

REVIEW



an education and advocacy resource



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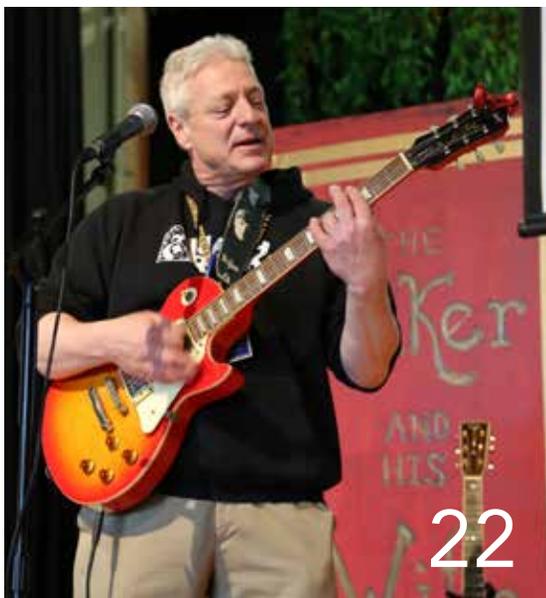
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WE ARE NJEA

In memory of
those we have
lost and in
honor of their
legacies.



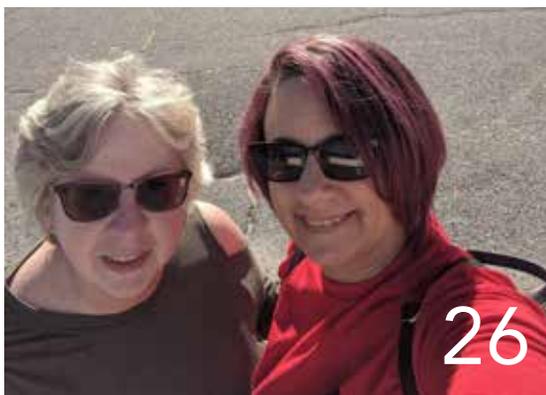
FEATURES



22 | MATH ROCKS!

When Gary Hank moved from teaching seventh grade to sixth grade math, he ended up across the hall from his lifelong friend Anne Bercaw, and the 2 + 1 Math Rocks! band was born. Since then they have racked up more than 50 songs and recorded four albums with catchy tunes that teach math.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



26 | WE FLIPPED OUR SCHOOL BOARD

You know the feeling: Something just has to be done about our school system! A school board member's primary responsibility is to see that the school district is well run. They are there to serve the best interests of students and the community. When board members forget this, the association can play a role in supporting candidates to replace them.

BY SUSAN SWEZENY



30 | THE PHOENIX RISING

Early last month, the Clinton Township Education Association ratified a long-awaited contract, marking the end of working seven of the last nine years under an expired agreement. While simply breaking the cycle of protracted bargaining fatigue alone is cause for celebration, it was even more special for CTEA. The ratification also marked the end of a long, hard road of internal and external organizing to get them to this point.

BY CHRISTY KANABY



34 | TENURE VICTORY

After a three-year legal battle, and with representation from an attorney provided by NJEA, high school guidance counselors Venus Rose, Nicole Cartwright and Luis Sanchez were reinstated to their tenured positions in the Englewood Public School District. Their ultimate victory, and total exoneration, underline the value of NJEA membership.

BY SHELDON H. PINCUS, ESQ.



38 | PRIDE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Local and county associations throughout the state repurposed their Pride grants to serve their communities, feed and protect those on the front lines of the pandemic, partner with community- and faith-based charities, and support local businesses in the process.

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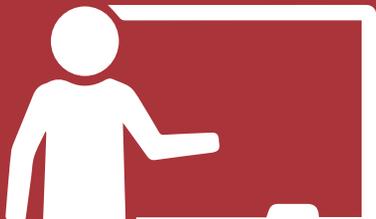
FINAL EXAM 58
Health care and job justice



1/2

The number of people completing teacher preparation programs in New Jersey has dropped by nearly half over the past decade, according to a new report from New Jersey Policy Perspective.

Source: Weber, Mark. New Jersey's Shrinking Pool of Teacher Candidates. New Jersey Policy Perspective, njpp.org/reports/new-jerseys-shrinking-pool-of-teacher-candidates.



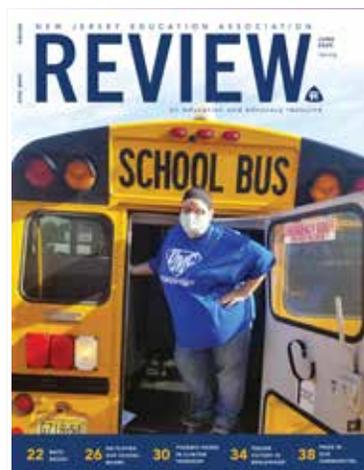

GOOD NEWS

New Jersey is one of the top two states in the nation in public high school graduation rates.



Source: DePaoli, J.L., Balfanz, R., Bridgeland, J., Atwell, M., and Bridgeland, J. Building a Grad Nation: Progress and Challenge in Raising High School Graduation Rates. Annual Update 2018.

On the Cover



Bus attendant April Jones of the Delsea Regional Transportation Association helps load a bus with food for students. Five local associations that are part of the Delsea Regional School District in Gloucester County worked together to deliver care packages to 380 families in need within the districts. They were not alone as thousands of members in local associations across the state did all they could to support their communities.

PHOTO BY SHIRLEY SWANSON

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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*.



A YEAR LIKE NO OTHER

Every year has its unique memories and challenges, but I don't think anyone will ever forget the 2019-20 school year, particularly the last three months of it.

Our communities have been hit hard by the pandemic; there is almost no family in the state who has not been touched by illness, death or economic hardship. At the same time, we are working to educate and feed students while balancing the needs of our own families and friends. And for those fortunate enough to have escaped the worst consequences of the pandemic, there is relief and a desire to help those who have not been so fortunate.

As educators, we are leaders in our communities. We are held to very high standards, and we hold ourselves to high standards—we would have it no other way.

And now more than ever, our leadership is needed. Even as some things return to some version of normal, things are not normal and may not be for some time.

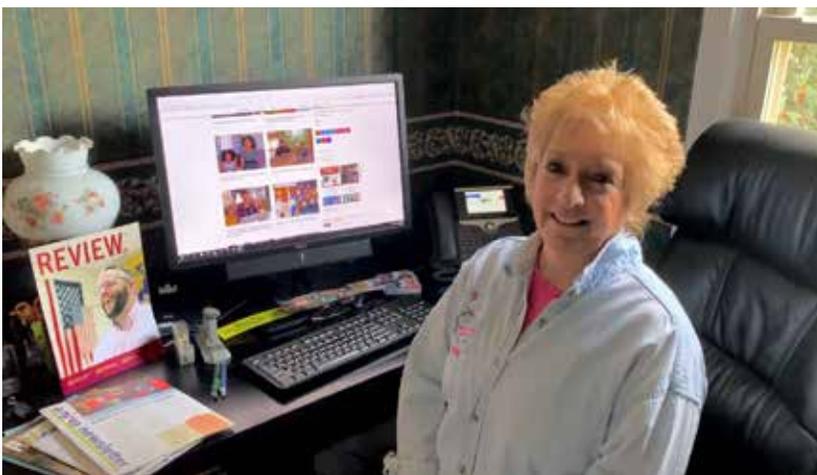
We have to lead with love in our communities. We must show compassion for those who continue to struggle and suffer. We must be gentle with those who are mourning and healing. We must be understanding but focused on facts with those who deny the extent of the pandemic. Perhaps this last task will be the hardest, but as educators it most certainly falls within our purview.

I have said time and time again how proud I am of our members. The NJEA family has stepped up to help their students and their communities in ways that go well beyond the call of duty, and they have answered the call for compassion, love and leadership.

Thank you for the strength, courage, humor and dedication you have shown over this school year. I hope that you have an opportunity to rest and rejuvenate over the summer, and I look forward to working side by side with you to plan and prepare for a new school year.

In unity,

Marie Blistan



NJEA President Marie Blistan working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic.

OFFICERS ONLINE

MARIE BLISTAN

Facebook

@Marie.Blistan: This is the time for all US Senators to show their commitment to our children and public education with passing this bill NOW!

On May 17, NJEA President Marie Blistan shared a link to educatingthroughcrisis.org/take-action, where supporters of public education can take action on relief legislation related to COVID-19, such as the HEROES Act. The bill passed the House of Representatives on May 15. The Senate had yet to act on the bill. The website also offers support to educators for their own wellness needs and the needs of students and parents.

SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

@SpillerForNJEA: A big thank you to all of the wonderful educators out there. Keep it up and stay well!

NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller posted a video message to members encouraging them in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. "It is no surprise that the educators who brought us the very best schools in the nation are now bringing us the very best home instruction in the nation," Spiller said. He also pointed members to resources for both education and self-care that can be found at njeatogether.org.

STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: Great work from the members of the Bridgewater-Raritan Education Association!

On May 11, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty shared a link to an article on tapinto.net, a local online news website, about BREA members providing lunch for those staffing the COVID-19 testing site at Raritan Valley Community College. According to the article, "members were able to drop off the food and sodas, made at a discounted cost by Joe's Meat Market, of South Bound Brook, and then drove through the area waving to the brave people while beeping their horns." Beatty is on leave from his position as a social studies teacher at Bridgewater-Raritan High School.

KNOW. LEAD. ACT.



RADICAL IMAGINATION SUMMIT FOR EDUCATORS

A virtual event on July 16

This July, we were planning to launch the new NJEA Radical Imagination Summit for Educators (RISE) combining our Techstock Conference and Summer Professional Learning Institute. This gathering would have invited members from across the state to engage in conversation, sharpen their tech skills, and co-create a vision for the next decade in New Jersey public education. Because of the COVID-19 crisis, our in-person summit must be postponed. However, we extend this special invitation to join us virtually for #StillWeRISE on July 16, 2020.

We are asking participants to first unplug and reflect as you tend to your self-care on the morning of our virtual summit. At noon, you will join our WebEx welcome room to vibe together to our RISE playlist, before the program begins with opening remarks and our special keynote speaker.

Dr. Bettina L. Love is an award-winning author and associate professor of Educational Theory and Practice at the University of Georgia. Dr. Love is one of the field's most esteemed educational researchers in the area of hip-hop education. Her research focuses on the ways in which urban youth negotiate hip-hop music and culture to form social, cultural and political identities to create new and sustaining ways of thinking about urban education and intersectional social justice. Her work is also concerned with how teachers and schools working with parents and communities can build communal, civically engaged schools rooted in intersectional social justice for the goal of equitable classrooms.

We hope to create a radically restorative experience in the wake of this global pandemic that creates space for healing through reflection, learning through listening, and elevation through imagination. If you would like to join us on this collective journey, then please follow these steps below:

Step 1: Register for free – njea.org/event/riase

Step 2: Digital Detox in Solidarity and Health on July 16, 2020

- Temporarily replace your profile picture on social media platforms with the RISE logo.
- Add hashtags #StillWeRISE #DigitalDetox #NJEASStillLearns #RadicalImagination.
- Disconnect from all screen-based devices from midnight to noon.

Step 3: Free Write – Reflection, Healing and Imagination

- The morning of July 16 prepare your favorite breakfast and write a reflection.
- Prompt: What were your greatest challenges of this past school year?
- Prompt: What are your greatest hopes for the year(s) to come?

Step 4: Join the virtual summit – Learning by Listening

- Noon - 12:45 p.m. – Welcome WebEx
 - Connect your speakers and listen to our RISE playlist together.
 - Feel free to prepare your lunch as you enjoy the music.
 - Screen time is optional. Audio is recommended.
- 12:45 - 1 p.m. – Welcome Remarks
 - 1 - 1:45 p.m. – Keynote: Dr. Bettina Love
 - 1:45 - 2 p.m. – Special Q & A

Step 5: Enjoy the bonus material

- Exclusive release of the Freestyle Friday series (Season 1)
- Check out this free content from our webinar initiative at learning.njea.org.
- Members who mail in their written reflections will receive a copy of Dr. Love's latest book, *We Want to Do More Than Survive: Abolitionist Teaching and the Pursuit of Educational Freedom*.

STATE OFFICER PETITIONS AVAILABLE

Elections for NJEA state officer positions (president, vice president, and secretary-treasurer) will be held during the upcoming school year for the 2021-23 term.

All nominations for these positions may be made only by petition on forms prescribed by the NJEA Elections Committee.

Petitions for state officers must contain at least 300 signatures of NJEA active members (including active professional and ESP, as well as life members and retired members who are eligible to vote) with at least 10 such signatures from each of 11 counties. Persons who are retired are considered to be from the county in which they last held employment prior to retirement. No more than one nomination may be proposed on any one petition.

Below are the anticipated deadlines and procedures for acquiring and returning petitions. **Please note that the dates and procedures are subject to change because of the current global pandemic. Changes, if any, will be posted at njea.org/NJEAelections.**

Petitions will be available on **Sept. 1, 2020**. They may be obtained from NJEA Headquarters in Trenton, or from a county or unit representative on the NJEA Elections Committee.

All signed petitions must reach NJEA Headquarters at 180 W. State St., Trenton, or an NJEA-NEA UniServ office no later than 5 p.m. on **Oct. 15, 2020**.

These procedures and the deadlines are for state officer positions only and do not affect nominations for other NJEA positions.

Balloting for contested positions will take place in the regular 2021 NJEA spring elections.

SAVE THE DATES

- NJEA Health and Safety Conference: Oct. 2-3, 2020
East Brunswick Hilton
- NJEA LGBTQ+ Conference: Oct. 16-17, 2020
Doubletree Somerset

Note that, as with all conferences during this period of social distancing, conference dates are subject to change.

NOMINATE A LOCAL ASSOCIATION FOR BARGAINING EXCELLENCE

A local association that has demonstrated excellence in collective bargaining will be honored at the summit with the 2020 Jim George Collective Bargaining Award. Those nominated will also be recognized. Typically, the award is presented at the annual NJEA Jim George Collective Bargaining Summit. Details on the venue for the awards presentation are yet to be determined in light of social distancing restrictions.

Criteria

A local qualifies for nomination by meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- Bargained one or more new contractual provisions not already found in another affiliate's contract.
- Conducted an extraordinary community-organizing effort that resulted in a settled agreement.
- Used the bargaining process to propel new members into association involvement and leadership positions.
- Achieved a particularly good settlement, in comparison to state averages, in salary increases, benefits, professional development, and/or member protection and follows best practices for salary guides.

Nomination

Local associations can be nominated by any NJEA member or NJEA staff member.

To nominate a local, visit njea.org/cbaward.

To be considered for the 2020 Jim George Collective Bargaining Award, settlements must be ratified by both parties between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2020.

Nominations are due Sept. 11, 2020.

NJEA LAUNCHES PODCAST "MEMBER VOICES"

Looking for a new listening option that will inform, inspire and encourage you in your work? NJEA just launched a new podcast called "Member Voices." It's hosted by NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller and Jeff Bradbury of TeacherCast, and features conversations with NJEA members from across the state.

The program will showcase some of the amazing things members are doing in our schools and community college campuses from all around the state. You will also hear from special guests from the world of education and get information you need to help you advocate for your students and your colleagues.

Find our podcast on njea.org/podcast or any of your listening platforms, such as the podcast app on Apple platforms, Google Music streaming app, Spotify, and other digital platforms. Look for "Member Voices: An NJEA Podcast."

If you have an idea for a story to share, please email our podcast team at podcast@njea.org to submit your story.

NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR AWARDS TO BE CONFERRED AT NJEA EQUITY ALLIANCE WEEKEND

Nominations are now open for four awards that will recognize advocacy and achievement in equity and justice. The awards will be presented at NJEA's Equity Alliance Weekend to be held on Jan. 15-16, 2021.

The weekend will feature training on social justice issues and social justice activism, recognizing the intersection of diverse identities and circumstances among NJEA members and the communities they serve. The event is a collaboration of these NJEA committees: Exceptional Children, Human and Civil Rights, Minority Leadership and Recruitment, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Urban Education, and Women in Education.

Four of NJEA's highest awards will be presented during the NJEA Dr. Martin Luther King Human and Civil Rights Celebration, held at the conclusion of the Equity Alliance Weekend.

- **NJEA Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Human and Civil Rights Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Human and Civil Rights Committee. Nominees may be an individual, group or organization working in the area of civil rights, and if eligible, NJEA members.
- **Judith Owens Spirit Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee. Named for Judith Owens, the first African American president of NJEA, this award honors a member who has been a champion of ethnic minority rights and issues and who has had a significant impact on education and the achievement of equal opportunity for those facing discrimination because of their ethnicity.
- **Equality Champion Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee. This award honors a member who has been a champion of human and civil rights, and who has had a significant impact on education and the achievement of equal opportunity for those facing discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **NJEA Elizabeth A. Allen Women in Education Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Women in Education Committee. Named for NJEA's first female president, the award honors a member or an individual living or working in New Jersey who promotes women's rights and equality for all persons, particularly in education.

Nomination forms and documentation for any of these four awards are due Oct. 30, 2020.

For awards criteria and to make a nomination, go to njea.org/equitynominations.

For more information, contact Colleen Stevens at cstevens@njea.org or 609-599-4561, ext. 2290.

NJEA ELECTION RESULTS

NJEA elections were held in April for the NJEA Executive Committee, NJEA Delegate Assembly, and NEA Representative Assembly, as well as for positions as NJEA Delegate Assembly-Alternates.

Election results are posted at njea.org/NJEAelections.

DELEGATE ASSEMBLY TO CONSIDER BYLAW AMENDMENTS

Proposals boost hours used to determine part-time members, adjust dues calculation based on date a new member joins, and add three committees to NJEA standing committees

At its June 10, 2020, meeting, the NJEA Delegate Assembly (DA), will consider three amendments to the Bylaws of the New Jersey Education Association.

They propose:

- Amending the calculation of first-year dues for new members based on when they join NJEA after Sept. 1;
- Amending the hourly threshold at which members are eligible for part-time membership status from the current less than 20 hours a week to less than 25 hours a week;
- Adding three committees – Educational Support Professionals, Minority Involvement and Recruitment, and Urban Education – to the current list of NJEA standing committees.

As specified in the Bylaws, amendments to NJEA's Bylaws require two votes by the DA. Bylaw 52 states "Amendments to the Bylaws may be proposed by a majority vote of the Executive Committee or by a majority vote of the Delegate Assembly. Amendments so proposed shall be submitted to the Constitution Review Committee for review and recommendation and shall be published in full in the Official Publication of the Association. A three-fourths vote of all the members of the Delegate Assembly shall then be necessary for the adoption of such amendments."

At the DA meeting on May 16, 2020, a majority of DA members voted to propose the three Bylaw amendments. The DA will vote at its meeting on June 10, 2020, whether to adopt these amendments. At least a three-fourths majority of all delegates must vote in favor of any proposed amendment for it to be adopted. If approved, these amendments will take effect Sept. 1, 2020.

Because of the current statewide executive order banning large gatherings to slow the spread of the virus that causes COVID-19, the meeting will be held virtually.

Directions on how to provide comments to the DA on the proposed amendments and deadlines for such comments can be found at njea.org/da.

PROPOSED CHANGE TO FIRST-YEAR DUES CALCULATION FOR NEW MEMBERS

At its Nov. 7, 2019, meeting, the DA sent to the Constitution Review Committee, upon recommendation of the Membership Committee, a request that a Bylaw amendment be drafted to provide that NJEA dues for new members would begin in the month in which the individual signs the membership application.

New member applications are received throughout the year, but under the current Bylaws individuals eligible for active membership who join later in the year are assessed full dues prorated over the fiscal year from the time they join.

In its November 2019 report to the DA, the NJEA Membership Committee noted that "With member acquisition being of utmost importance to the Association's survival, the committee believes that the imposition of back dues is an unnecessary hurdle to enrolling active members beyond the August-September window. The proposal would enable NJEA to develop more flexible enrollment procedures and parameters as appropriate member-entry and fiscal software applications become available."

The proposed amendment is as follows:

That the following section of Bylaw 1(h) be approved for amendment as follows (*with additions in boldface and underlined; deletions in brackets and struck out*) and renumbered as Bylaw 1-(j).

...[The dues for persons whose initial eligibility in that year for active membership is effective after September 30, or who are returning from unpaid leaves of absence, shall be prorated based on the remaining portion of the fiscal year, commencing with the first month of active membership eligibility, or the first month of return from leave.]

"Bylaw 1...

"(j) Membership start date and dues for individuals joining after Sept. 1 – For individuals joining after Sept. 1, the dues shall be calculated from the first of the month in which the application is signed and shall be based on the proportionate amount owed for the remaining portion of the fiscal year."

If approved, this amendment to the NJEA Bylaws will take effect on Sept. 1, 2020.

MOVE TO EXPAND ELIGIBILITY FOR PART-TIME DUES BASED ON HOURS WORKED

Regarding payment of dues, the current NJEA Bylaws state that:

"The dues for persons eligible for active professional or active supportive membership...that...are to be considered part-time employees and are employed for less than 20 hours per week, shall be one-half of the full dues for their respective active membership category."

At the Nov. 7, 2019, DA meeting, the Membership Committee recommended that the DA request the Constitution Review Committee to draft a Bylaw amendment to modify the hourly weekly workload used to determine whether individuals qualify for the part-time dues threshold from the current "less than 20 hours" to "less than 25 hours."

Prior to the Constitution Review Committee drafting its recommendation, the Membership Committee—aided by NJEA Membership Processing—conducted a survey of local associations regarding:

- the number of district part-time employees;
- a breakdown of how many hours weekly each of those employees works—broken down for under 20 hours and by the full hours falling between 20 and 30 hours;
- whether the individuals fall into the active professional or active supportive member categories.

The survey garnered responses from 53% of locals representing educational support professional (ESP) members and 57% of locals representing active professional members. These responses were then weighted against the membership counts as of April 2019 and extrapolated to estimate how many members would fall into each range statewide and the subsequent fiscal impact on the Association.

The survey revealed that if the weekly hours cutoff for determining part-time dues is raised to under 25 hours, an estimated 5,570 additional members would fall into the part-time dues category and qualify for half of the active professional or active supportive (ESP) dues, depending on their membership category. NJEA budget revenues would be reduced by an estimated \$1.5 million.

While setting a higher threshold was suggested earlier, on May 16 the DA preliminarily approved the Constitution Review Committee's proposed Bylaw amendment to set a 25-hour threshold for the coming year based on the data provided.

At the same time, the Membership Committee is being asked to survey locals with respect to determining how many members who work under 30 hours are receiving health benefits and how many hours they work. Once the information is obtained, the Membership Committee will review the data and has been asked to report back to the DA by late next fall. Subsequently, a decision will be made whether further amendments regarding the threshold for part-time membership should be proposed.

The proposed amendment is as follows:

That approval be given to amending the following section of current Bylaw section 1(h) and renumbering as shown (*with additions in boldface and underlined; deletions in brackets and struck out*):

“Bylaw 1**(i) Thresholds for calculating dues –**

1. Hours worked – The dues for persons **determined** eligible for active professional or active supportive membership, [for whom it is determined,] **who** under [such] standards and procedures [as may be] established by the Executive Committee, [that they] are [to be] considered **to be** part-time employees and **who** are employed for less than **25** [20] hours per week, shall be one-half of the full dues for their respective active membership category.”

If approved, this amendment to the NJEA Bylaws will take effect on Sept. 1, 2020.

ADDITIONS RECOMMENDED TO STANDING COMMITTEES

As part of the Bylaws evaluation, the standing committees currently contained in the Bylaws were reviewed.

The Bylaws are not meant to include all NJEA committees. Instead the standing committees are intended to include committees essential to organizational operations. Other committees may be and are established to place greater focus on specific programs or issues that are important but do not need to be included as standing committees.

As a result of the review, three committees were identified as rising to the level of standing committees. They are the Educational Support Professionals (ESP) Committee, the Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee, and the Urban Education Committee. Each of these committees deals with major organizational goals and functions and are considered significantly important to the Association’s continued organizational strength.

The proposed amendment is as follows:

That the following amendment be approved to add to current Bylaw 29, Standing Committees, the following committees (*additions in boldface and underlined; deletions in brackets and struck out*):

29. Standing Committees –

The Standing Committees shall be:

- Affiliation
- Budget
- Certification, Evaluation, & Tenure
- Constitution Review
- Editorial
- **Educational Support Professionals**
- Government Relations
- Human & Civil Rights
- Instruction
- Leadership
- Membership
- **Minority Leadership and Recruitment**
- Pension Policy
- Professional Development
- Professional Rights & Responsibilities
- Public Relations
- School Finance
- Urban Education
- Working Conditions
- **Urban Education**
- Working Conditions

In addition, the following committees and their charges (*additions in boldface and underlined; deletions in brackets and struck out*) shall be added alphabetically to the list of the standing committees, currently Bylaws 33 to 48, with the Bylaws containing the additions and those that follow being renumbered to reflect the additions:

38. Educational Support Professionals Committee – The Educational Support Professionals Committee shall consist of one member from each unit of representation, with representation from educational support professional and teaching staff members. It shall:

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a. examine and make recommendations on active supportive member needs, services, and programs;

b. recommend activities and programs to organize support staff groups not yet affiliated with NJEA;

c. review efforts to develop inclusive local organizations;

d. gather, review, and report on data related to anti-privatization initiatives;

e. develop and initiate training opportunities for school personnel.

39. [38:] Government Relations Committee...

40. [39:] Human & Civil Rights Committee...

41. [40:] Instruction Committee...

42. [41:] Leadership Committee...

43. [42:] Membership Committee...

44. Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee – The Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee shall consist of at least 11 members. It shall:

a. encourage multi-ethnic members to become active in all levels of association work;

b. recruit multi-ethnic members for Association involvement;

c. identify and recommend ways to attract multi-ethnic members to the school employee professions;

d. develop and initiate training opportunities for school personnel.

45. [43:] Pension Policy Committee...

46. [44:] Professional Development Committee...

47. [45:] Professional Rights and Responsibilities Committee...

48. [46:] Public Relations Committee

49. [47:] School Finance Committee

50. Urban Education Committee – The Urban Education Committee shall consist of at least 11 members. It shall:

a. identify solutions to improve educational equity issues in urban school districts;

b. study pertinent data and members' needs in order to elevate the voices of all of the stakeholders in urban education to build long-term sustainability that impacts systemic issues;

c. study strategies and programs needed to address the barriers that prevent students in urban settings from receiving opportunities suitable for all students to achieve their potential;

d. develop relationships with other entities that support NJEA's goals in urban education;

e. collaborate with other appropriate NJEA committees.

51. [48:] Working Conditions Committee...

If approved, this amendment to the NJEA Bylaws will take effect on Sept. 1, 2020.

Directions on how to provide comments to the DA on the proposed amendments and deadlines for such comments can be found at njea.org/da

COOL STUFF



BEDTIME MATH LAUNCHES ONLINE, HANDS-ON MATH EXPERIENCES

With widespread school closures driving remote learning during the pandemic, Bedtime Math is responding to teachers nationwide with Fun Factor, a suite of free online math experiences to support math learning at home. It features engaging hands-on activities that use common household objects and align with math standards for grades 3-5.

Fun Factor features activities drawing on Bedtime Math's popular Crazy 8s after-school club, which has been proven to reduce math anxiety for elementary school-age kids. Teachers of grades 3-5 can either run the activities with their students over video or email them the materials for self-directed learning. Games like the fraction bonanza Face-Off or the graph-plotting Pirate Treasure Hunt use everyday items along with images that can be either printed or drawn so any child can participate. Each activity generates a lasting board game or toy so students can continue the math fun and skill-building.

Join the fun at bedtimemath.org/fun-factor.

To learn more about Bedtime Math, visit bedtimemath.org.

LENAPE EDUCATOR NAMED NJASP SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST OF THE YEAR



Stephanie Frasier, of Lenape Regional High School, has been named the NJASP School Psychologist of the Year. The New Jersey Association of School Psychologists (NJASP) confers the award annually to a practitioner in a public or private school setting.

Frasier is currently an NJASP executive board member and membership chair, a past president of NJASP, and a member of NJASP's research and conference committees. As a member of the research

committee, she has contributed to studies presented at the International Association of School Psychologists (ISPA) and the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

Before becoming a school psychologist, Frasier worked as a mobile therapist, providing wrap-around services to at-risk youth and a behavioral specialist at the Bancroft School in Haddonfield. While working at Bancroft she developed, implemented and oversaw behavior plans and served as a member of the behavior management committee. Frasier's current interests includes assisting students transition from high school to adulthood, writing collaborative reports with the learning disabilities teacher-consultant and partnering with families and outside service providers to better assist the needs of high school students.

You can learn more about NJASP at njasp.org.

BRIDGEWATER-RARITAN EDUCATOR NAMED VFW NATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER OF THE YEAR



Michael Russell, an eighth-grade science teacher at Bridgewater-Raritan Middle School (BRMS), has been selected for the 2020 VFW National Citizenship Education Teacher Award at the middle school level. Russell, sponsored by VFW Post 370 in Highland Park, was chosen for his work creating initiatives designed to educate his students and the school on the importance and sacrifices of America's veterans.

"Dr. Russell has led initiatives in our school that have done an outstanding job of educating our school on the importance and accomplishments of veterans and why we should recognize them at every opportunity," wrote BRMS Assistant Principal Jacqueline Loughridge in a letter to the VFW supporting his nomination.

As a former sergeant with the Army National Guard and volunteer firefighter, Russell finds his military and volunteer service have greatly influenced his teaching methods. From establishing a Veterans History Club, which included veteran discussions, visits to veterans' memorials and supporting the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project, to organizing schoolwide fundraisers to generate donations and supplies for service members, veterans and their families, his dedication and initiatives in the classroom have enabled him to have a positive impact on everyone he meets.

"Every one of these endeavors has helped me to better understand the responsibilities of civic duty, patriotism, and volunteerism, all of which I try to demonstrate and instill in my students each year," Russell wrote.

NJEA Report

Jefferson Java serves coffee and life-skills training



The Jefferson Java team at Jefferson Township High School delivers tasty products and learns important life and work skills in return.

By Ashley Dispenziere, RISE program teacher, Jefferson Township High School

Every Friday morning at 7:15, the hallways of Jefferson Township High (JTHS) school are buzzing with the hustle and bustle of students and staff, anxiously awaiting the weekend. The sea of blue and gold might appear to be like any other high school, but there is a rich smell of coffee separating this Falcon Family from the rest.

Jefferson Java, a student-run coffee shop, serves the students and staff as they enter the building. The brightly colored paper straws, homemade muffins and student-brewed coffee are all trademarks of the coffee shop, but what draws in the customers is the excellent service, which is provided by the high school's multiply disabled program, titled RISE, which stands for Real-World Interdisciplinary Structured Education.

MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL COLLABORATION

Jefferson Java was the result of a collaboration with Alyssa Guagenti a life skills teacher at Jefferson Township Middle School. Guagenti starts students at the middle school with basic customer service expectations, and once students graduate to the high school level, their skills are honed and applied at a larger scale.

As Jefferson Java became a staple of every Falcon's high school experience, we started to expand the opportunities we were providing students. We went from just serving coffee to making muffins. We researched deals at the grocery store, budgeted for our shopping trips, and used social media platforms to advertise. We even began a delivery service, which went well for students learning how to navigate the building independently as they responded to online orders.

As our coffee shop continues to grow, we continue to grow as well. A student is even creating an app for mobile orders from Jefferson Java that

keeps our customer base expanding. The app also keeps staff and students up to date on our hours, and they order from us when they are on the run from one class to another. The interdisciplinary connections our shop has created for students and staff are truly remarkable.

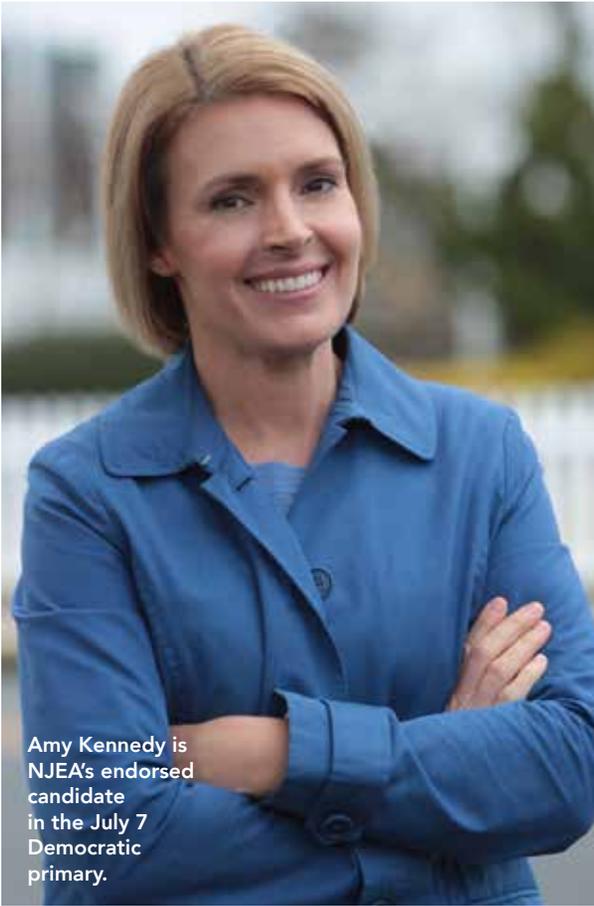
The students in the RISE program at JTHS begin as freshman learning and applying real-world workplace readiness skills through this coffee shop. The students use technology to advertise for their shop, make shopping lists based on inventory, calculate an estimated cost for their weekly grocery-shopping trips, restock inventory, bake the breakfast treats, and prepare the coffee pots all before the usual Friday rush. These key skills of budgeting for shopping trips, taking inventory, restocking inventory, and preparing meals and goods to sell are all skills that later lend themselves to their adult lives once they leave JTHS—a goal of any successful high school program.

While these workplace readiness skills are crucial to their development into productive citizens and community members, the social skills practiced and reinforced through the coffee shop are what makes it such an amazing place to grab a morning pick-me-up. The baristas of Jefferson Java have made lasting friendships through their trade. They walk through the hallways with their navy and gold uniforms on and students who were once customers are now their friends. They wave to each other, say "Hi!" and even make weekend plans with them.

Jefferson Java, home to the strongest coffee on campus, is sure to add a kick to anyone's Friday, and keep the Falcon Family ready to work at the end of a long week. The social and emotional skills learned, practiced, and applied by all involved are the driving force behind the shop's slogan: "Birds of a feather Java together!"

Editor's note: This article was submitted prior to school building closures aimed at slowing the spread of COVID-19. The staff of Jefferson Java look forward to serving java one again when their school building reopens.

Amy Kennedy in her own words



Amy Kennedy is NJEA's endorsed candidate in the July 7 Democratic primary.

Dear NJEA Members,

My name is Amy Kennedy, and I'm running for Congress in New Jersey's second district. I grew up in South Jersey in a family of educators. My mom taught for 36 years in Absecon and my dad taught in Galloway Township public schools, both of them proud NJEA members.

As a little girl, I was inspired by how much my parents loved teaching. I began my own teaching career at Northfield Community School, starting with sixth grade history, and eventually teaching sixth, seventh and eighth grade history, science, and English for over a decade.

I never envisioned running for Congress, but when Jeff Van Drew switched parties, I knew that South Jersey was in need of a leader who would stand up for our communities. As a former public school teacher, mental health advocate and mother of five, I understand so many of the challenges we're facing as a community, and I'm committed to addressing the needs of the people of New Jersey.

Like many of you, I saw how many of my students were overwhelmingly impacted by mental health issues. Whether stemming from adverse childhood experiences and trauma, or from mental health disorders and conditions, it was clear to me that my students were in need of more resources and support.

In Congress, I want to provide mental health and wellness services in schools and in early childhood learning centers. By prioritizing social and emotional learning from the earliest grades, we can help give our children the tools they need to succeed in school and throughout their lives. I also believe that every student should be able to afford a college education or industry-credentialed training program that leads to a high-paying job. I

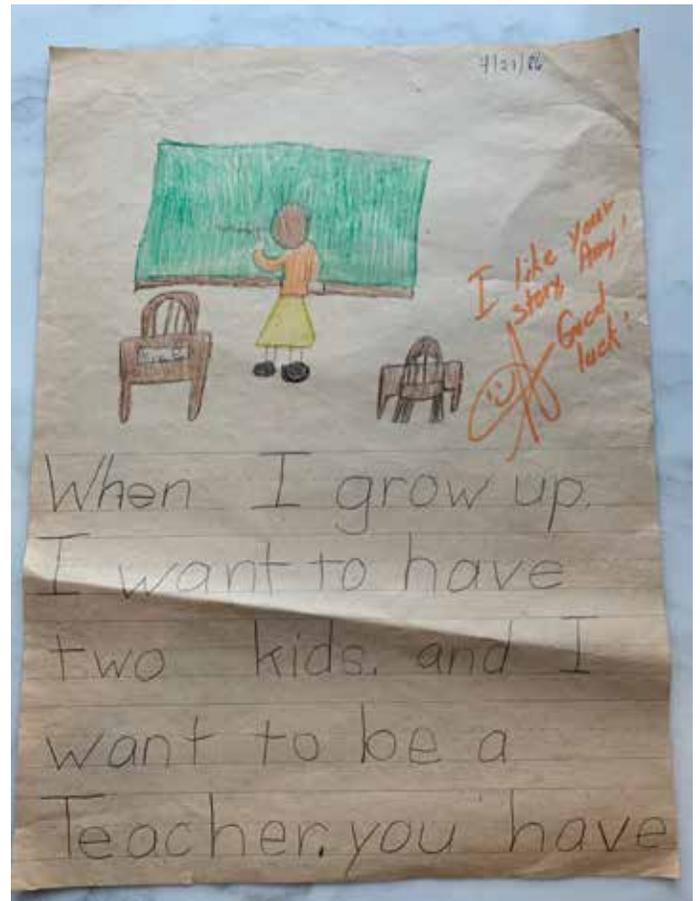
will fight to expand loan forgiveness programs, and to ensure that college and training programs remain a pathway to future success—not a pathway to crushing debt.

I will also make sure the federal government realizes every student's right to a high-quality public education. That work is especially urgent now as we adapt and respond to COVID-19. I will do everything I can to support state and local education budgets as our economy recovers from this crisis, and to ensure that teachers have the resources they need to instruct and inspire. I will also fight to protect teachers' pensions, because America promised you that, if you worked hard, you would have the right to a secure retirement. I will always uphold that promise.

I know NJEA works tirelessly to serve the children of New Jersey, and it is an honor to have your endorsement. Even amidst a global health crisis, you all have risen to the occasion, adapting to online learning and ensuring that our children continue to get the educational support they need.

In Congress, it will be my privilege to stand up for the educators and educational support professionals of South Jersey and honor your work by providing you with the support and resources you need in these challenging times.

Sincerely,
Amy



Since early in her childhood, Amy Kennedy wanted to be a teacher.

NJEA endorses Amy Kennedy in July 7 primary



Martin Luther King III, NJEA-endorsed candidate Amy Kennedy, NJEA President Marie Blistan, former U.S. Rep. Patrick Kennedy, and NJREA member Robert Blistan after a Jan. 28 rally in Wildwood

NJEA's 125-member political action committee (NJEA PAC) voted to endorse Amy Kennedy for Congress in New Jersey's second congressional district (CD-2). That unanimous vote was based on the recommendations of an eight-county screening committee made up of NJEA members in CD-2.

The endorsement of Kennedy by NJEA continues the momentum behind her bid for Congress, building on her endorsement by the Communication Workers of America (CWA), her decisive win at the Atlantic County Democratic Convention, and a public poll showing her as the clear frontrunner in the race with a strong fundraising advantage heading toward the July 7 primary.

Kennedy is a former teacher and NJEA member in Northfield, Atlantic County. She holds a Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education from Pennsylvania State University and a Master of Science in Environmental Education from Nova Southeastern University. Since her teaching career, she has focused on mental health issues and education.

Kennedy pledged to fight for and enhance member salaries, pensions, and health benefits to retain and attract high quality educators in New Jersey's classrooms and ensure equal access to high-quality public education regardless of ZIP code. She has stressed the need to reduce class sizes, improve school infrastructure and make free preschool available to every child in America. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, Kennedy supports federal funding for states to deal with ramifications of the pandemic.

"Our members know an advocate when they see one, and that's what they see in Amy Kennedy," said NJEA President Marie Blistan. "Her commitment both to public schools and to the students and working families who rely on them will serve New Jersey well when she represents us in Congress. I know that Amy will keep the promises made to educators and make sure that at the end of their careers, New Jersey's public school employees can count on retirement benefits we earn during a long career of service. She is the leader that CD-2 needs in these challenging times."

"I am proud of the decision our members made to endorse Amy Kennedy," said NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller. "As an educator herself, she understands the day-to-day challenges faced by NJEA members and she shares our commitment to keeping our public schools strong and successful. She will be an outstanding advocate for students and educators and we look forward to helping her win this election."

"The next Congress is going to have the very challenging task of leading our nation out of a pandemic and rebuilding our economy," said NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty. "Amy Kennedy understands that when you invest in people and communities—and especially in public education—you build the foundation for a fairer and more resilient society."

Kennedy enthusiastically accepted the endorsement of her fellow educators.

"As a former public school teacher, a product of South Jersey public schools and the daughter of educators, I'm honored to have earned the support of my fellow educators and advocates," Kennedy said. "Our educators work every single day for our children and our families. In Congress, it will be my privilege to stand up for the women and men across the country who work on behalf of our children and families."

NJEA/NEA July 7 primary endorsements

Including Amy Kennedy, the following candidates have been endorsed by NEA and NJEA for the July 7 primary:

President

Joe Biden

U.S House of Representatives

CD-1: Donald Norcross

CD-2: Amy Kennedy

CD-3: Andy Kim

CD-5: Josh Gottheimer

CD-6: Frank Pallone

CD-8: Albio Sires

CD-9: Bill Pascrell

CD-10: Donald Payne Jr.

CD-11: Mikie Sherrill

CD-12: Bonnie Watson Coleman

July 7 primary shifts to vote by mail

On May 15, Gov. Phil Murphy announced that the July 7 primary will be a primarily vote-by-mail election. All registered Democratic and Republican voters will receive a postage-paid vote-by-mail ballot. All unaffiliated and inactive voters will receive a postage-paid vote-by-mail ballot application.

Murphy indicated that a limited number of in-person polling places in each county will be open to ensure that everyone can exercise their right to vote. He further indicated that the deadline by which votes must be received by a county Board of Elections to be counted as valid will be extended from 48 hours after polls close to seven days after polls close.

Deadlines

- June 16: Voter Registration Deadline for Primary Election
Not registered? Get your forms here: nj.gov/state/elections/voter-registration.shtml
- July 7: Primary Election Day – If voting by mail, your ballot. MUST be mailed by this date.
- Oct. 13: Voter Registration Deadline for General Election
- Oct. 27: Deadline to apply for a Mail-In Ballot by Mail for General Election
- Nov. 3: General Election

Every vote-by-mail ballot that is postmarked on or before July 7, 2020, and that is received by July 14, 2020, at 8 p.m. will be considered valid and will be counted.

Our next professional crisis: student loan debt

By Andrew Lewis

At every NJEA Preservice event members are asked to fill out a “debt dollar” where they write down how much student loan debt they estimate they will have upon graduation. Over the last few years this informal surveying of our members has shown that total debt in a room of a couple of dozen members has grown from \$700,000 to over \$1,000,000.

One member refused to write down her debt because she was embarrassed to write down how much debt she would have upon graduation. Embarrassed? She was earning a college degree. This member felt ashamed that she had to take out so many loans just to graduate and enter the profession.

DEGREES NOT DEBT WEBINARS

While our preservice members were calculating how much debt they would have upon graduation, our early career members were dealing with the reality of making their first student loan payments. During a conversation with members, someone noted that NJEA offers “XYZs of Retirement” for members at the end of their careers, but what financial advice do we offer members who are at the start of their career?

That question was the start of our Degrees Not Debt webinars.

Since they began in September 2017, more than 500 members have attended one of NJEA’s Degrees Not Debt webinars. The webinars cover loan consolidation, income driven repayment, and programs that will help our members reduce or even eliminate their student loan payments including Public Service Loan Forgiveness and Teacher Loan Forgiveness.

JOINING FORCES TO FIGHT STUDENT LOAN DEBT

During the summer of 2019, Organizational Development Field Representative Marguerite Schroeder and I met with staff from New Jersey Communities United (NJCU) and the Work Environment Council (WEC). We developed an organizing plan.

NJCU has been holding stakeholder interviews and collecting stories from New Jersey residents who are struggling to pay back their student loans. NJCU has made student loan debt one of its priority initiatives and has dedicated a portion

“
One member refused to write down her debt because she was embarrassed to write down how much debt she would have upon graduation.

of its website to hearing from NJEA members. Members are encouraged to visit unitednj.nationbuilder.com/studentdebt_njea to complete a brief survey and share their student debt story.

Partnering with WEC’s campaign organizer for “Public Need Over Corporate Greed,” Brandon Castro, we began the process of researching the history of student loan debt and the complex relationship between loan servicers and Wall Street.

Castro and I attended the Legislative Action Team meetings in the NJEA’s central zone to present information on the student loan debt crisis and the financialization of the issue. Members at these meetings have been asked to take the information back to their local associations and collect stories from members who are struggling to pay their student loans.

THE NEW JERSEY STUDENT LOAN DEBT ALLIANCE

Knowing that our work with WEC and NJCU would not be enough to make even a dent in the issue of student loan debt, we formed the New Jersey Student Loan Debt Alliance. In December, our three organizations were joined by the New Jersey Department of Education and the New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority for the first meeting of the alliance. During this meeting, each organization shared their individual work around the issue and discussed possible future collaborations.

Meeting again in February, this time joined by New Jersey Citizen Action, the alliance furthered their work through discussions on legislation, organizing, and movement building. The New Jersey Student Loan Debt Alliance will work to develop goals to assist those who are seeking a college degree and accumulating debt as well as those who have graduated and are struggling with the burden of paying back student loans.

Student loan debt is a substantial financial issue affecting our members and residents across New Jersey. Working with the alliance, we will make progress on the issue, but this work must be done throughout the state. Members need to raise the issue to crisis level, members need to speak to each other and their legislators about the issue.

Andrew Lewis is an Organizational Development Consultant with NJEA. He can be reached at alewis@njea.org.



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CHANGE A
CHILD'S STORY.™



Teacher Leader Academy eligible for graduate credit



NJEA Teacher Leader Consultant Anna Muessig speaks at the first meeting of the full cohort of Teacher Leader Academy candidates on Jan. 23. Muessig is an English language arts teacher at Collingswood High School.

Candidates for the teacher leader endorsement in the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy will now be eligible to earn up to 12 graduate credits through Thomas Edison State University (TESU). This follows several months of review through TESU's Professional Review Program.

Depending on local collective bargaining agreements, these 12 credits should increase the possibility of both tuition reimbursement and movement on the salary guide. The Teacher Leader Academy is currently in its first year of operation. A second cohort of the program is scheduled to begin in early 2021, with applications being available late this summer.

THE TEACHER LEADER ENDORSEMENT

Since legislation was passed in 2015, NJEA had been in the lead at working with the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) to create a teacher leader endorsement to be attached to an instructional certificate.

Teacher leadership offers a paradigm shift that not only allows teachers to support their peers from a nonevaluative position, but also to influence the entire system. Teacher leadership gives educators a voice at the decision-making table on instructional issues at the school and/or district level.

At its core, the work of teacher leaders is to build the capacity of their peers.

THE TEACHER LEADER ACADEMY

Meeting weekly over the course of a year, and occasionally on Saturdays, the core of the program focuses on regional study groups in which candidates for the endorsement identify their own strengths and areas where they want to challenge themselves.

With those areas identified, each candidate leads the learning of groups of seven or eight other teachers working with them on the endorsement. With the support of a group facilitator supplied by the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy, the study groups are designed to use feedback from other participants to create an incubator for leadership.

The program emphasizes candidates developing the ability to walk the challenging line of acting as both peer and expert with their colleagues. Other components of the program include occasional meetings of the full cohort of 35 participants in Trenton, as well as a clinical experience designed to meet the individual goals of each candidate.

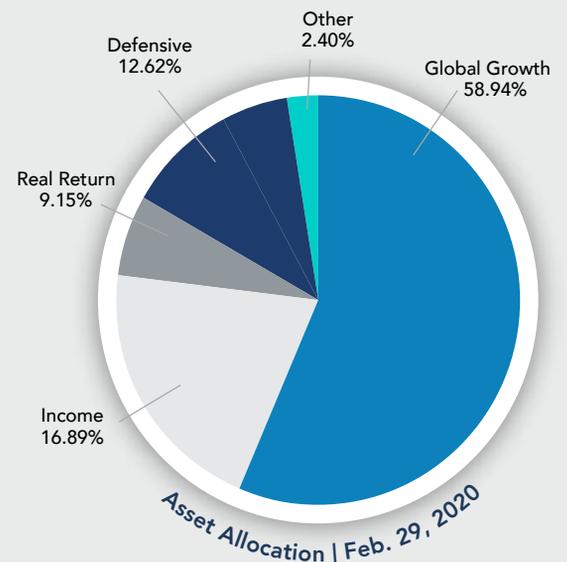
In the period of social distancing requirements to quell the spread of COVID-19, meetings of the full cohort of participants and regional study groups are being held in virtual spaces.

PENSION UPDATE

TOTAL PENSION FUND: \$75.45 BILLION

The totals below reflect market values as of Feb. 29, 2020, and for comparison, Dec. 31, 2019. The figures, which are rounded, may not reflect the current market values of some alternative investments through the period noted, because of lags in reporting under industry standards.

| | Feb. 29, 2020 | | Dec. 31, 2019 | |
|---------------|----------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|------------------|
| | Market Value (\$ billions) | Asset Allocation | Market Value (\$ billions) | Asset Allocation |
| Global Growth | \$43.30 | 58.94% | \$46.99 | 58.94% |
| Income | \$13.69 | 16.89% | \$13.46 | 16.89% |
| Real Return | \$7.15 | 9.15% | \$7.30 | 9.15% |
| Defensive | \$9.32 | 12.62% | \$10.06 | 12.62% |
| Other | \$1.98 | 2.40% | \$1.91 | 2.40% |
| Total | \$75.45 | 100% | \$79.73 | 100% |



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

Delegate Assembly meets virtually

The NJEA Delegate Assembly (DA), the association's highest policy-making body, held its May 16 meeting through WebEx, an electronic videoconferencing program. NJEA President Marie Blistan presided over the DA meeting.

To accommodate an electronic meeting format, several amendments to the DA's standing rules were required. Following a lengthy debate, delegates adopted standing rules for when an emergency necessitates a virtual meeting, but the rules were amended to indicate that two provisions would apply to the May 16 and June 10, 2020 DA meetings only. These amendments affected standing rules concerning the submission of New Business Items and rules concerning when and how nondelegate members may address the DA.

For the May 16 and June 10, 2020 DA meetings, nondelegate members can submit comments at njea.org/da to be included in the official record of the meeting.

Members may always reach out to their elected DA members to discuss their ideas, information and concerns. To find the names of your elected delegates, visit njea.org/da and click on the link to "NJEA Delegate Assembly" in the description of the DA. Each delegate has an email address that consists of their first initial and their full last name, followed by @njea.org.

DELEGATES ADOPT 2020-21 NJEA BUDGET

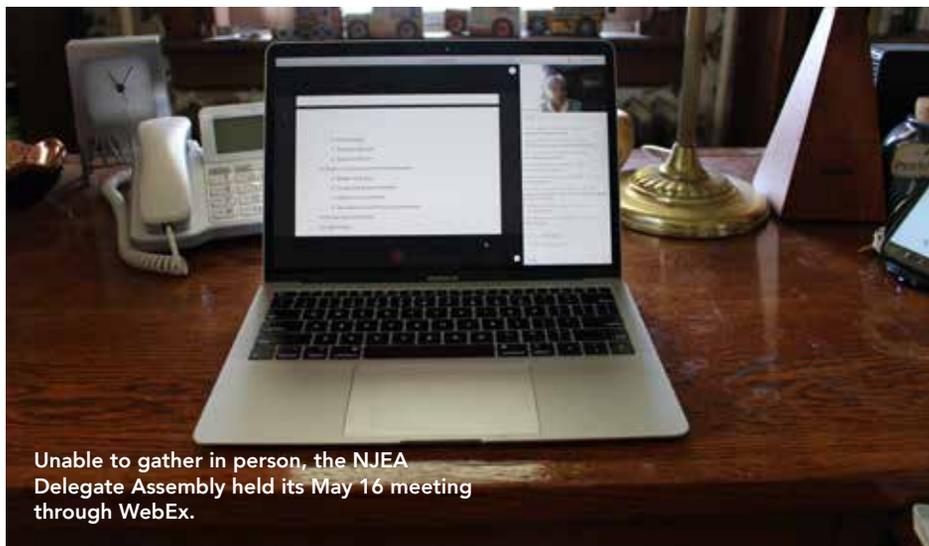
NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty presented NJEA's proposed budget for the fiscal year beginning Sept. 1, 2020.

"We operate under one simple premise: that we will continue to put forth budgets that demonstrate our values and our ongoing commitments to honor our members' priorities," Beatty said.

He noted that the proposed budget will enable the association to protect the economic interests, working conditions, job security, and pensions and benefits of NJEA members, support county and local associations, and promote quality professional development. The budget, Beatty said, will enable the association to continue to promote the quality system of public education that makes New Jersey's schools the best in the nation.

For the 2020-21 fiscal year, delegates approved a \$154,027,700 operating budget, a \$12,986,600 NJEA Pride in Public Education budget, a \$2,986,700 capital fund budget, and a \$325,000 NJEA Disaster Relief Fund budget.

The approved budget will appear in the September 2020 edition of the *NJEA Review*.



Unable to gather in person, the NJEA Delegate Assembly held its May 16 meeting through WebEx.

DELEGATES TO ELECT NEA DIRECTORS

The NEA Board of Directors is responsible for setting general policies between annual NEA Representative Assembly meetings. NJEA sends nine state representatives to the NEA Board of Directors. In addition, two other NEA Board members are NJEA members who were elected nationally in at-large positions.

The elected board members will serve three-year terms from Sept. 1, 2020 to Aug. 31, 2023. Elected alternates will serve one-year terms beginning Sept. 1.

The following NJEA members were nominated as NEA Director candidates: Brenda Brathwaite, Anita Kober, Carolyn, McKinney-Croix, Peter Moran, Michael Morton, Chrystal Parr-Allen, and Barbara Rheault. Nominated as NEA Director Alternates were June Camizzi, Christopher Cannella, Gayle Faulkner, Ashanti Rankin, and David Walker.

Delegates will elect NEA Directors and NEA Director Alternates through a mail-in ballot system.

DELEGATES TAKE FIRST VOTE ON BYLAW AMENDMENTS

DA members considered three amendments to NJEA's bylaws. The first proposes to amend the calculation of dues for members based upon when they join NJEA, the second would amend the hourly threshold at which members are considered part-time employees in their districts, and the third would add three committees to the list of standing committees in NJEA's bylaws.

Amendments to NJEA's bylaws require two votes by the DA, each at a separate DA meeting. At the first meeting, the bylaw amendments must

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The full text of the proposed amendments to the NJEA Bylaws can be found on pages 10-11 of this edition of the NJEA Review.

pass by a majority vote of the DA. At the second meeting, a three-fourths vote of all DA members is required for the adoption of such amendments.

Three bylaw amendments were adopted by a majority vote at the May 26 DA. The second vote will take place at the June 10, 2020 DA meeting. As required for bylaw amendments, the full text of the proposed amendments to the NJEA Bylaws can be found on pages 10-11 of this edition of the *NJEA Review*.

Minutes of the proceedings of the DA, when available, are published in the *NJEA Review* and at njea.org/da.

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NJDOE waives edTPA requirements

This week the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) waived the edTPA requirement for those currently seeking a Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS) or those moving from a Certificate of Eligibility (CE) to a standard certificate.

The waiver is for candidates who apply for certification on or after April 28, 2020, and expires on Sept. 1, 2020, or when the public health emergency is lifted, whichever is earlier.

The waiver applies to the following teachers:

- Educator Preparation Program (EPP) completers, who have met all other requirements for the CEAS certificate, are not required to take the edTPA. EPP providers will submit a plan to the NJDOE explaining their criteria for recommending certification for these teachers.
- CE holders, formerly known as alternate route teachers, who have completed all other requirements for a standard certificate, are not required to take the edTPA. Like programs for CEAS candidates, the EPP providers will determine the criteria for certifying these teachers.
- Candidates who hold a CE through reciprocity rules that meet all other requirements for a standard certificate except for edTPA, are eligible for the waiver and may apply as usual for their standard certificate during the effective dates of the waiver.

Teachers who have already submitted the edTPA but were unsuccessful in one or more of the sections of the assessment, are eligible for the waiver and do not need to resubmit.

Candidates seeking a refund of their fees should refer to the current edTPA refund policy at bit.ly/edtparefund.

To check your certification records, visit www20.state.nj.us/DOE_TCIS_ONLINEED. Note that the URL is case-sensitive, all characters after the backslash must be in all caps when entering the URL.

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The waiver is for candidates who apply for certification on or after April 28, 2020, and expires on Sept. 1, 2020, or when the public health emergency is lifted, whichever is earlier.



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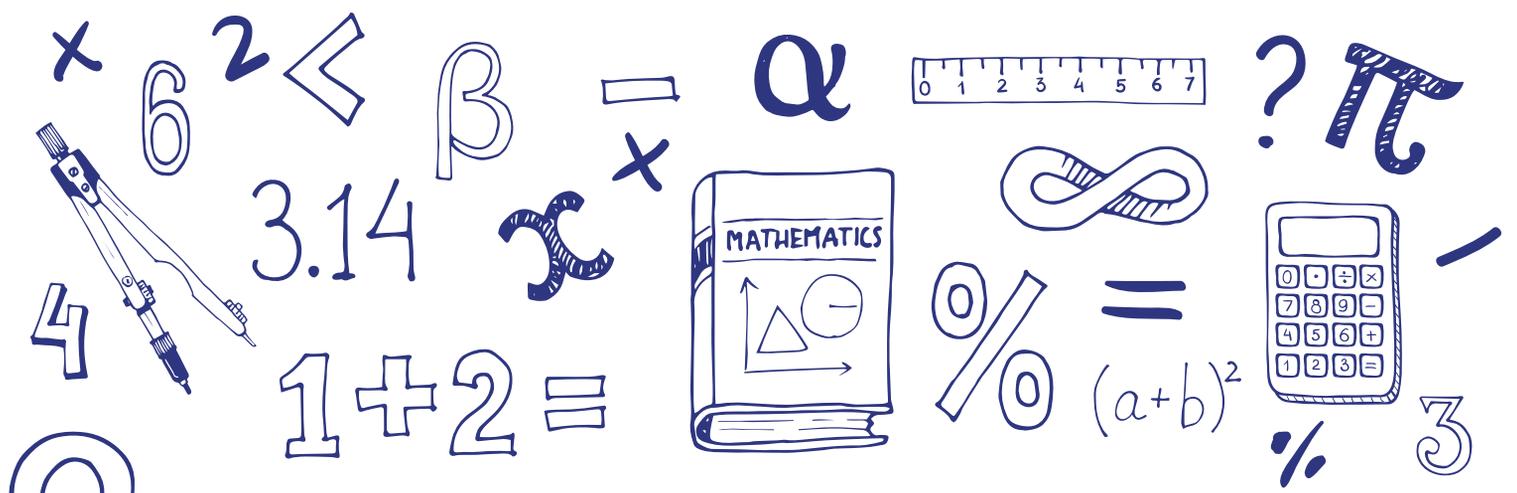
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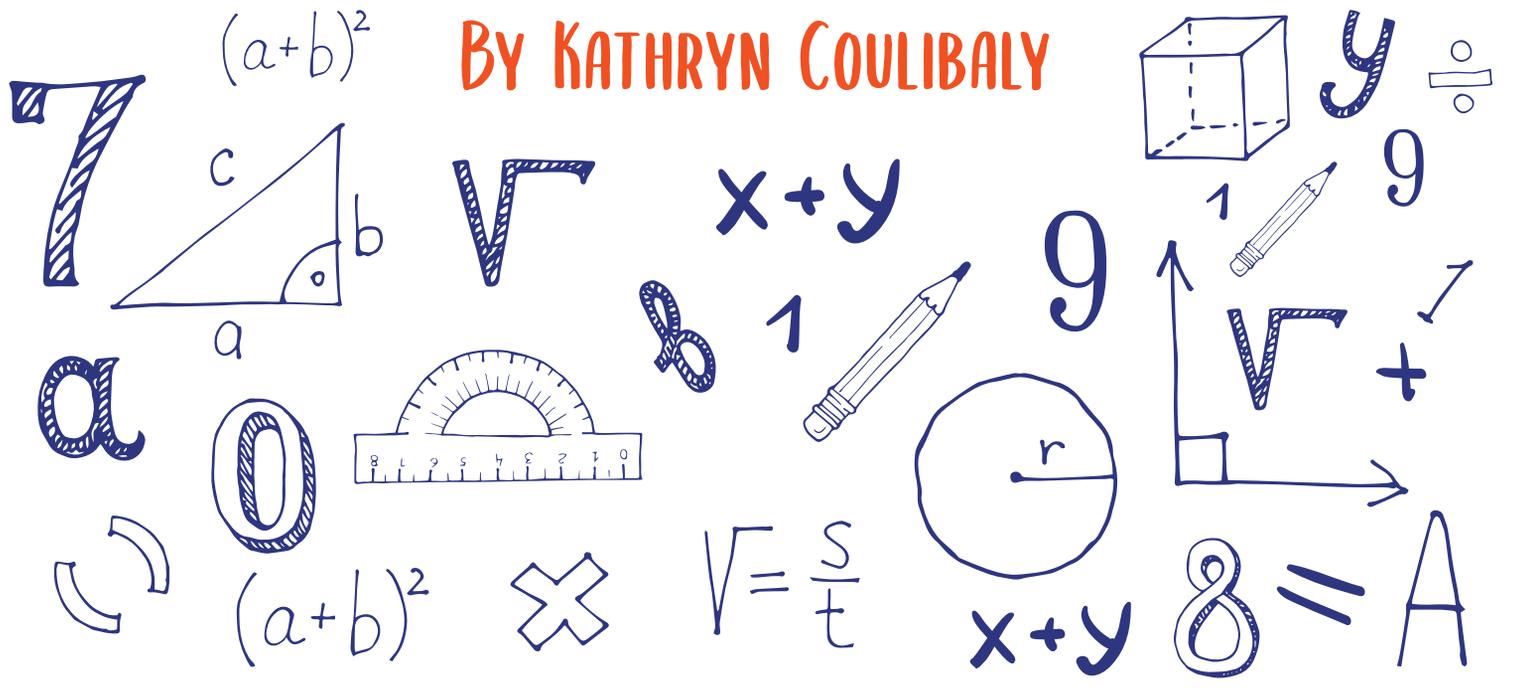
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MATH

ROCKS

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY





Gary Hank and Anne Bercaw entertain and educate fifth and sixth grade students at Lopatcong Middle School as the band 2 + 1 Math Rocks!

Most teachers don't get rock star treatment, even though they deserve it. But Lopatcong Middle School sixth grade math teacher Gary Hank and Anne Bercaw, who retired from the district in 2014, are living their rock and roll dreams.

Since 2007, Hank and Bercaw have been performing as the band 2 + 1 Math Rocks! at school assemblies, family fun nights, educator in-service days, including the Association of Mathematics Teachers of New Jersey's annual conference, and community events throughout the Lehigh Valley and northwestern New Jersey, as well as at the Mayfair Festival of the Arts, ArtsQuest Center at SteelStacks, and Musikfest, one of the largest music festivals in the nation.

But Hank and Bercaw consider themselves educators first, and musicians—or math rockers—second.

"Growing up here in Lopatcong, I did not like math," Hank admitted. "When I became a teacher, I realized that I could make a difference."

But even before education and music, Hank had another passion: baseball. He attended Lock Haven State University and was on the baseball

team. But when he was cut from the team, he realized he needed to pursue a different path. A class on children's literature inspired him to pursue a career in education, and the rest is rock-and-roll history.

"I don't know where this passion for music came from," Hank said. "I grew up in a sports family; no one played a musical instrument. But my older brother had a guitar that he never used. From the time I was six years old, I'd play around with his guitar. I still collect vinyl albums."

Hank has more than 1,500 albums at home; his wife considers him a vinyl hoarder. But that vast musical knowledge is what enabled him to connect music and math.

"I started teaching in 1984 at Phillipsburg High School," Hank said. "I was 21 years old, teaching math to juniors and seniors. They were very close to my age, and it was pretty tough. But I had the support of my colleagues and administrators. After a few years, I moved to Lopatcong Middle School. I started bringing the guitar into the classroom around 1999."

Hank was teaching a poetry section in language arts and some students suggested that he put some of the poems they wrote to music. Eventually, one song became adopted as the school's D.A.R.E. song, which was the anti-drug and alcohol abuse program.

Other teachers and staff in the district also were musically inclined and would perform at talent shows and other events. When Hank saw his students struggling with some difficult math concepts, he began to wonder if incorporating music into his math lessons could help. His first song was about fractions.

A BAND IS BORN

Hank and Bercaw, who also grew up in Lopatcong, have known each other nearly all of their lives. When Hank moved from seventh grade to sixth grade math at the middle school, Bercaw's special education classroom was right across the hall. Bercaw, who plays bass and is a classically trained flutist, jumped at the chance to collaborate.

"I love being a part of this," Bercaw said. "Gary would poke his head in my classroom door and ask what my plans were that day. We almost always found a way to bring our students together. It meant a lot for my students to get to sit with their friends and listen to and learn these math songs."

Today, they have more than 50 songs and have recorded four albums: "Math Rocks!," "Squared²," "Power of Ten Songs" and "Gee, I'm a Tree!"

At an assembly in early 2020 in Lopatcong Middle School's cafeteria in front of fifth and

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.

sixth grade students, Hank and Bercaw rocked the house. Students wore the band's T-shirt and buttons and clapped and sang along to the songs. Cafeteria staff who were preparing lunches stopped to listen and applaud. Following the show, students lined up for Hank and Bercaw's autographs.

"HERE COMES THE SUM"

The teachers and school employees know the songs Hank and Bercaw's songs are based on, but the students often do not. One former student told Hank that whenever she hears the Neil Diamond song, "Sweet Caroline," she sings the words to Hank's version, "Just Simplify," which teaches students about using greatest common factor to simplify fractions.

"The kids go crazy over that one and always sing along," Hank said.

"Estimating in Paradise," a take on Jimmy Buffet's "Cheeseburger in Paradise" is about estimating using rounding but Hank confesses that every time he plays that song, he gets hungry.

Bruce Springsteen, of course, is a popular choice. Springsteen's song, "Hungry Heart" is transformed into "If I Forgot to Tell You" to help students understand how to use renaming to add and subtract unlike fractions.

"I have these kids brainwashed," Hank joked. "When they come into class and we do a lot of fractions, decimals, and percents, I say to them, 'If I forgot to tell you,' and they immediately respond with, 'the denominator stays the same.' It's very catchy. I must say it a thousand times."

They have used songs from musicians such as Billy Joel, REM, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Spin Doctors, and many more, but Hank's favorite band, by far, is the Beatles, and their song catalog reflects that.

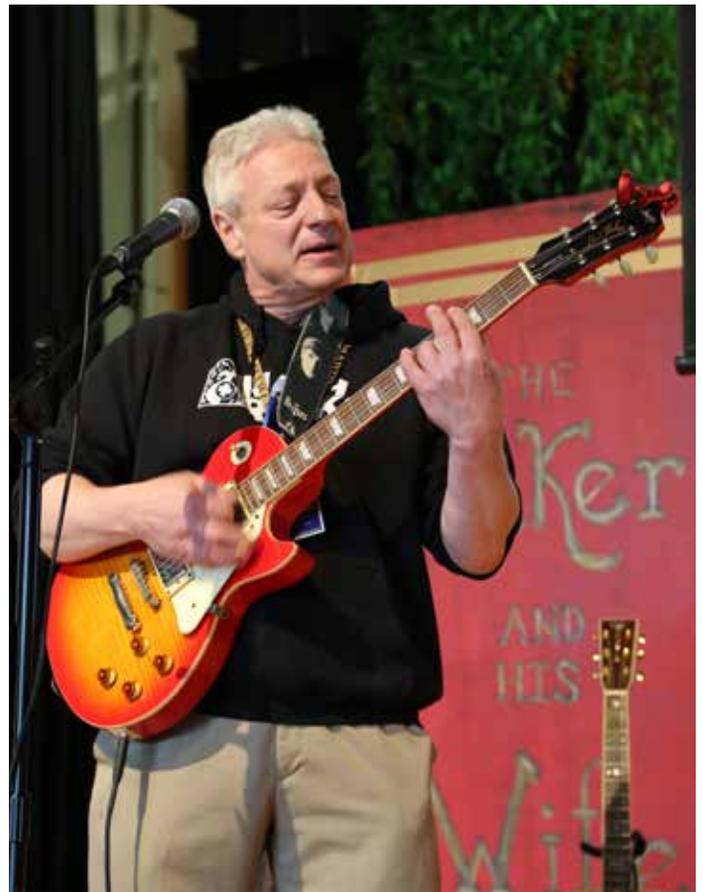
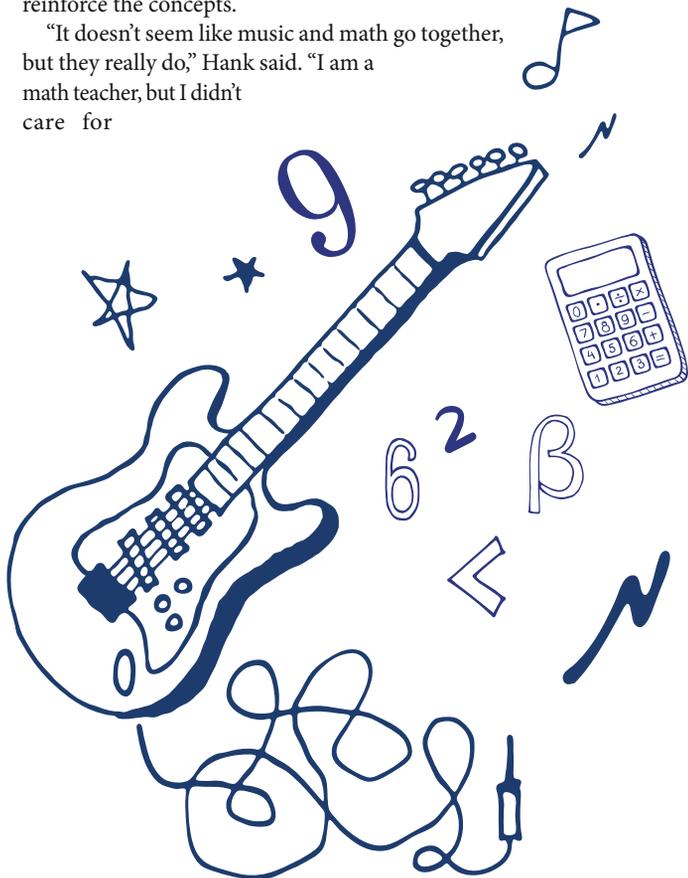
"I'm kind of a Beatle fanatic," Hank says. "My wife will say I'm obsessed. We have a lot of Beatles-based songs."

The 2 + 1 Math Rocks! song, "Here Comes the Sum," is, of course, the Beatles' "Here Comes the Sun" which teaches students addition facts.

"Nowhere Man" by the Beatles is one of 2 + 1 Math Rocks! best-known and earliest songs. It's called "Powers of Ten" and uses basic facts and zero patterns to multiply and divide decimals.

Hank and Bercaw enlist the help of another retired colleague, Valerie Mamrak, who runs the PowerPoint displays while they play, showing the math concepts, lyrics, and fun art to entertain the students and help reinforce the concepts.

"It doesn't seem like music and math go together, but they really do," Hank said. "I am a math teacher, but I didn't care for



Gary Hank has been performing and writing songs to teach math concepts for more than 20 years.

the subject as a kid. If I would have had this as a kid, I think I would have mastered these concepts and enjoyed math much more. Maybe I would have even pursued math further!"

INSPIRING STUDENTS

Administrators have been very supportive and encourage Hank to share his talents.

"Using music is a great way to reach students who learn in different ways," said Rick Bonney, principal at Lopatcong Middle School. "Our teachers have the creative freedom to find strategies that work for our students and implement them. Every staff member has a hidden talent that may be something they do outside of school or with their family. We welcome them bringing those talents and passions into the classroom. That makes the educator feel more creative, and it really inspires students."

Bercaw echoes the importance of educators sharing their passions with students.

"When middle school students sense that you care about them, they come alive," Bercaw said. "It's a tough age; when educators share their talents and passions with their students, it makes students realize they're important and valued. They see us taking a risk, flubbing a note, being creative: that makes them feel safe about showing their true selves."

A FAMILY AFFAIR

Hank and Bercaw have gotten their own children involved. Bercaw's son, Ryan, began drumming with the group when fellow educator Kenney Lutz left Lopatcong to become vice principal in the Newton School District. When Ryan went off to college, Hank's son, Alec, picked up the sticks and has been drumming with them ever since. Hank's other son, Cory, has

“

Today, they have more than 50 songs and have recorded four albums: “Math Rocks!,” “Squared²,” “Power of Ten Songs” and “Gee, I’m a Tree!”

played lead guitar on the band’s “Gee, I’m a Tree” and “Squared²” CDs.

“It’s pretty cool; it’s kind of a family affair,” Hank said.

They have been featured on WFMZ (Channel 69) news broadcasts, NJTV’s Emmy award-winning show, “Classroom Close-Up NJ” and NBC 10’s program, “The Teacher Says.”

They are eager to share these songs with other educators and encourage them to use 2 + 1 Math Rocks! resources, which are aligned with New Jersey Student Learning Standards, to reach their students. Hank proudly points to a file cabinet full of thank you cards from students, parents, and educators across the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom.

2+1 Math Rocks! has all their music on their website, 2plus1mathrocks.com, as well as YouTube, Spotify, iTunes, Pandora and others. They are happy to share their content and are available to play school assemblies, music festivals, and other events. They also have CDs and DVDs for sale.

In addition to their music, Hank uploads lesson plans and records his lessons and posts them on Google Classroom and his YouTube page.

“It helps students stay with the class when they miss school, and it helps parents understand how we are teaching math concepts,” Hank said.



The students at Lopatcong Middle School agree: Math Rocks!

RESOURCES FOR ONLINE INSTRUCTION

These resources have been beneficial to Hank with the move to online instruction, and he is eager to share them with other educators.

“To this day, I have a song in my head constantly,” Hank said. “If you put math concepts to a song, it’s always going to stay with you. I feel like using music to teach these concepts really reaches students in ways that other methods do not. And the best part is, they are excited about learning them!”

“Music is essential for everyone,” Bercaw said. “Research has shown that humans process music in several different areas of the brain. Basically, we are hard-wired for music and you see that when we introduce it into our lessons. Behavior, self-confidence and engagement improve when we bring music into the classroom.”

Hank and Bercaw have continued to create new music, even during the coronavirus pandemic. On their YouTube channel, TwoPlusOneMathRocks, they posted a message of hope and laughter for educators, students, and their parents based on the Mamas and the Papas song, “California Dreaming.” The new song, “All I Want to Do ... Is Go to School Today” includes the lyrics: “All the kids are home, mom is turning grey.”

“Now, more than ever, we need to inject some fun into learning,” Hank said. “Students, their families and educators are struggling with an abrupt transition to remote instruction, but some things haven’t changed at all: math should be everyone’s favorite subject. Personally, it makes me break into song!” 🎸



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It’s a tough age; when educators share their talents and passions with their students, it makes students realize they’re important and valued.

Go behind the scenes with 2 + 1 Math Rocks! in this exclusive NJEA Review video at njea.org/mathrocks.

WE
FLIPPED
FLIPPED
OUR SCHOOL BOARD,
SO CAN YOU!

BY SUSAN SWEZENY



Visiting NJEA members during the school board campaign were, from left, NJEA staff member Beth Buonsante, Pleasantville EA members Sue Swezeny and Terre Alabarda, and Buena Regional EA member Melissa Tomlinson.

You know the feeling: Something just has to be done about our school system!

Yet, what can we do about it? If you think about it, the school board has a lot of power to change your school district for the good or drive it further into disarray. I came into our school district a year before five board members were whisked away in handcuffs in a federal corruption case. Things were quiet for a while then people started to grumble again. That's where our story begins.

GETTING STARTED

The issues with the board were myriad. Residents were often berated at the microphone and told to sit down and stop talking. Teachers and other staff were ignored. Police were called to our board meetings as a means of intimidation, and the board president called upon them to remove residents and even one of the board members for speaking out against her.

In the meantime, we continued to have problems with mold, supplies were never bought, roofs leaked and students went without supplies. Something had to be done.

Susan Swezeny is the secretary of the Pleasantville Education Association and is a science teacher at Pleasantville Middle School. She can be reached at susan.swezeny@gmail.com.

I have a background in local politics and knew enough people that I felt confident in approaching a few local people and imploring them to run for school board. I asked the county committee leader for help in screening some people he would consider "safe" for me to approach. I found my first possible candidate. Joanne had been on the board before and was reluctant, at first, to run for the school board again. I had to assure her that the union would support her, and we could have members help her run her campaign. She agreed.

When I told the Pleasantville Education Association Executive Committee what I was up to, another member gave me a surprised thumbs up and told me that she was doing the same exact thing.

Renee Irwin was one of those members—she's now an administrator—who knows everyone and still has strong ties with students and their families well after they'd left her classroom. She was reaching out to parents and former students to get them to run.

To this day, Renee will still tell you that she is not political. I disagree. Politics is another word for human relations. I'm pretty good at the party politics of it. Renee is great at the human interaction part of it. It was the makings of a great team.

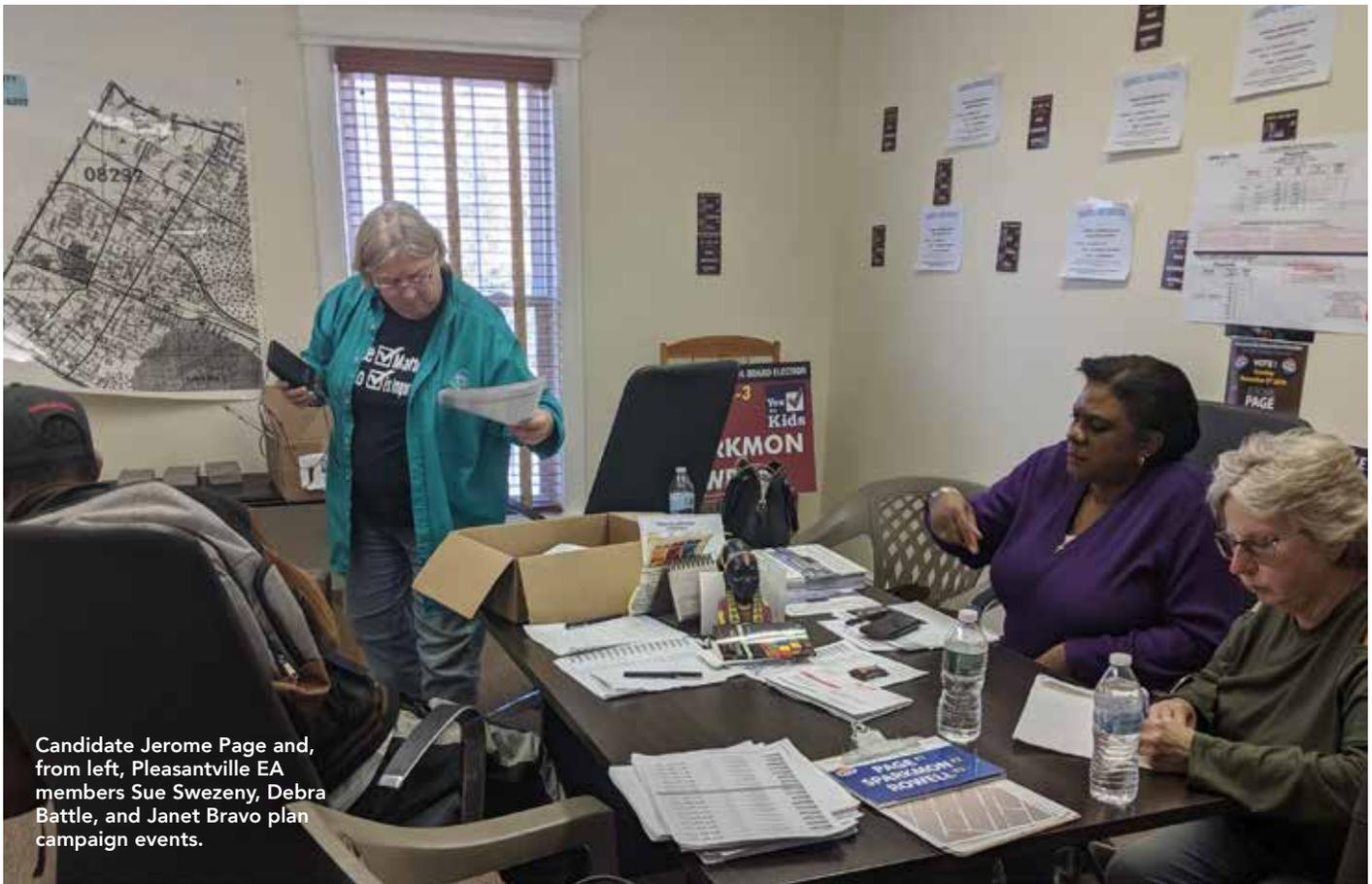
Now we had a team, we had a purpose, we

needed more candidates, and we decided to do this quietly. Joanne ended up apologizing and backing out, but she still was willing to be a source of information, resources and moral support.

None of this is easy, but there is good news: The more your town needs a new school board, the more people are willing to help.

Some of the people who can help you include:

- Government Relations at NJEA – Government Relations is an invaluable asset for resources, information, and current laws. The convenience of having one person to contact in order to access all the resources of NJEA for our candidates makes all of this so much easier.
- Your local political parties' county committee chair or the parties' local representatives – You can find them online, usually on the county website, if you don't already have a connection. Don't expect too much, they are running other elections at the same time and are quite busy.
- Your town's political parties' committee members – These town leaders have as much desire to see your school board work efficiently as you do. It looks better for them as well. Check with people who you trust regarding the loyalties of politicians. Their loyalty should be to the community.



Candidate Jerome Page and, from left, Pleasantville EA members Sue Swezeny, Debra Battle, and Janet Bravo plan campaign events.

- Community leaders – These are the parents, former board members, coaches, church leaders, and others who are willing to run for school board or who are willing to help you along the way. These people are also an invaluable source of information about your potential candidates.

CHOOSING THE CANDIDATES

This one seems like a no-brainer. You all have those parents! The ones who show up at the board of education meetings to keep up with everything going on in the district. The parents who show concern about their own children and everyone else's. The parents who volunteer for lots of activities in the school and the community. Those parents who seem to have daily contact, and sometimes daily arguments, with the principal. These are all potential candidates.

Seek them out. Introduce yourself. Give them your business card. You will hand out many business cards and get only a few nibbles. That's OK. That way you know you are getting someone who really wants to commit to this. Many people will complain about the school system, few will follow through and make the leap to run for the school board.

It is up to you to convince those who are on the fence about running for the school board that they need to make that leap for the children, for

the school, and for the community. It is also up to you to not judge those who can't make that commitment.

A few notes about what you're doing: In New Jersey, school board candidates need to have a petition with 25 voter signatures to the county clerk by the end of July. You want to give your candidate plenty of time to get this done. There are typically three seats available for election. In some districts, you are lucky you get three candidates. In other districts many will run for those seats. School board positions are nonpartisan. The candidates may seek out guidance from one party or another, but they must remain neutral.

Don't do any of this during the school work day. This all to be done during your own time after contract hours.

SO YOU'VE ENDORSED A CANDIDATE! NOW WHAT?

In our case, we were all in. With assistance from NJEA, we made phone calls. We spent weekends walking door to door. We had weekly meetings with the candidates. We helped at the polls on Election Day.

Your candidates get a letter of endorsement and a pack of stickers that say they are the real deal. Your level of involvement in the campaign is an agreement between your political action committee (PAC) team and your endorsed

candidate(s). You don't want to promise more than you're capable of delivering. Make sure you and your team are honest about what level of commitment everyone can put forth. It's better if everyone doesn't overestimate their abilities.

Keep in mind that this is the candidate's campaign, not yours. The candidates must agree to your involvement.

A WORD ABOUT CANDIDATES

You are not choosing a candidate for yourself. You are not choosing a candidate who will be in your pocket and always vote on your side. You choose a candidate who will understand the policy and be fair and able to compromise while still being strong enough to speak their mind. Embrace those personalities. Encourage those personalities. This is what is going to save your school.

Our candidates ran as a team. This is unusual but made a lot of sense for our plan. It gave the candidates the ability to pool their resources, team up to reach more voters, and afford an occasional moment off the campaign trail while others covered for them.

BOOTS ON THE GROUND

This is a lot of work. You will need people to help you out. You cannot be shy about asking. The good news is that depending on your level

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Many people will complain about the school system, few will follow through and make the leap to run for the school board.

of involvement, the jobs are many and varied. There is a need for phone banking, door-to-door campaigning, setting up meet-and-greets, mailing out flyers and much more. Remember that it's the candidates who are running, not you. You are helping in every way you want.

NJEA Government Relations can get you a list of voters for your district. Your county political committees should also be able to provide this list. This list can be filtered by any number of factors. Want a list of all NJEA members in your district? Done. Need to know who voted in the last three primaries? Done. Need a list of all those registered to vote by mail? You got it. Don't overdo it. Remember, all elections are happening at the same time and all those candidates are using the same resources.

MY TOOLS

Google Voice: This tool gives you the ability to get a free phone number. I use my voice number on my business cards.

Business cards: Get yourself a box of inexpensive, good quality business cards.

Dedicated email: Set up an account that has no other purpose but your PAC and association work. Trust me. You will thank me later!

WAITING ON THE RESULTS

As of this writing, we are still awaiting the results of our November election! Crazy, right?

The first year we participated in a big way in board elections, we succeeded in getting all three of our candidates on the school board. In this last election, all three of our candidates won at the polls. What a rush! But when the mail-in ballots came in, we were stunned. Suddenly over 600 ballots went for other candidates and two

of our three candidates were out. This set off a series of legal challenges that still has us on the edge of our seats.

We still have a glimmer of hope. A few of those ballots might be thrown out because of irregularities with signatures and addresses. This part of the election, however, is 100% on the candidate. I still keep in touch with the candidates to offer moral support, but there really is nothing for the PAC to do except never give up hope.

ONE MORE WORD ON THE ELECTIONS

We had difficulty booking places to hold meetings, hold candidate forums, and even hold our PAC meetings. Venues that have strong ties to other candidates were reluctant to let us have a room. In addition, many people feel uncomfortable hosting a "political" event because they do not understand the nonpartisan nature of a board election.

Start early on this process and make sure that you follow the proper procedures. Do not hand out information on school property, don't hold meetings on school grounds, and never do any of your PAC work during your regular school time, on school property, or with school equipment.

THE END?

Elections are not a "one-and-done" thing. This is a long-term process. This could take up to three years to set straight. Then you are back at square one and you need to get your original candidates fired up to run for another term or groom a new set of candidates. Every year, three more seats come up. Every year, you have to show up. Every year, new members join the union. Every year someone retires or resigns from PAC work. It's a never-ending process, but it is worth it. 🏠



Pleasantville EA member
Janet Bravo (l) canvassing with
Buena Regional EA member
Melissa Tomlinson.

THE PHOENIX RISING

Clinton Township EA is reborn
following a victorious end to
protracted bargaining

By Christy Kanaby



In Greek mythology, the phoenix is a long-lived bird that arises from the ashes of its predecessor. For the 180 members of the Clinton Township Education Association (CTEA), it became a powerful symbol of strength and renewal.

Early last month, CTEA ratified a long-awaited contract, marking the end of working seven of the last nine years under an expired agreement. While simply breaking the cycle of protracted bargaining fatigue alone is cause for celebration, it was even more special for CTEA. The ratification also marked the end of a long, hard road of internal and external organizing to get them to this point.

In many ways, the deck was stacked against them, as the district was in a constant state of chaos. There had been four superintendents in the previous five years, three business administrators in the same time frame, and the human resources director was escorted out of the district after just a few weeks on the job. Additionally, the board of education made a unilateral decision to close one of the district's schools for the 2019-20 school year, without prior notification or warning—despite community outcry. There was so much turmoil that the superintendent from Lebanon, a sending district, notified the board of education that his students would no longer be attending Clinton Township public schools.

In addition to constant bargaining issues and administrative turnover, CTEA struggled with internal support and consistent advocacy for its members as a result of the its own upheavals. Many educators sought

Christy Kanaby is an associate director in the NJEA Communications Division. One of her primary assignments is serving as the communications specialist in the UniServ regional offices in the Northwest Zone, which includes Clinton Township. In addition, she is the editor of the NJREA Newsletter, oversees the Read Across New Jersey, Teacher for a Day and Pinch Hit for an ESP programs. Kanaby has extensive communications experience in anti-privatization initiatives. She can be reached at ckanaby@njea.org.

employment elsewhere, and the turnover rate was staggering: nearly 120 staff members left Clinton Township schools in the span of five years. Those who stayed were downtrodden, and the only thing keeping them in the district was their commitment to the Clinton Township students and community.

At the root of all the problems was the board of education president, Maria Grant. These issues continued to mount during Grant's 10-year tenure as board president, and she indicated no willingness to address them.

THE BREAKING POINT

The final insult came when CTEA had to file an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) with the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) to get the board to come to the table to negotiate with the union. Recognizing that her members could no longer sustain the current climate and that they needed to rediscover their voices, newly elected CTEA President Kelly Hill turned to NJEA Field Representative Fred Skirbst for assistance.

Skirbst assembled a team of NJEA staff members from multiple divisions to join CTEA leadership over the summer of 2019 to develop a plan to strengthen the local, elect pro-labor, pro-public education candidates to the board of education and secure a fair and equitable contract settlement.

That plan was unveiled at the CTEA's first general membership meeting of the 2019-20 school year in August. Vowing to move forward with a commitment of transparency and union support, Hill urged CTEA members to come together to win this battle, while acknowledging the mistakes of the past.

"Instead of coming together and directing all our frustrations and anger and energy at those responsible, we'd fallen into the trap of creating a circular firing squad," Hill said. "I am just as guilty of this. And while debate and disagreement are healthy parts of any organization, it does us absolutely no good to remain fractured. If we are fractured, we are weak—and it's a near-certainty that the board of education and administration has been taking and will continue to take advantage of any and all weaknesses that we display."

Clinton Township EA members picketing prior to a board of education meeting.





Clinton Township EA members from Patrick McGaheeran School.

SOUNDING THE ALARM

From that point forward, CTEA took an active role in executing its plan, first by engaging the community to focus on the upcoming board elections in November. CTEA developed a questionnaire, which was sent to all BOE candidates, and circulated the answers to its members and the community. They also partnered with the PTA to support the PTA's first-ever "Candidates' Night" event in October.

Meanwhile, NJEA staff began to visit each district school building throughout September and October to amplify CTEA's efforts and provide support and resources to its members. Through these meetings, it was revealed that the district was not in compliance with many special education regulations after firing, without any explanation, all district paraprofessionals the previous June. The district forced them to reapply for their jobs. To add insult to injury, CTEA discovered the district was also considering the privatization of its paraprofessional staff and was illegally using an outside service to fill any open paraprofessional positions.

Knowing the parents were unaware of these issues, CTEA began to host a series of community meetings to share concerns and solicit support. Outraged parents organized their own coalitions and shared information on social media. The various stakeholders made plans to attend the upcoming board meetings to express their displeasure.

Throughout it all, CTEA developed clever ways to call attention to their issues. At one board meeting, attendees carried and placed 120 black balloons around the auditorium, each symbolizing a staff member who had left under the strain of working in such a chaotic and unpredictable environment.

It was there, that Hill threw down the gauntlet and declared that it was a new era. In her remarks, Hill admonished the board and, looking squarely at Grant, cautioned against any retaliation for their efforts.

"Many members of this board—especially its leadership—choose to bully and intimidate them for expressing their views," said Hill. "Let me be perfectly clear: That stops right here and right now."

NEGOTIATIONS IN LIMBO

While CTEA continued to organize its members and the community, it kept a watchful eye for the fact finder's report. Originally expected to be available in early September, the report continued to be delayed, month after month. Fact finding is a step in the bargaining process used to reach an agreement between the board and the association when both regular face-to-face negotiations and negotiations conducted by a state-appointed mediator fail to yield a settlement. A state-appointed fact finder hears testimony from both parties and writes a report containing a proposed agreement.

The CTEA and NJEA staff team used that lag time to educate its members about the collective bargaining process, as well as share what the fact finder may write in his report. Members were informed how breakage—the money a district saves when someone of experience leaves the district and a lesser-experienced person replaces them—to understand the ways in which the district continued to make money as a result rampant turnover.

Additionally, CTEA members learned how increment cost—the money it takes to move between steps on the guide—affects settlements, and why the CTEA negotiations team needed to hold firm for a settlement above the county average.

VOTE OF NO CONFIDENCE

As CTEA members' confidence in their association increased, it dramatically declined in board president's ability to lead. After much discussion, the CTEA initiated a vote of no confidence against Grant.

On Oct. 23, over 96% of the CTEA membership cast ballots, with 92% voting in favor of a vote of no confidence against Grant. At the Oct. 28 board meeting, CTEA members packed the auditorium to demonstrate their unity in the vote taken. Joined by dozens of parents and community members, they held up signs and handmade mirrors, urging Grant to reflect on how terrible things had become with the mantra, "This is not normal!"

In addition to Hill, CTEA Executive Vice President Ronda Ferri, CTEA

Negotiations Co-Chair Penny McFadden and Action Chair Julie Mooney addressed the board, informing them of the vote and outlining the 31 grievances the association levied against Grant.

“We have no confidence in Maria Grant because, under her leadership and at her direction, the board has provided no stable leadership in the district administration, no financial stability and no indication of a willingness to address these issues and concerns,” said Mooney. “This is not normal, and more importantly, it will not be tolerated any longer.”

ELECTIONS REMAINED THE FOCUS

Recognizing the challenges and limitations an endorsement poses, CTEA supported the candidates who shared a commitment to restoring order within the district without formally issuing endorsements. The CTEA knew there were plenty of NJEA members throughout their community who understood what was at stake.

The weeks leading up to the elections became tense and full of accusations, as the incumbent and his running mate took to the Clinton Township residents Facebook page to “explain” the grievances levied against Grant, as well as attempted to discredit vocal parents and their opponents.

Undeterred, CTEA members canvassed the town in the days before the election, visiting only NJEA members’ homes and sharing their views. Additionally, using the Hustle app, other NJEA members living in Clinton Township were contacted and urged to lend their support.

Their efforts paid off. On Nov. 5, four pro-labor, pro-public education candidates— Jennifer Kaltenbach, Scott Hornick, Alison Grantham and Laura Brasher—were overwhelmingly elected to the board.

A NEW ERA

With the election of these new board members, hope began to emerge. Grant was not re-elected as board president, and public meetings began to run more efficiently and openly. Recognizing that it was the beginning of the journey, not the end, Hill addressed the board and community to urge all stakeholders to come together to put Clinton Township on the path to healing.

“For the last two months, CTEA members have been vocal about the problems that we face here in Clinton Township,” declared Hill. “We’ve said that we intend to find solutions, and we believe that in the wake of the elections earlier this month, we are now on the path to achieving them. This is the beginning of a ‘new normal’ in our school district, and it’s going to take every one of us—CTEA members, administrators, parents and board of education members—to work together to make it a reality.”

With the fact finder report still nowhere in sight, the CTEA negotiations team rolled up its sleeves and reached out to the new board negotiations team to get back to the table. Embracing the new collaborative relationship being fostered, both sides met over the course of several weeks to reach a settlement. On March 4, both parties signed a memorandum of agreement, and the wait was over.

“After working at it for over 1,000 days, it’s challenging not to be in a state of disbelief that we finally settled our contract,” said McFadden. “We have worked long and hard to reach a settlement that serves the interests of our students, teachers, support staff and our community,” “Patience, persistence and organizing worked for us in the end. We had an amazing team, and this settlement is a testament to their extraordinary efforts, time and commitment.”

McFadden’s co-chair, Jayson Hill, echoed her sentiments, adding that it was also the unwavering efforts of the CTEA members and NJEA team that netted this result.

“CTEA members collectively rose to the challenge by becoming active members of our school community,” Hill added. “From attending board meetings and rallying in front of the schools to wearing our logo on shirts as a display of our unity, the consistent support of our members made it possible for us to stand our ground on key issues. We appreciate all the NJEA

support we received, especially from our UniServ Field Representative Fred Skirbst. Our local association could do the right thing for our members because he organized help from other representatives and members from around the state. We’re grateful to have had the support of many caring, knowledgeable NJEA staff.”

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, neither side had the opportunity to meet with its respective members in person to review the tentative agreement. Undaunted, the CTEA leadership worked to develop a virtual ratification process, and on May 1, the membership voted overwhelmingly to approve the deal, with the board of education following suit at their May 4 meeting. Their new-found partnership was evident with the two groups issuing a joint statement—the first in years—announcing the good news.

“The phoenix is the perfect symbol for what has taken place here,” said Skirbst. “We utilized the basics that have made NJEA and all unions successful to help CTEA. It was those tried-and-true efforts that fostered their rebirth into a stronger association, and it’s an unequivocal example of what can be accomplished when we all work together.” 🙏



ENGLEWOOD
GUIDANCE COUNSELORS
REINSTATED

AFTER THREE-YEAR TENURE-CHARGE BATTLE

BY SHELDON H. PINCUS, ESQ.



From left: Nicole Cartwright,
Venus Rose, Sheldon Pincus,
and Luis Sanchez.

“

The district went on the offensive to deny any wrongdoing and chose to make these guidance counselors the scapegoats.

The evening of Feb. 13, 2020, was a momentous one for Dwight Morrow High School and Academies @ Englewood guidance counselors Nicole Cartwright, Venus Rose and Luis Sanchez. After a three-year legal battle, the three Englewood Teachers Association (ETA) members were reinstated to their tenured positions in the Englewood Public School District. They, along with two nontenured guidance counselors, a tenured social worker, the director of Guidance, two high school principals, and an assistant principal were first suspended from their positions on Feb. 16, 2017.

“We received our Rice notifications on Valentine’s Day,” Rose said. “There was nothing in the board of education agenda about what would be discussed. It was in an addendum to the agenda that we found out what was happening.” A school board must inform employees that their employment status will be discussed during a school board’s closed session. This notification is known as a Rice notice.

The suspensions followed a school board-commissioned review of the district’s high school student transcript records regarding credit hours and other claimed irregularities.

NJEA ASSIGNS ATTORNEY

ETA President Dave Vignola called NJEA UniServ Field Representative Rich Loccke for assistance.

“Based on the events that had already transpired, I was concerned and decided to bring a network attorney to that first meeting with the guidance counselors,” Loccke recalled. “At that meeting, it was still not clear to anyone the full scope and impact of the issues and how the district would respond. Shortly thereafter the district went on the offensive to deny any wrongdoing and chose to make these guidance counselors the scapegoats.”

The school board attorney interviewed all 97 high school teachers. It took three days. NJEA UniServ field reps Loccke, Joseph Tondi and Luis Delgado accompanied each teacher during their interviews. The impact of these investigations and the constant media attention resulting from the district’s determination to find staff to blame created panic.

“That was a hard hit,” Sanchez said. “I am the type of person who works from very early in the morning. I’d skip breaks and keep working. I work very hard. I’m well-known in the community, and suddenly in the eyes of the community I was

Sheldon Pincus is a member of the firm Sheldon H. Pincus, LLC, and is one of NJEA’s network attorneys. Throughout all of the proceedings described in this article, he represented the counselors as an NJEA Network Attorney assigned the case through NJEA UniServ field rep Richard Loccke.

seen as a dishonest person.”

The review found over 3,000 unaccounted changes to transcripts. The counselors themselves had been reporting numerous irregularities to the student information system analyst and the superintendent since 2015—a full two years prior to the suspensions.

In July 2016, the student records system was replaced. Attempts to transfer student data to the new management system only exacerbated the problems with the records.

“We would print out a senior’s transcript and see one GPA that day, but when we printed it out the next day, the GPA would be different,” said Sanchez. “Students would say to us, ‘Look, I have to apply to a university and my transcript isn’t correct.’”

KEEPING RECORDS

Fortunately, Cartwright, Sanchez and Rose had maintained records of their efforts to correct the irregularities. Their numerous communications detailed both their individual and group concerns about the records’ accuracy. Cartwright had previously taught eighth-graders in Englewood, so just a few years earlier she had many of the affected seniors in her classroom.

“For me this was about equity,” said Cartwright. “We tell our students that the way out of poverty is getting an education and here the system was setting them up. I just couldn’t let it go. This was somebody’s child.”

PARENT AND STUDENT PROTESTS

The board never investigated the counselors’ reports and never sufficiently explained why it neglected to do so. The suspensions of the counselors became the subject of numerous TV, print and online news features. Parents protested the suspensions, and students staged walkouts.

Rose, who lives within walking distance of the high school, remembers what a painful experience it was.

“I could hear news helicopters from my house, and I watched this drama play out on all three local news channels,” Rose said. “I didn’t sleep or eat for days. I stayed in my house. I didn’t want to show my face in public. This became my life for three years.”

Cartwright also lived near the school and heard the same helicopters. She soon learned that it was student protests that drew the attention of the media.

“I knew we had taught them how to be resilient and fight for their rights,” Cartwright said. “It wasn’t just for us they were fighting. They were thinking of their future, and they were upset.”

While the experience was difficult for Cartwright, she knew it also took its toll on the students.

“I wouldn’t have had a fighting chance without NJEA. I could never have afforded to pay an attorney for three years to look at 60,000 records.”

“We don’t do therapy, but we do a lot of brief counseling because our students have experienced trauma,” Cartwright said. “We are the people they have trust in, and I didn’t want them to feel abandoned because so many of them have been abandoned before.”

In July 2017, the New Jersey Department of Education Office of Fiscal Accountability and Compliance (OFAC) issued a report based on its own review of the transcripts. That review, unlike the school board’s, included the counselors’ communications detailing their concerns.

The OFAC found that most of the changes had not been made by the counselors, but instead by an outsourced district guidance secretary and the student information system analyst. Significantly, OFAC found no evidence that any fraudulent changes had been made.

BOARD IGNORES OFAC FINDINGS, CERTIFIES TENURE CHARGES

The board did not take the OFAC finding into account and in September 2017 certified for hearing by the commissioner of education the superintendents’ tenure charges against the counselors and administrators. Each of those charged filed a request with then-Commissioner of Education Kimberley Harrington to dismiss the allegations because they had not been filed in accordance with the law.

On Nov. 8, 2017, Harrington found that when the board brought the tenure charges in one consolidated pleading against eight individual staff members and administrators, the board had usurped the commissioner’s authority to determine whether such matters should be combined.

The commissioner held that the consolidated filing had deprived those charged of their due process rights. Each individual charged had the right, the commissioner ruled, to a clear statement that described the precise nature of charges against them as well as a description of the evidence that allegedly supported the charges. The commissioner dismissed the charges without prejudice, which meant they could be refiled if submitted in a

legally proper form and manner.

All of those charged, including Cartwright, Rose and Sanchez were ordered reinstated with back pay and benefits.

SUPERINTENDENT REFILES TENURE CHARGES

While each counselor was reinstated, none of them were permitted to return to work. The superintendent instead refiled individual sets of tenure charges in late January 2018 against Cartwright, Rose and Sanchez, which the board then certified to the commissioner of education for arbitration. Each counselor was suspended a second time without pay and benefits for 120 calendar days pending the hearing and determination of the charges.

After substantial delays, the hearings finally began in May 2019 before a commissioner-appointed arbitrator. The board spent 13 days presenting its case urging the dismissal of the counselors and removal of their tenure. The business administrator acknowledged that the board had spent over \$3 million from the initial filing of tenure charges to the day the board rested its case that May.

Cartwright, Rose and Sanchez renewed requests that the charges be dismissed a second time. This time, however, the counselors’ contentions were based on substantive rather than procedural grounds.

Each counselor asserted that the board had not met its burden of proof by a preponderance of the credible evidence to demonstrate that they had engaged in any willful, knowing and fraudulent activities that had a deleterious impact on students and the school district. That was the standard of proof that had guided the review and determination of the charges.

MEMBERS EXONERATED

The arbitrator dismissed each and every one of the over 400 charges that had been filed against the counselors. The arbitrator’s decision noted that the actions of the board had “initiated a tsunami of collateral harm to its employees placed on paid administrative leave, to the district’s reputation, and to many of its high school students.”

Each counselor was ordered a second time to be reinstated to their tenured guidance positions, together with back pay, and all other statutory and contractual entitlements. The tenure charge provisions of the TEACHNJ statute mandate that the Arbitrator’s Decision and Order are final and binding.

“This experience has made me even more fearless,” Cartwright said. “I’m

always telling people to speak up and encouraging members to document, document, document. Above anything else, document.”

Cartwright, Rose and Sanchez, along with the two nontenured counselors, who were suspended and nonrenewed by the board, and the social worker, who had her tenure and seniority rights determined in a separate administrative proceeding before the commissioner of education, have individual lawsuits pending against the board and superintendent. They allege that the tenure charges and other actions taken by the board and the superintendent were done so in violation of the New Jersey Conscientious Employee Protection Act as retaliation for their whistleblowing activities.

“Before this happened, I was one of those people who paid my union dues, but I really didn’t think I needed a union,” Cartwright said. “I thought if I followed the rules, I’d be OK, and if anything happened I could defend myself. Now I tell people, ‘You need to join the union.’”

“I wouldn’t have had a fighting chance without NJEA,” Rose concluded. “I could never have afforded to pay an attorney for three years to look at 60,000 records. Our first meeting with him was five hours. He listened to everything and took the time to understand us. Most of my emails to him were 10 pages long! I’m very grateful to him, ETA, and NJEA.”

“

“We tell our students that the way out of poverty is getting an education and here the system was setting them up. I just couldn’t let it go. This was somebody’s child.”

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The arbitrator’s decision noted that the actions of the board had initiated a tsunami of collateral harm to its employees placed on paid administrative leave, to the district’s reputation, and to many of its high school students.



From left: Venus Rose, Sheldon Pincus, Nicole Cartwright, and Luis Sanchez.

ASSOCIATIONS REDIRECT PRIDE GRANTS TO SERVE COMMUNITIES

The NJEA Pride in Public Education Program provides grants to local and county education associations to plan events that bring communities and schools together. In the midst of the global pandemic, social distancing practices have led to the cancellation of nearly all Pride-funded events.

Undaunted, local and county associations throughout the state repurposed the funds to serve their communities, feed and protect those on the front lines of the pandemic, partner with community- and faith-based charities, and support local businesses in the process. Here are many of the Pride grant stories that associations shared through the “Share your Story” link at njeatogether.org.

You'll find others by visiting njeatogether.org/pride.



Deb Crosby, a paraprofessional member of Burlington County Special Services Education Association and the Burlington County ESP of the Year, has been making hundreds of sandwiches weekly to help feed the hungry in her area. She and her husband, Dan, are part of a team of volunteers who have made sandwiches for Cathedral Kitchen in Camden.



1. Parades can often lead to crowded sidewalks that risk a lack of social distancing, so Westampton Education Association members participated in a reverse parade. Westampton school employees parked in the school parking lots and families drove around the lot to see all of the staff. It was an exciting day with lots of signs, smiles, air hugs, and love! The PTO celebrated the staff by giving each member a pizza to take home for their families.
2. The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Education Association sent water, energy bars, coffee and cookies to Overlook Hospital. Additionally, SPFEA members went to the hospital with fresh coffee and doughnuts for health care workers, many of whom are parents of students in Scotch Plains and Fanwood. SPFEA member Reyna Martoccia made homemade masks for residents and staff at the Chelsea at Fanwood, a center for assisted living. SPFEA's next project is to get produce from local farms to local food banks.
3. The Rutherford Education Association has completed four Pride projects to benefit front-line workers who have been tirelessly giving their time and talents during the COVID-19 pandemic as well as to help those in the community who have been affected. On April 27, the association provided lunch and dinner to the officers on duty at the Rutherford police department. These meals were provided by Jim Dandy's and Ferazzoli's. On April 29, the association purchased 60 meals from Matera's on Park, which were delivered to the emergency room staff at Hackensack University Medical Center. On May 4, 225 meals were purchased from The Risotto House, which were delivered to the COVID-19 floor staff at Holy Name Hospital in Teaneck. Finally, the association is donating \$670 to the Rutherford Community Food Pantry to be used to buy supplies for those in need.
4. The Burlington County Education Association provided meals for over 400 workers at the Virtua Hospital in Willingboro, including all staff in the intensive care unit, the emergency room, two COVID units and housekeeping. Hoagie and wrap trays, pasta salad, Caesar salad, pizza, and cannolis were prepared and delivered by Vincenzo's, a restaurant in Willingboro. Two deliveries were made, one for each 12-hour shift. Alesa, a staff member at Virtua, coordinated the delivery and took the pictures.
5. The Bayonne Teachers' Association helped those serving on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through Pride grants, BTA donated food to the emergency room staff at CarePoint Health/Bayonne Medical Center, McCabe Ambulance Service, the Bayonne Police Department and the Bayonne Fire Department. BTA also sponsored food distributions at Meals on Wheels (Bayonne Economic Opportunity Foundation) and the VFW Post 226.



We hope you enjoy them. Thank you for all you do! You are our superheroes!





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6. The Education Association of Passaic Pride Committee showed its gratitude to first responders of the Passaic police and fire departments by providing essential supplies such as masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer. EAP also provided lunch for the Passaic police department and essential workers at the St. Mary's General Hospital of Passaic. The Tropical Juice Bar Restaurant of Passaic provided hot, boxed lunches for the workers. The second phase of EAP's COVID-19 project is providing families with nonperishable food items. EAP members are handing out bags in conjunction with the district's breakfast and lunch program located at several schools in the city. The bags are being provided by the Cuellar ShopRite of Passaic, which is generously matching EAP's donation of food items to help keep families fed.

7. The Palisades Park Education Association sponsored Our Community Dinner Table, a local nonprofit. This organization's goal is twofold: to provide meals to those residents who are in dire need because of the COVID-19 pandemic and to support locally owned restaurants in the process. PEA used its Pride funding to donate \$1,500 to Our Community Dinner Table, all of which will be used to feed the most vulnerable in the community and support local restaurants. In addition, PPEA members have volunteered to assist in handing out meals with Our Community Dinner Table.

8. The Wayne Education Association, the Wayne Custodial Maintenance Association, and the Wayne Special Education Aides Association partnered to assist those combating the COVID-19 virus. Together, they pooled a \$30,000 NJEA Pride grant to work with the school district, the mayor, county government and other community stakeholders. Through the grants, they provided Wayne's students and families with the tools to stay healthy and safe. They also found ways to say thank you to the first responders and medical professionals, providing meals to 135 front line staff members at St. Joseph's Wayne Medical Centers in Wayne.

9. The Montclair Education Association reallocated nearly \$10,000 in Pride grant money that was originally for the funding of student and community events this school year, to COVID-19 first responders, including two Hackensack Medical Center Foundation needs: iPads for quarantined patients to communicate with loved ones, and daycare for children of healthcare workers; grab-and-go lunches for Montclair firefighters and the Montclair ambulance unit emergency medical technicians; and masks for the Montclair police department.

10. The Monmouth Beach Teachers Association proudly partnered with the Front-Line Appreciation Group of Oceanport and Monmouth Beach and Bagel Masters, a locally owned and operated bagel and sandwich shop, to donate 50 lunches to health care workers at Monmouth Medical Center in Long Branch, funded through a Pride grant from NJEA.



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11. Long Branch School Employees Association member Karina McIntyre and her spouse are working with Cafe Amici to deliver meals directly to hospitals throughout the area. They raised \$1,000 to help fund the meals and are personally delivering them.

12. Through the generous donations of its members, the Hackettstown Education Association sponsored 100 meals for essential workers at Hackettstown Medical Center. Soups on Main and Enjoy! Creperie made delicious soups and crepes for workers to enjoy and to fuel their important tasks.

13. The Mercer County Education Association used Pride grant money to purchase 1,600 potted pansies. MCEA members, students, community volunteers and the mayor of Hamilton Township packaged and delivered them over three days to eight nursing and assisted living facilities throughout Mercer County. The delivery brought a splash of color and a feeling of appreciation to the residents and to all the employees. Two small businesses, Tony's Farm Market and Triangle Copy, received much needed business.

14. The Morris County Retirees Education Association Executive Board says, "We are home, we are retired, but we are working hard to support and keep New Jersey's School's #1! We congratulate all our active teachers and educational support professionals for the phenomenal job they are doing with online teaching and giving our children and the academic and emotional support that they need during this time of crisis. We also thank all of our health professionals for all they are doing to keep us safe."

15. The East Greenwich Education Association carried out several Pride-funded initiatives. The association helped local food pantries youth service centers, donating nonperishable items to community members in need. EGEA also donated board games and activities to the youth homes to keep children occupied during the quarantine. In another project, EGEA thanked local heroes, donating lunches to the East Greenwich Police Department, the East Greenwich Fire Department, and the Mullica Hill Inspira Hospital Emergency Room and Step-Down Unit. EGEA members also delivered treats to the East Greenwich Post Office and Home and School Committee.



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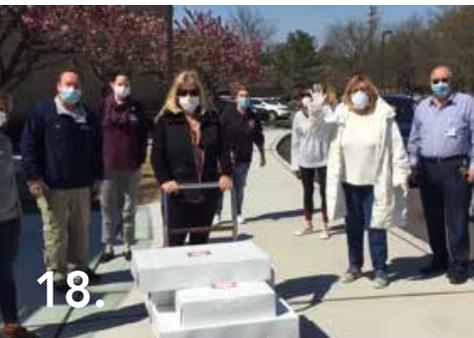
15.

Susan Vigilante

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16. The Mullica Township Education Association supported its essential community partners: the Mullica Township Police Department, Department of Public Works and Mullica Township employees during the coronavirus pandemic. From the Little Water Distillery in Atlantic City, MTEA obtained spray hand sanitizer for every Mullica Township employee and two gallons for refills. MTEA also donated several boxes of gloves.

17. The West Windsor-Plainsboro Education Association reallocated its Pride grant for several activities. First, WWPEA members wrote notes that went home in the food boxes of students participating free or reduced-price meal program. Next, WWPEA members placed light-up yo-yos in the food boxes. WWPEA also put up 120 lawn signs throughout the school district to let students know that everyone from school missed them and wanted them to stay safe. WWPEA also thanked community first responders and medical heroes with lawn signs.

18. The members of the Holmdel Township Education Association donated \$1,000 to show appreciation for hospital workers treating COVID-19 patients at Bayshore Hospital. During their lunch breaks on April 15, HTEA members delivered cupcakes from Confections of a Rock\$tar to the hospital workers. Confections of a Rock\$tar is an Asbury Park bakery that has been temporarily closed during the COVID-19 quarantine.

19. Michelle Mistichelli, school nurse at Pennsville Middle School and member of the Pennsville Education Association Negotiations Team, was spotlighted by the Salem County government for volunteering to help with COVID-19 testing in Salem County.

20. The Gloucester County Education Association delivered food and school supplies to the two Boys and Girls Club locations in the county. GCEA delivered 40 boxes of food, loaded with eggs, milk, bread, peanut butter, cereal, and more for distribution to the students and families of the Glassboro Boys and Girls Club. GCEA also delivered school supplies to the 90 students who typically attend Paulsboro Boys and Girls Club activities.

21. The Frankford Township Education Association created self-care packages for health care workers at Newton Memorial Hospital and Morristown Medical Center. Each hospital received 100 self-care items in canvas "Thank You" bags that contained locally made lip balm and lotion, locally made hand sanitizer, Life Savers candy, and a thank you note. FTEA also delivered several trays of freshly baked goods and boxes of brewed coffee from local bakeries, including a thank you card to each hospital with the breakfast trays.

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22. Delsea Education Association, Delsea Transportation Association, Elk Township Education Association, Township of Franklinville Education Association, and Township of Franklinville Support Staff Association worked together to deliver care packages to 380 families in need within the districts.

23. The Cranford Education Association provided dinner for the Cranford Police Department, Fire Department, and First Aid Squad. The Pride grant enabled Cranford's educational support staff and teachers to support community restaurants. The CEA has secured a number of Pride grants over the years that have allowed them to support the local community and school events including an annual donation to Cranford Project Graduation.

24. The Cumberland County Council of Education Associations made a donation to the Millville Child Family Center Food Pantry. With help from Millville Education Association members, the center distributes food to Cumberland County families twice a month. Each bag of food contains a recipe, a personal positive note, and a message of hope.

25. The Clifton Education Association used its Pride funds to say thank you to the community's front-line workers. President Lori Lalama and Pride Chair Martha Andrea Orrok worked with Corrado's Market to deliver meals to these essential workers. On April 21, the first round of meals was sent to the Clifton Police Department, the Office of Emergency Management, and all six firehouses in the city of Clifton. Lunch and dinner were also provided to the staff members at St. Mary's General Hospital in Passaic. CEA also collaborated with the Wayne Education Association to provide iPads to the Preakness Healthcare Center, so families can connect to their loved ones.

26. The Cinnaminson Education Association provided lunches from Georgetti's Italian Market for health care workers at Cooper Urgent Care, Med Express, and Wynwood Rehabilitation and Care Center.

27. The Elizabeth Education Association partnered with several local restaurants and businesses to help community organizations provide over 750 grab-and-go meals and fill food pantries throughout the city of Elizabeth. Using its Pride grants, EEA organized the first Grab-and-Go at the Glorious Hope Missionary Baptist Church, in the city's Elizabethport section. Nearly two hundred meals, along with personal essentials and pantry items, donated by the church were distributed to area residents by church volunteers. Two weeks later, EEA partnered with the church to provide a second Grab-and-Go. This was followed by a Grab-and-Go at Christ Fellowship Church in Midtown. EEA also partnered with New Life Direction, a nonprofit organization serving at-risk youth in the city's Bayway section. Volunteers from New Life Direction delivered 150 complete meals to the families of youths they mentor and area residents. Lastly, the EEA was asked by St. Joseph's Service Center to help supply families with basic food needs. With Pride funding, EEA purchased and donated over \$400-worth of nonperishable items to help stock St. Joseph's Service Center pantry.

PLANNING FOR BACK TO SCHOOL

GOOD CONTRACT LANGUAGE INCREASES YOUR RIGHTS FOR ACTION

BY DOROTHY WIGMORE

School may be out, but the pandemic has taught us many things. One is that governments are sometimes slow or missing in action when it comes to enforcing health and safety when it's most needed. Union members need other tools to protect themselves, their co-workers and their communities.

When schools open in the state, health and safety issues will be there.

If asbestos needs to go, what's happening? If the gym still has mercury flooring, when will it be removed? If mold or indoor air quality problems were on your plate, what's been done? Are less toxic cleaning products and processes in place? How do we have a healthy and safe workplace with the novel coronavirus?

Whether they are long-time issues, new concerns, or questions related to the pandemic, activists and local associations can start considering them. Groundwork done between now and when schools open will pay off.

WHAT ARE THE PRINCIPLES BEHIND WORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY?

Principles should guide our actions and the solutions we demand:

- Health is the condition of being sound in body, mind and spirit.
- Everyone has the right to a healthy and safe job, i.e., health and safety is a human right.
- Prevention is our goal, and the most effective measure, personal protective equipment is

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 last resort (but sometimes necessary).

- Hazards are the problem, especially those related to how work is organized.
- Employers are supposed to fix hazards, not blame workers (e.g., behavior-based programs).
- Solutions (goals) and strategies (how to get them) are different.
- Worker participation is essential in all health and safety activities and decisions.

Tools, such as the six categories for hazards, are useful. As the graphic shows, work organization is at the center because it affects everything. The categories help organize thinking about the problems, inspect for them, and develop solutions. Your school is bound to have items in each category.

Other useful tools or participatory processes include:

- Body maps that make symptoms, including stress, visible.
- Workplace maps using the hazard categories, marks where people usually are found, and more (check "Seeing the workplace with new eyes" in resources sidebar).
- Participatory events to gather information, explore solutions, plan activities, etc.
- Using the law, contracts and bargaining in creative ways.

See the resources sidebar for information about these ideas, and more. For now, we concentrate on bargaining.

WHY BARGAIN AROUND HEALTH AND SAFETY?

Districts must bargain and provide information about health and safety—it's mandatory. Contracts can use the good parts of the law and policies and improve on inadequate ones.

Once language around health and safety matters is in the contract, members or local

associations can file grievances to get problems fixed. Grievances often move faster and are more reliable than counting on state inspectors. Moreover, there are many hazards that the law doesn't cover, or deal with well. This includes mold, infectious diseases—despite the COVID-19 pandemic—or problem-solving processes, such as effective ones to refuse dangerous work.

Grievances and contract campaigns build members' support and enthusiasm for health and safety, especially if they're involved and they care about the topic. Such campaigns and grievances can build activist skills among members. It builds the union, even when you don't win all you want.

Challenges exist because bargaining is a process of identifying priorities and negotiating trade-offs. Consider this in planning demands and building support for them.

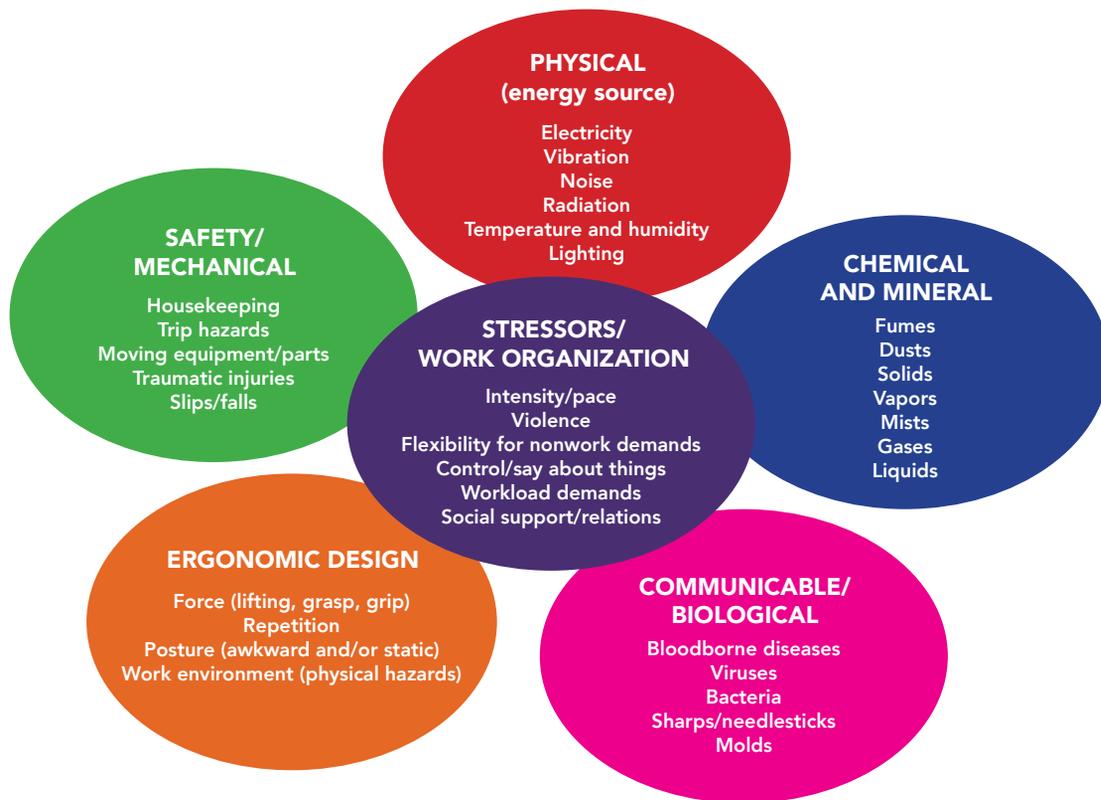
PREPARING FOR BARGAINING

Like other union activities, health and safety bargaining takes preparation, member participation, and organizing. Among other things you need to know:

- What's already in the contract about hazards or processes, such as refusing dangerous work?
- What about topics such as technological change, job design, hours of work, schedules, staff levels, workload, privatization (all stressors/work organization hazards)?
- What loopholes has the local encountered or anticipates?
- What issues has the local dealt with in the last few years? What are the lessons from those efforts?
- What are members' past and current questions, concerns, and priorities (participatory methods include body maps, workplace maps, surveys, brainstorming sessions)?

WHAT CAUSES OUR SYMPTOMS?

SIX CATEGORIES OF HAZARDS!



- What do the *NJEA Review* health and safety articles inspire? (e.g., using less toxic cleaning products, cleaning mold. See njea.org/issues/health-safety).
 - What are the best solutions for those concerns/hazards, including processes to get them? (use the Solidarity solutions chart in *Seeing the workplace with new eyes*).
 - What do other locals or unions have in their contracts? (see the *NJEA Health and Safety Manual*).
 - Ask: “If you—members—ran the world, what would a healthy and safe workplace look like?” (a participatory activity to make drawings and discuss how to get there; see *Educating for Changing Unions, Beautiful Trouble*)
 - How can you expand the union’s right to inspect for hazards to include “inspection notices,” the law in several countries? (see resources).
 - What would create equity for workers from traditionally marginalized groups?
 - How do our demands build the union?
- Other steps are:
- 1. Set priorities.** Don’t try to solve every problem through the contract. Is it the best way to address that issue? (See the Bargaining priority checklist from *Tools of the Trade*).
 - 2. Collect the information you need.** Involve members to build support, enthusiasm and leadership skills.
 - 3. Work with the bargaining team.**
 - 4. Launch a bargaining campaign.** Keep members informed with updates, “speak-outs” about members’ experiences, etc.
 - 5. Negotiate and ratify the agreement.** Anticipate management’s responses and counteroffers. Support the bargaining team with feedback before they accept or reject offers. Celebrate victories.
 - 6. Enforce the contract and evaluate results.** Report to members regularly about both, about health and safety.

Resources

Beautiful Trouble: Narrative Power Analysis, and other tools, beautifultrouble.org

Educating for Changing Unions, by Bev Burke Jojo Geronimo, D’Arcy Martin, Barb Thomas and Carol Wall, btlbooks.com/book/education-for-changing-unions

NJEA Health and Safety Manual, www.njea.org/download/1784

Seeing the Workplace With New Eyes, By Dorothy Wigmore, Wigmorising.Ca/Seeing-Jobs-With-New-Eyes

Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP): *Tools of The Trade: A Health and Safety Handbook for Action*, lohp.org/tools-of-the-trade

Bargaining Priority Checklist (from *Tools of the Trade*): [Wigmorising.Ca/.....](http://Wigmorising.Ca/)

The Charley Richardson Guide to Kicking Ass for the Working Class: Continuous Bargaining, by Charley Richardson, charleyrichardson.org

Provisional/Union inspection notices:

- Hazards: PINs and UINs, hazards.org/notices
- WorkSafe New Zealand: Provisional inspection notices, bit.ly/worksafepin

A CLOSER LOOK ...at essential careers and the heroes around us



As we adapt to the challenges we are all facing, recognizing the essential employees who keep us safe, nourished, and healthy has never been more important. “Classroom Close-up NJ” has covered many stories highlighting the people in these professions and taken a closer look at what their work looks like.

To survey the broad selection of show segments Classroom Close-up NJ has produced about school libraries, visit classroomcloseup.org, click on drop-down menu under “Categories” and select among the multiple subject areas.

On this page, we highlight three stories about essential services and the people who are sharing information about their careers to inspire the next generation of heroes.

LESSONS IN MEDICINE

Medicine is an ever-growing field and a great opportunity for future employment, but students at Cherry Hill High School West can see if it is a good fit. A Cherry Hill West partnership with Virtua Hospital enables students to spend two days a week attending labs, observing virtual surgeries, doing clerical work and understanding what it takes to be a nurse.

HEROES LUNCHEON

Teachers aren’t the only people in our public schools making an impact on children and their community. The educational support professionals at Charles Lewis Middle School in Blackwood host a “Heroes Luncheon” for firefighters, police officers and other local heroes. The cafeteria staff prepare the meal, while the custodial and paraprofessionals help with all the details. The students also get involved by writing thank you notes and making posters and centerpieces.

TOOLS OF THE MIND

Preschoolers at Walnut Ridge Primary School in Vernon Township gain valuable tools by visiting a grocery store where they learn colors, math, vocabulary and much more. The school uses Tools of the Mind Curriculum to enhance learning for the preschoolers.



WATCH CCU ON NJTV



classroomcloseup.org

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

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

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MODIFICATIONS THROUGH REMOTE LEARNING

BY AMANDA BECK, NJEA PRESERVICE MEMBER AT THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY

Because of COVID-19 (Coronavirus), teachers and students have been adjusting to remote learning. This looks different for every school district.

For some, this involves packets or Google Classroom, and for some it is a combination of both. For many teachers and students, this is their first time experiencing this change. Remote learning can be difficult for a typical student of any age, but it can be even more difficult for a student with a differing ability. Some students with differing abilities need someone in front of them to hold them accountable, verbal instruction, visual instruction, assignments broken down, and so forth. These vary from student to student.

Many teachers are struggling with how to provide these modifications through online learning and the worksheets or packets they sent home. Even though remote learning looks different grade to grade, keep these suggestions in mind that may be helpful to all students.

KEEP IT CONSISTENT

All students need consistency, but especially those with differing abilities. When assigning and turning in work, holding lectures, introducing a new topic, it is important to keep it consistent. For example, if every week your students do a journal, make it always due on Thursdays. Also, the way that they turn it in should always be the same. If they are emailing a picture, then keep it the same week to week. If you send Google slides with audio to your students to introduce a new topic, always do it that way.

By keeping it consistent, your students will feel more comfortable completing the work and they can focus on the material and topics.

GIVE DIRECTIONS IN DIFFERENT WAYS

On a platform, such as Google Classroom, some students may struggle with just reading instructions. A way around this is to record yourself giving instructions and embed the video. Another option is to host a Google Hangout or Zoom with those specific students who would benefit from hearing the instructions. Keep in mind that you should only be using such tools if they are approved by the district in which you are working.

Make sure that instructions are simple, straightforward. For example, if the assignment is for your students to make a poster about a specific state and post a picture, clearly outline the information that you want your students to cover. Maybe put this in a checklist format. This way your students know what is expected of them.

USE PARENT COMMUNICATION TO YOUR ADVANTAGE

If you have a strong classroom community and communications with parents already established, continue to use that. Ask your parents how their child is working at home and what they may be struggling with. You can also host a Google Hangout or Zoom meeting—if this is available to you—to host a face-to-face meeting.

If you would feel more comfortable, reach out through your guidance department to connect to parents. By checking in with students, they will feel like they are not in this alone. This input can help you understand how to best support that student.

MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE USING ALL OF YOUR RESOURCES

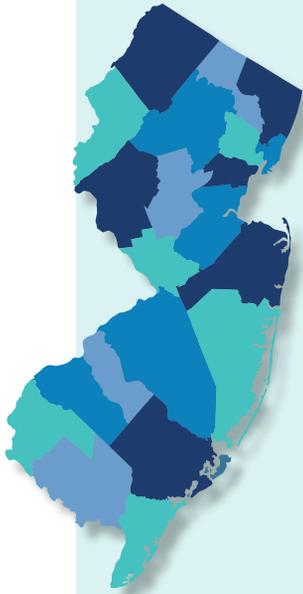
Look back at the documentation, logs and data that you have collected on your students. Use this data to help make decisions as to how you will support your students. Reach out to the child study team to discuss additional supports. They may also be a good resource to reach out to the parents in addition to the guidance department.

MODIFY AND CHUNK ASSIGNMENTS

If you are assigning a large task or project, chunk it for your students. For example, if you are having your students do a PowerPoint on a president of their choice, first give instructions to choosing a president. Next, give them instructions on how to research that president with a checklist of the type of information you are looking for. Then, instruct them to put it in a PowerPoint. The key is to not give them all of these chunks at once. Wait until they turn in each piece to give them the next. If you do this, your students will feel less overwhelmed and increase their success.

All teachers want all of their students to be successful and it is imperative that, even though we are learning online or through packets, we still need to provide modifications to our assignments for students with differing abilities. I hope that these tips are helpful. 🍌

SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT LEARNING.NJEA.ORG

The NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division has developed guidance on a number of issues and has recorded a series of webinars addressing a wide variety of issues being brought forth by our members.

The webinars address a variety of topics, including but not limited to:

- Conversations on equity and inclusivity (Freestyle Fridays)
- Professional growth
- Health and safety
- Tools for working remotely
- Information management
- Working safely and maintaining privacy in a remote environment
- Online pedagogy

All topic areas have webinars designed for educational support professionals (ESPs), certificated staff, or both. Live presentations are recorded and stored at learning.njea.org as a professional development resource.

Members seeking to earn a certificate of attendance for participating in a live webinar, should log on to njea.org to ensure that their profiles are up-to-date, especially your email address. Certificates will be automatically added to your “My PD Transcript.”

Later, when signing into WebEx, provide your full name and email address matching the information in your NJEA profile. Remain for the duration of the event. For certificated staff, be sure to work with your district administrator/supervisor to update your Professional Development Plan (PDP) to include webinar content.

To access the webinars and resources, and for more information, visit learning.njea.org.

TEACHERS GROW OFFERS FREE ONLINE RESOURCES, COACHING FOR EDUCATORS

Teachers Grow, found at www.teachersgrow.com, is a free online resource for teachers offering access to lesson ideas, strategies and coaching supports. Teachers Grow, LLC, was launched this past fall and has hundreds of site visitors who enjoy the ability to “Grow into their Greatness” as teachers who experience genuine interactions with real peers within a safe social media forum.

Teachers can receive supports from personal teaching coaches who volunteer their time to provide suggestions and advice. Teachers can give and receive support while sharing and exchanging ideas and strategies with peers, as well as view prerecorded videos of lessons and trainings. Once teachers register, they receive free access to an extensive catalog of training and model lessons and training videos as well as children’s book reviews with modeled read-alouds. Teachers Grow encourages teachers to upload and share educational resources, images of children’s work, projects, class displays, tried-and-true management ideas, research articles, and more.

NJEA member Donna Gilbert-Akins is the creator of Teachers Grow. During the early years, her passion for teaching young learners was ignited in Newark, teaching preschool through fourth-grade students. Soon thereafter she began providing coaching supports and professional development to early education teachers throughout the state.

“Coach Donna” has spent the past 17 years observing, coaching and supervising pre-K and kindergarten teachers in Newark, Asbury Park, Winfield Township, and Trenton. When her passion for providing coaching supports to thousands of teachers became possible via the internet, this 30-year New Jersey teaching veteran wasted no time bringing her idea for an online educational portal for teachers to life.



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NJREA CENTENNIAL EVENT RESCHEDULED

As many retirees have heard, the NJREA 100th Anniversary Committee rescheduled its May 3 gala event for the safety and health of participants, as well as state regulations during the pandemic crisis. However, we still plan to celebrate, and it's not too late for you to attend!

NJREA members can mark their calendars for Sunday, Oct. 4, from 12:30-4:30 p.m. to join us at the Grand Marquis in Old Bridge, where 500 NJREA members, NJEA staff and friends will gather to recognize our achievements over the last 100 years and salute more than 50 NJEA/NJREA members who are centenarians as well.

As promised, party-goers can expect fine food, live entertainment, a photo booth, and a gift of a commemorative frame. A memory book featuring photos and a historical retrospective of NJREA's accomplishments on behalf of public education and

its employees will be a must-see while you are there.

All members who sent in their reservations to attend the original spring event are considered confirmed and paid in full for Oct. 4, and nothing more needs to be done. However, if you need to cancel your reservation, contact Dianne Papadinec, NJREA treasurer, at dpapadinec@njea.org no later than Aug. 1 to receive a refund. No refunds will be available after that date.

Any member who did not respond to attend the original event is welcome to join us on Oct. 4. All new reservations will be accepted until Aug. 1. Please use the RSVP card enclosed in the June NJREA Newsletter to join the celebration.

Can't make the rescheduled event but still want to be a part of it? Become a 100th Anniversary Celebration sponsor. Interested members can learn more by visiting njea.org/njrea.

NJREA FALL LUNCHEON SCHEDULED FOR SEPT. 24

Attention public education advocates: Are you looking to make the most of your NJREA membership? Want to hear the latest on pensions and benefits news? Then mark your calendars and join NJREA on Thursday, Sept. 24 for its annual Fall Meeting, where retirees will continue to remain informed and be inspired.

This popular member event will be held at the Nottingham Ballroom in Hamilton. Any members wishing to attend must use the coupon insert found in the June NJREA Newsletter and send their reservations in before Sept. 14.

The day's activities will begin at 10 a.m. with the Delegate Council meeting, where officers and representatives attend to the business of the organization. Any members wishing to bring business to the Delegate Council should indicate their intentions in the speaker's book upon arrival at the luncheon.

Attendees are also welcome to choose to arrive in time for the "Member Information Session" beginning at 11 a.m. Members are urged to attend this session to hear important updates and the latest news affecting our union and its members. There is also time provided for questions and answers.

Reserve your spot now

The cost of the fall luncheon is \$33 per person, which includes breakfast, lunch and all taxes and gratuities. Members still have the option to come for breakfast only, for a cost of \$5. **Reminder: As per NJREA policy, any individuals who are eligible for NJREA membership who have elected not to join are not permitted to attend as guests. Only NJREA members and NJREA-invited guests may attend luncheons, business meetings and workshops throughout the year.**

Please remember that attendees are no longer be allowed to reserve tables upon arrival. Any members wishing to sit with their counties should indicate this intention on the coupon form. Reserved seating requests will be honored only if received on or before the registration deadline.

To register, send the coupon found in the June NJREA Newsletter or on njea.org/njrea, along with your check (payable to NJREA) to Joan Wright, NJREA First Vice President, by Sept. 14. Be sure to include your meal choice of balsamic chicken, salmon in dill sauce or eggplant parmigiana.

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 and the subsequent executive orders issued by Gov. Phil Murphy, the following county retirement education association (REA) events have been cancelled:
Monmouth County REA's 60th Anniversary Jubilee (June 9)
Morris County REA meeting (June 10)

EVENTS STILL SCHEDULED

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

The MORRIS COUNTY REA'S

Welcome Back meeting/luncheon will be held on Wednesday, Sept. 9 at the Birchwood Manor in Whippany. The cost is \$35. To attend, call John Beekman at 973-514-1080.

WARREN COUNTY REA will

hold its fall next meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, Sept. 2 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.

All scheduled events are subject to change because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

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GLOBAL LEARNING & PARTNERSHIPS

YOUR SUMMER READING LIST

FROM THE NJEA PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND INSTRUCTIONAL ISSUES DIVISION

Amid the busyness and noise that is typical at the end of a school year, we often begin to dream about some quiet time alone with a good book. But this year is anything but typical. With the massive amount of screen time we have all experienced, and the call for social distancing and quarantines, curling up with a good book might be needed now more than ever. With that in mind, we give you this year's summer reading recommendations from the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division (PDII).

Equity and justice are on the minds of the PDII staff members this season, as can be seen by many of their reading choices.

Dr. Chrissi Miles suggests *Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption* by Bryan Stevenson. The author paints a disturbing picture of America's broken criminal justice system. As a lawyer fighting for justice for America's most historically marginalized communities, he depicts the systemic racism and injustice that still exist today. Throughout his experiences, Stevenson learns that human connection, understanding and empathy are the key to justice and redemption.

Gabriel Tanglao finds inspiration in the work of the keynote speakers from last year's NJEA Convention in *Tell Me Who You Are: Sharing Our Stories of Race, Culture, and Identity* by Winona Guo and Priya Vulchi. This is an amazing collection of stories from people across the country describing their experiences with race, culture and identity. It was compiled by two young women from New Jersey helping a new generation become more racially literate.

Priority Schools coordinator, Amanda Adams, and NJEA Convention coordinator Janet

Royal were both moved by the same book, *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies* by Resmaa Menakem. The book calls on all of us to recognize that racism is not about the head but about the body. It introduces an alternative view of what we can do to grow beyond our entrenched racialized divide.

Continuing this theme, Camy Kobylinski recommends *How to Be an Antiracist*, by Ibram X. Kendi, who shares his exploration of internalized and institutionalized racism. He makes a distinction between being "not racist," a passive state, and being "antiracist." He challenges the reader to consider why in a world where most people consider themselves not racist, racism still exists.

Elisabeth Yucis, the newest member of the division suggests *The Moment of Lift* by Melinda Gates. The central thesis of this phenomenal text is—to borrow Gates' own words—that "when you lift up women, you lift up humanity." Gates shares stories of child marriage and maternal health initiatives from abroad, while reflecting on her own experiences balancing work and motherhood. The work of uplifting those on the margins is central to what we do as educators, and you are sure to experience a deep resonance between Gates' narrative and your own work.

Shifting to personal growth, Mike Ritzius suggests *Presence* by Peter Senge, Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski and Betty Sue Flowers. These authors discuss how striving for deeper self-awareness and seeing ourselves as part of a greater whole are the foundational steps for transformational systemic change. They discuss

how these changes offer fresh possibilities for shifting a world that is dangerously out of balance.

Rich Wilson, coordinator of the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy, continues the theme of personal growth, encouraging educators to explore *Onward: Cultivating Emotional Resilience in Educators* by Elena Aguilar. The author understands—perhaps better than anyone else in the field of education—the need for educators to reflect on and take care of their emotional needs. With compassion and empathy, she lays out 12 habits and dispositions that help educators better understand and develop their whole selves.

Director of the division, Michael Cohan, looks for inspiration in past presidents in *Leadership for Turbulent Times* by Doris Kearns Goodwin. The famous historian helps us learn the lessons of prominent past U.S. presidents who dealt with dramatic reversals that disrupted the country. She examines how their leadership moved us forward. As we move from what promises to be a turbulent summer to a very significant presidential election, we need these lessons about the type of leadership our country needs.

The members of the PDII Division staff hope that this year's summer reading recommendations provide a needed respite from a uniquely challenging school year, while still fostering reflection and opportunities for growth. In a year's end that required juggling remote instruction for your students—and, if you have children, supporting their remote instruction—while caring for and worrying about parents, friends and neighbors, make sure to take the opportunity for some self-care with a good book this summer. 📖





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 - Buyer's Edge, Inc.** – Residential Home Funding at 800-971-7721 (Give them Group #: 3386 and Code: NJEA)
 - NEA Member Benefits** – First National Bank of Omaha at 855-290-9454
3. Visit NEAMB.com for money saving tips and offers on home office supplies, meals, personal care items, pet care, gifts and much more.
4. Always check memberbenefits.njea.org and search our full Member Benefits Directory to see if an affiliated provider has what you are looking for at a discount not offered to the general public.

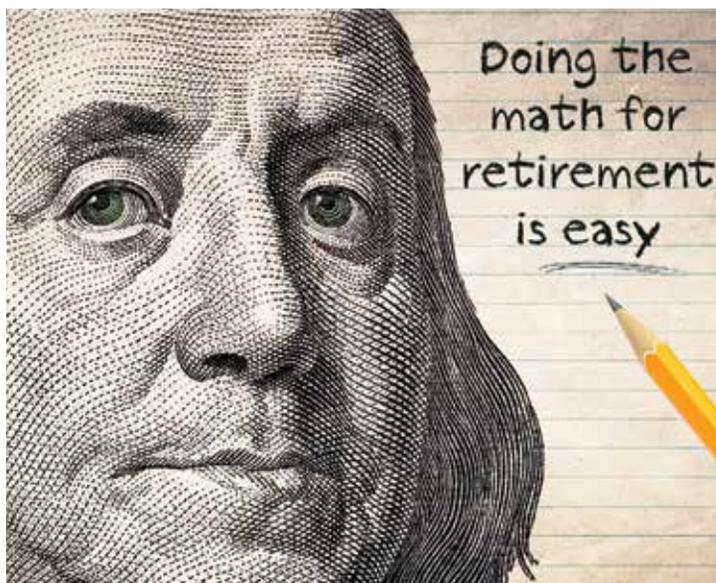
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STAFF NEWS

HIRES AND PROMOTIONS



NJEA welcomed **LOU RANDAZZO** on April 1 as a UniServ field representative in the Region 2 office in Mullica Hill. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Randazzo worked as the coordinator of communications for Deptford Public Schools, where he had previously taught English language arts at both the middle and high school levels.

For five years, he was president of the Deptford Education Association. Since 2016, Randazzo had been a part-time UniServ consultant in Region 2. He had been a consultant in the Communications Division since 2017. Randazzo earned a master's degree in school leadership from Wilmington University and a bachelor's degree in public relations from Rowan University. He lives in Haddonfield with his wife, Jayme, and their two children, Piper and Sam.



NJEA welcomed **RYAN STOFFER** on April 16 as a software application developer in the Information Systems office of the NJEA Business Division. Stouffer's 20-years of experience in software development covers a variety of information technology applications. He most recently worked at Continuum Health as director of Development Operations from 2010 through 2019. From 2010,

Stouffer was a principal consultant architect at DXC in Marlton. He holds a bachelor's degree in associative computer science and robotics from California University of Pennsylvania. Stouffer lives in Mount Laurel with his wife, Tammy, and their sons, Ryan II and Nathan. Ryan's hobbies include 3-D printing and robotics.

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NEW JERSEY MONTHLY NAMES NJEA STAFF MEMBER, PATERSON EA MEMBER AMONG 10 MILLENNIALS TO WATCH

Gabriel Tanglao, an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division was named by *New Jersey Monthly* as one of 10 millennials to watch. The article, subtitled “A new generation has begun to step up and embrace leadership roles in government, education, social activism and business,” appeared in the publication’s March 2020 edition.

The article notes that Tanglao’s father emigrated from the Phillipines to New Jersey with a high school education and that his son, Gabe, holds two master’s degrees. “That arc of our story in one generation is the foundation of what defines me,” Tanglao told *New Jersey Monthly*. He traces his union activism to his mother, a nurse.

New Jersey Monthly lauds Tanglao for his social justice activism and his work on student debt, wealth inequality and access to education.

PATERSON EA MEMBER ZELLIE THOMAS

NJEA is proud that also among the 10 listed is Paterson Education Association member Zellie Thomas. *New Jersey Monthly* notes that “Zellie Thomas learned early on that education could be liberating for disadvantaged youths.” Thomas teaches third-grade math at Paterson School 16, where he is an association representative. He is also co-founder of Black Lives Matter of Paterson. The article notes that Thomas traveled to Ferguson, Missouri to protest the shooting death of Michael Brown. The article further points out that “he was arrested while protesting the death of Jameek Lowery, a Paterson resident who suffered a cardiac arrest after leaving police custody beaten and bruised.”

Most recently, Thomas was featured on “Good Morning America” for organizing a program to deliver meals to seniors who cannot get out of their homes or afford groceries in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2018, NJEA awarded Thomas the NJEA Dr. Martin Luther King Human and Civil Rights Award.

The *New Jersey Monthly* article can be read at njmonthly.com/articles/jersey-living/millennials-to-watch.



Gabe Tanglao speaking at the NJEA Equity Alliance Weekend on Jan. 10, 2020



Zellie Thomas receiving the NJEA Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Human and Civil Rights Award in 2018. From left: NJEA President Marie Blistan, Thomas, then-chair of the NJEA Human and Civil Rights Committee Jacqui Greadington.

IT'S THE ASSEMBLY'S TURN

TO ACT ON HEALTH CARE AND JOB JUSTICE FOR ESPS

Without a doubt we are in a time like no other. The human toll of this pandemic will shape us for more than a generation. But as NJEA members, you've done what you can always be counted on to do—you have risen to meet the moment.

It's painful to know that we will not see our students in our school buildings again this year. It's heartbreaking that this year's seniors are missing the rituals that generations before them took for granted: proms, senior trips, yearbook signings, graduation ceremonies and so much more. But for students at all levels, there are losses and missed once-in-a-lifetime opportunities that cannot be recaptured, despite our efforts to make the best of a difficult situation.

In the midst of this loss, you have helped to soften the blow and provide a sense of routine and familiarity to your students. Almost overnight, you reconfigured everything you do while continuing to provide essential services, such as feeding students and looking after their social and emotional well-being. Parents appreciate what you've done and applaud your everyday acts of heroism. In fact, in a national survey conducted in April, the National Education Association found that 88% of parents approve of the job you are doing in the midst of the pandemic. More than half responded that they strongly approve of the job you're doing.

Compounding the physical and emotional toll of the pandemic is its financial impact. Levels of unemployment not seen since the Great Depression fill everyone from those in the middle class to those for whom economic insecurity is nothing new, with dread and anxiety. NJEA members are not immune from this financial

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It's the right thing for educators. It's the right thing for our schools. It's the right thing for New Jersey.

anxiety as school districts seek to balance their budgets in the midst of losses in state aid and the uncertainty of federal assistance.

It might seem, in these troubled times, that relief from the crushing burden of Ch. 78 health insurance payroll deductions would be unattainable. But it's not! Thanks to S-2273, which passed in the state Senate on March 19, relief is closer than ever. Under the bill, which is strongly supported by NJEA, NJEA members and school districts would save a combined \$1 billion a year. And S-2273 didn't just pass; it passed unanimously, 34-0. When every Democrat and every Republican agree on a plan to lower health care costs while preserving access to high-quality health care for school employees—and that plan has the full support of NJEA—something truly remarkable has happened.

As the world seems more insecure, greater job security, fairness and professional dignity is vital for the unsung heroes of New Jersey's public

schools: the educational support professionals (ESPs) who drive the buses, prepare the meals, maintain school facilities, assist in the classrooms and keep the offices running, among countless other key roles. They helped create the nation's best schools. During this pandemic, they've helped ensure the safety and welfare of students. When we eventually return to our school buildings, their role will be more critical than ever.

NJEA's advocacy for ESPs due-process rights, which other public employees take for granted, has never wavered. And contracts, once signed, must be honored. NJEA has been fighting for job justice measures like these for ESPs for even longer than it has been fighting for Ch. 78 relief, and victory is on the horizon there as well.

On the same day it passed Ch. 78 relief, the Senate passed two job justice bills: S-993 by a vote of 31-3 and S-1928 by a vote of 32-2. S-993 ensures due-process rights for ESPs and S-1928 provides protections for ESPs against the subcontracting of their work.

The governor has repeatedly and publicly pledged his support for both Ch. 78 relief and job justice for ESPs. It's time for the Assembly to move these bills to his desk. We hope that by the time you read this Final Exam column, the Assembly will have done just that. If so, be sure to thank your Assembly members. If not, visit actioncenter.njea.org to write to your Assembly members urging them honor the work of ESPs and provide health insurance relief to both taxpayers and educators.

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Topics include but are not limited to:

- Conversations on equity and inclusivity (Freestyle Fridays)
- Professional growth
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- Information management
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- Online pedagogy

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