
and Technology
Pennsauken Intermediate School
Pennsylvania Avenue School
Pine Hill Middle School
Princeton Charter School
PS #7
PS #21
PS #24
PS #34
Quitman Street School
Ridge and Valley Charter School
Robert Waters School

Rohrer Middle School
Roosevelt Elementary School
Samsel Upper Elementary
Sherman Elementary
Steinert High School
Stonybrook School
Sussex County Charter School for Tech
Teaneck Community Charter School
The CEA School
The Learning Community
Charter School
The Queen City Academy
Charter School
Thomas Edison EnergySmart
Charter School
Thomas Wallace Middle School
Ocean Township Intermediate School
University Avenue Middle School
Vineland Public Charter School
Walter O. Krumiegel Middle School
Warren Middle School
Washington Community School
Waterford Elementary School
Wildwood Elementary School
Williamstown Middle School
Wood-Ridge Intermediate School
Woodrow Wilson Community School

The Foundation for Impact on Literacy and Learning would also like to thank Panasonic for their support of this project.
To learn more about the Panasonic Student Eco Citizenship Project visit: ecocitizenship.org

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LEARNING ADVOCACY CONTINUES IN THE 'NEW NORMAL'

BY ELISABETH YUCIS

On a typical pre-COVID day in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues (PDII) Division, the office buzzed with the sounds of collaboration. Phones rang, copiers chugged along, Outlook notifications chimed, dry erase markers squeaked, and warm greetings were exchanged. Until March 13, our offices on the third floor of NJEA headquarters in Trenton were a place of teamwork and laughter.

Now teamwork has morphed into “quarantesting” over the past few weeks. You might be wondering how the PDII Division has responded to the COVID-19 crisis. Here’s a peek at how our work has shifted, thanks to a bit of creativity and some fearless leadership.

School building closures have brought new opportunities for engagement as we continue providing meaningful professional development for members. With the support of our associate staff and our many talented PD consultants and Digital Boulevard partners, we offer a full calendar of virtual events to keep all our members learning, including our educational support professional (ESP) members.

PARTNERSHIPS

One notable new partnership with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) and WNET/NJTV is “New Jersey Learning Live.” This daily weekday show, airing from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., brings televised enrichment lessons into children’s homes. The lessons are taught by New Jersey public school teachers, and the program is hosted by New Jersey Teacher of the Year Kimberly Dickstein Hughes.

ADVOCACY

Along with supporting our members as they transition to a remote learning environment, we have also strengthened partnerships with UniServ reps and consultants as they advocate for members and local associations in this unprecedented work environment. PDII Division staff work with teams

in the Northeast, Northwest, Central and South zones to ensure continued member advocacy. Our associate staff, at HQ and in regional offices, has seamlessly handled all the logistics of planning and communication.

The thread of member advocacy reaches all the way to the NJDOE, with whom we have been communicating about the COVID-19 crisis since early March. Our thorough and nuanced understanding of how policy impacts the daily work of members and their students has benefited us in advocating for the successful cancellation of statewide assessment—including the graduation portfolio—and in recommending actions that the commissioner can take that will benefit members and students, including those in special education classrooms.

PRIORITY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

Equity is a major focal point that permeates our work, and our Priority Schools Initiative (PSI) embodies this value. In the current crisis, the work of our PSI consultants has expanded: from conducting wellness check-ins to facilitating grade-level meetings, the PSI team ensures that these students and teachers are given the supports they need.

TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACHES

Educators across the state understand the significant need to continue advocating for a trauma-informed approach to all the work that we do. We’ve made sure to keep our website updated with important mental health resources for members. Likewise, social justice and anti-racism are embedded throughout our continued service. We are working to build on our existing partnerships to share anti-racist, equity-informed education resources.

TEACHER LEADER ACADEMY

A global pandemic can’t stop Teacher Leader Academy, in its inaugural year, from remaining

fully operational. This program has been reworked for a virtual learning environment, including conducting performance assessments via WebEx. The consultants and candidates participating in TLA can’t wait to be together again.

“

School building closures have brought new opportunities for engagement as we continue providing meaningful professional development for members.

RISE AND THE NJEA CONVENTION

Similarly, our flagship events won’t be stopped. Although our spring events have been cancelled altogether, planning for the inaugural RISE conference this summer and the NJEA Convention this fall is proceeding, with the added task of creating parallel plans if it becomes necessary for these events to take place virtually. This includes providing presenters with resources they would need to adapt their sessions to a virtual format. Our associate staff has risen to the occasion in doing double duty with creating detailed backup plans and ensuring that all details are covered.

When I joined the PDII Division in early February, I had no way of knowing that in five short weeks, I’d be saying goodbye to my Trenton commute and beginning a new phase of NJEA’s work. Nevertheless, we persist in this “new normal” and we look forward to the day when we can be together again. 🍷

Elisabeth Yucis is an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division



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RESOURCES AND SERVICES

Many of our benefit partners are offering special assistance to members in need who may have been recently affected by changes in household income. Please contact us for help connecting with these and other partners.

NJEA Member Benefits
(609) 599-4561, ext. 2222

NEA Member Benefits**
NEA Member Advocacy Center
1-800-637-4636
(Mon-Fri: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. ET, Sat: 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. ET)

FINANCIAL SERVICES

NJEA Income Protection Program**
Administered by Educators Insurance Services and Prudential, this is the only NJEA-sponsored program for disability insurance. If you have questions or concerns about your current coverage, call 800-727-3414.

NEA Student Loan Forgiveness Navigator Powered by Savi
Have you seen a disruption to your income because of the COVID-19 crisis? You may be eligible for reduced student loan payments. NEA Member Benefits and Savi have a free tool to help you file the paperwork.

NEA Credit Card Program – Bank of America
As an NEA cardholder, you can reach Bank of America for assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week via the toll-free number on the back of your credit card (800-854-7338) or on your monthly account statement.

First National Bank of Omaha Home Loan Program
If you've been directly impacted by the COVID-19 situation, please call us at 1-855-682-9377. As always, your financial wellness is important to us and we may have financial relief options that can help or may be able to connect you to local services that can help you with other basic needs.

NEA Personal Loan – First National Bank of Omaha
If you've been directly impacted by the COVID-19 situation, please call us at 1-855-682-9377. As always, your financial wellness is important to us and we may have financial relief options that can help or may be able to connect you to local services that can help you with other basic needs.

NEA Student Loan Programs (Undergraduate, Graduate & Parent) – College Ave.
Any borrower who contacts us and has been financially impacted by the virus will be granted a temporary repayment forbearance on their loan for up to 90 days. This is in accordance with our Natural Disaster Policy. As this is an unprecedented situation and rapidly evolving landscape, we will continue to monitor impacts to our customers and adjust as appropriate.

NEA Savings Program – Discover Bank
As an NEA member, you can reach Discover Bank for assistance 24 hours a day, seven days a week toll-free at 1-800-347-7032.

INVESTMENTS

NEA Retirement Program – Security Benefit
Please call 1-800-632-8258. Information on accessing your retirement account(s) to help pay for emergency expenses is also available at neamb.com.

INSURANCE

NEA Life Insurance Programs – NEA Members Insurance Trust (MIT)
MIT recognizes that participating members may have trouble paying premiums on time during this pandemic. MIT is willing to provide extensions, upon request. If a participating member expresses difficulty with paying premiums due to COVID-19, there is a premium grace period available for up to 90 days. If you have any questions about the grace period, call 1-800-637-4636.

The NEA Members Insurance Trust is waiving premiums for all participating members who have been laid off as long as written documentation is provided. Participating members will also have the option to reduce their coverage to lower their premiums. Coverage can be increased back to the original amount without going through the underwriting process again as long as it is done within two years of the reduction of coverage. If you have any questions about the waiver, contact MIT through neamb.com/contact-us. A Member Advocacy Center representative will assist you.

NEA Auto & Home Insurance Program – California Casualty
If a member is laid off, a skip payment option is available. Members who have been laid off should indicate this to the customer service representative to be transferred to a team manager who may be able to assist with other options. Members in need of assistance should call 1-800-877-7345.

NEA Pet Insurance Program – Pets Best
Pets Best is regulated by each State Department of Insurance, which includes following emergency notices for premium payments and cancellations. If members have questions, or need additional assistance with policies, they can contact Pets Best at petsbest.com/forms/customer-care

TRAVEL AND DISCOUNT PROGRAMS

NEA Office Depot / OfficeMax Discount Program
Save up to 75% on thousands of items including supplies to help you work remotely. neamb.com.

NEA Vacations
For questions about existing reservations, please call 866-524-2807.

*Member Discount Program and Access:
Products and services listed in the NJEA Member Discount Program and Access are provided as a service to NJEA members and do not constitute an endorsement by NJEA or a representation regarding the products' quality or characteristics. NJEA makes no warranties expressed or implied, including the warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose regarding any products or services listed in the NJEA Member Discount Program and Access.

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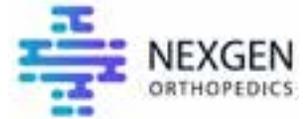


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GRADING WITH *empathy, grace and understanding*

Of the thousands of memes circulating on social media attempting to find humor in these difficult times, there is one that shows a principal standing outside a teacher's home by a sliding glass door with a clipboard. He's holding a sign that reads, "I'm here for your observation."

It's an easy laugh because we know it's absurd to judge an educator's performance by how they're faring under a sudden shift to remote instruction. It's not much of a leap to conclude that it would be equally absurd to measure student progress through traditional grading practices.

There is no question that teaching under COVID-19 is not equivalent to the level of education provided—and the impact achieved—by New Jersey's public schools at any other time. Without traditional in-person attendance in schools, traditional grading policies will not be a true gauge of student progress. They will more likely be a reflection of a family's income and resources. Grades have a real-world impact, and how well a family can cope during a pandemic should not become an obstacle to opportunities.

We must be mindful of equity and potential unintended consequences when considering grading policies and practices as we make our way through this uncharted territory. Issues may include, but are certainly not limited to:

- Students lack traditional access to their teachers and educational support professionals.
- Students lack equal access to devices and reliable internet connections.
- Students may lack access to a quiet and supportive environment.
- Students may not enjoy high levels of support and encouragement from adults in the home, who themselves are under considerable stress.
- Districts and schools have implemented a range of remote learning plans, ranging from virtual learning to paper-based packets. Disparities exist within schools and across districts.

- Special education, 504, and English language learner accommodations and modifications in a virtual/remote environment cannot possibly replicate the full range of accommodations and modifications available and accessible in a face-to-face environment.

At njea.org/covid is a section titled "NJEA Professional Development Guidance," where you'll find "Grading Policies and Practices under COVID-19." Below are several proposals from the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division (NJEA PDII) that you'll find there. Ultimately, state regulations empower boards of education to approve grading policies, but teachers, administrators and school boards should consider adopting some of these practices as they look for creative solutions to the evaluation of student progress.

ELIMINATE HARD DEADLINES

The goal should be for students to complete the work to the best of their ability. Rather than penalize students for missing deadlines, remove deadlines and encourage students to submit assignments as they are able.

EVALUATE ASSIGNMENTS AS COMPLETE, IN PROGRESS OR INCOMPLETE

As a replacement for letter or numerical grades on individual assignments, indicate whether assignments have been completed, attempted or not attempted by students. Provide ongoing feedback to students on individual assignments that move them in the right direction on the continuum toward completion of the best work they can do under the circumstances.

FREEZE GRADES OR ADJUST THE MARKING PERIOD

Schools could "freeze" the grades from the marking period, or at the point of school building closure, as a minimum final grade for the remaining marking period. Schools and districts could adjust the marking period

calendar to have ended on the school building closure date, with the subsequent final marking period encompassing the entirety of the school building closure. (Note that at press time, April 15, the governor had not yet announced whether school buildings would reopen in this academic year.)

ADOPT PASS/FAIL GRADES

Students complete assignments according to the district's remote learning plan. If students complete the assignments appropriately, meeting the basic level of minimum expectations, they pass the course. GPA calculations should not be altered by pass/fail courses.

FLEXIBLE PRACTICES

Despite the way grading policies and practices are implemented, students should be able to make an appeal for a pass/fail evaluation, grade modifications, and/or dropping a GPA calculation if performance is inconsistent with the individual's academic history or if a letter grade is requested by the student and their guardian.

Students across our state are experiencing varying degrees of trauma related to the COVID-19 pandemic as many did in the wake of Superstorm Sandy in 2012. Research on the impact of natural disasters indicates that students may experience higher levels of trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder that will greatly influence their performance. You will also find among the resources provided by the NJEA PDII Division for grading, citations to that research.

It's not business as usual, and it would be unethical to maintain traditional policies and practices as if it is. Instead of focusing on strict accountability for our students, we must refocus our energies toward empathy, grace and understanding. 🏠



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