

# REVIEW

MARCH  
2021  
njea.org



*an education and advocacy resource*



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During the snowstorm on Feb. 2, Jennifer Zechmeister, an administrative assistant at Lincoln School in Pompton Lakes, made an NJEA snowperson.



On Feb. 10, Victoria Law-Wright, a member of the Monmouth County Vocational Education Association received her second dose of the COVID vaccine. She posted this photo on the NJEA Members of Color Facebook page.



## Relax and Reflect...

*"Part of the conversations that we need to have in terms of decolonization is really looking at our own cultures. Challenging the systems within our own cultures and say why do we have to oppress others just because they are different? Why not look at each other as an intersectional community? Instead of squashing each other, destroying each other?"*

- Gladys Marquez, NEA Hispanic Caucus Chair

At the NJEA Equity Alliance on Jan. 15-16, (l-r, top and bottom) Lizandaa Alburg, Tiffanie ThrBak, Carmen Torres and Vilmory Hernandez discuss a statement from the NEA Hispanic Caucus Chair during a workshop titled Decolonizing Curriculum: Indigenous, Latinx and Hispanic.

# FEATURES



## 22 | PANDEMIC PE

Like her colleagues across the state, when Sussex County Teacher of the Year Meghan Radimer was separated from her students because of COVID, she searched for a way to connect with them, to continue teaching, and to let them know she cared about them. Leaning into her lessons on goal setting, she shared with them her goal to run one mile for each of them.

BY MEGHAN RADIMER



## 26 | MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR ATLANTIC CITY STUDENTS

As the secretary to an assistant principal at Atlantic City High School, Carla Davis-Smith was aware of the challenges students faced with remote learning. Armed with the results of survey she conducted that revealed the impact that isolation and stress were having on students, she reached out to colleagues, administrators, her association and her community for help.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



## 28 | FOOD LITERACY AND GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Food is universal. We all have a story, an experience and an emotional connection to food. In this way, food is the perfect vehicle to teach students complex concepts using a tangible, relatable topic. A former classroom teacher who is now the program development administrator for the New Jersey Healthy Kids Initiative, Erin Comollo, has firsthand experience with the transformational learning that occurs when we teach food literacy and global citizenship education to students of all ages.

BY ERIN COMOLLO



## 34 | TEACHING STUDENTS TO THINK LIKE EXPLORERS

The National Geographic Educator Certification program is available to PreK-12th grade formal and informal educators. It inspires educators to lead their students through powerful activities resulting in a level of engagement that keeps students curious, empowered and ready to change the world.

BY LISA ABRAMOVITZ

## 38 | CONTROVERSY IN THE CLASSROOM



We are living in turbulent times. Now more than ever before, classroom teachers are faced with addressing students' concerns and questions they have over events unfolding before their eyes. How can educators facilitate respectful discussions of controversial topics?

BY NORMAN GOLDMAN AND ERIC FIELDMAN

# 237

With the addition of the Bloomingdale School District in February, there are 237 school districts in the School Employees' Health Benefits Program.

Source: NJEA Research and Economic Services Division



## On the cover

Sussex County Teacher of the Year Meghan Radimer on the day she completed her goal to run one mile for each of her students. Radimer is a physical education and health teacher in Stillwater. See pages 22-25.

PHOTO BY  
Ryan Earley



# GOOD NEWS

## Leading the country in giving children the chance to succeed

New Jersey ranks among the top two states in Education Week's "Chance for Success Index," which measures a state's ability to give its children the greatest chance for success and shows that it is doing more in preparing young people for the challenges they will face as adults.

Source: Education Week. Quality Counts 2020: Grading the States. January 2020.



# REVIEW



Editorial Director Steven Baker  
 Editor Patrick Rumaker  
 Associate Editor Kathryn Coulibaly  
 Art Director Jennifer C. Marsh  
 Graphic Designer Jennifer Larson  
 Advertising Liz Murphy

180 W. State St., P.O. Box 1211, Trenton, NJ 08607-1211 • 609-599-4561 • NJEA.org

**President: Marie Blistan | Vice President: Sean M. Spiller | Secretary-Treasurer: Steve Beatty**

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 Email: [NJEAreview@NJEA.org](mailto:NJEAreview@NJEA.org)

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# MARKING THE PANDEMIC ANNIVERSARY WITH A STORY OF HOPE



NJEA President Marie Blistan

This month marks one year from the beginning of the global pandemic that has upended all of our lives. Over the past year, we have struggled to find new ways to connect, to keep each other safe, to ensure our students' access to a quality education and to find a way forward through these challenging times.

That is why I found Meghan Radimer's story of connection and motivation to be so powerful. Meghan, a PreK-6th grade physical education and health teacher is also the Sussex County Teacher of the Year. She is an impressive athlete in her own right, and she used her passion to motivate and connect with her students, even when they could not be together.

Meghan, an avid runner, decided to run a mile for each student in her school. She posted the results of her runs every few days so the students

could see the progress she was making, follow along with her, and encourage her.

In 35 days, Meghan ran 255 miles—one for each of her students and one bonus mile. She made a video of her project and shared it with her students.

I think what makes this story so powerful is its simplicity: Meghan found a way to connect with her students and let them know she was thinking of them while also demonstrating how staying active can help them deal with challenging times. In good or bad weather, Meghan found a way to run and she showed her students that she would let nothing stop her. By her example, she showed students how to set goals, break them down to manageable steps, motivate themselves, and achieve them.

We know that we still have many obstacles ahead of us, but Meghan's story really drives home how dedicated we are to overcoming challenges and how we can turn to each other through our union and keep going.

NJEA members have done so much to keep our students happy, healthy, safe and learning, even during a pandemic. You are the backbone not only of your communities and our state, but the world, because you are building our future one student at a time. Thank you for everything you do to meet our students' unique needs. Working together, as educators and advocates, I know we will continue to meet the challenges we face.

I hope that you will join with me in celebrating ESPs. Together, as a united association, we have built the best system of public education in the nation. Together, we will face whatever other challenges come our way. Thank you for all that you do to make the future brighter for our students, our communities, our profession and our country.

*Marie Blistan*

## OFFICERS ONLINE

### MARIE BLISTAN

Twitter

@MarieBlistan: @NJEA a great meeting hosted by Eric Jones: presidents & vps of color from NJ and Delaware share communication strategies! Thank you, leaders & special thanks to Delaware Pres Stephanie Ingram!

On Feb. 1, as Black History Month began, Marie Blistan tweeted to celebrate a members of color meeting tailored for local association leaders from both New Jersey and Delaware. NJEA Field Representative Eric Jones facilitated the meeting, which focused on communication strategies.

### SEAN M. SPILLER

Twitter

@SpillerforNJEA: Here comes 46! Congratulations America!

On Jan. 20, Sean M. Spiller celebrated the inauguration of the 46th president of the United States, Joe Biden. Biden and his running mate, Kamala Harris, earned NJEA and NEA's endorsement because they promised to listen to and work with educators on all issues affecting public education. Spiller's tweet captures the much-anticipated excitement of a new administration.

### STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@Steve BeattyNJEA: It may have been virtual, but that did not stop 600+ members from 'showing up' at our Winter Leadership Conference south and actively participating. Great sessions on the tried and true elements of union advocacy as well as several new sessions devoted to our work on equity: Trauma Informed Care, Critical Conversations Around Race & Privilege: Ensuring Equity & Inclusion in our Association, REAL Action Network, and Transforming White Privilege.

And, a "200,000 Conversations" lunch training session attended by over 150 members who want to be part of our new initiative to strengthen our Association at the grass-roots level by reaching out to engage every single member through authentic and sustained one-to-one conversations.

On Jan. 31, Steve Beatty offered a thorough recap of the NJEA's first all virtual Winter Leadership Conference. More than 600 members attended the first of the three Winter Leadership Conferences. Beatty also encouraged NJEA members to join the "200K @ NJEA" initiative, and you can learn more about the initiative at [njea.org/200k](https://njea.org/200k).

# KNOW. LEAD. ACT.

## NJEA ELECTIONS SLATED FOR APRIL

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

Information provided by the candidates running for NJEA secretary-treasurer will appear in next month's *NJEA Review*.

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

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

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

For complete elections rules and procedures, visit [njea.org/njeaelections](http://njea.org/njeaelections).

## YOUR TURN

### "A soothing balm on my soul"

*Editor's note: In February, Teaneck teacher Todd Murphy sent the following email to Irvington teacher Sundjata Sekou. The article he refers to, "Why We Need More Black Men in the Classroom," was written by Sekou for the October 2020 edition of the Review. The email is printed with his permission.*

I just wanted to say thank you, brother. I have read and reread your article over and over again—some days it's like a soothing balm on my soul.

I have been teaching in Teaneck Public Schools for about 15 years as a theater teacher. Prior to that I was an educational director at an Alternative to Incarceration program, which no longer exists, in New York City. Your article reminded me of the responsibility I have to my students and myself as a man of color. Everyone sees my "blackness" when I enter the room—not my degrees, education, or accomplishments. Just a face that knows it is responsible for those other young black faces when I walk into a classroom ... or any room.

In short, thank you for reminding me of my responsibility. It's especially hard now, teaching remotely.

Keep hope alive.

Udoka,  
Todd S. Murphy  
Teaneck Education Association

## NJEA SEEKS DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD NOMINATIONS

Do you know an individual or group that has made a significant contribution to public education in New Jersey? Nominations are now being sought for the 2021 NJEA Ruthann Sheer Award for Distinguished Service to Education. The award is named in memory of an educator from Hackensack who was its 1994 recipient. The award was first presented in 1934.

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

Any New Jersey resident or organization, including educators, may be nominated. Excluded are NJEA officers during their terms in office. Past award recipients have included state and federal lawmakers, reporters and editors, newspapers, the New Jersey Congress of Parents and Teachers, PTA leaders, former NJEA presidents and staff, State Board of Education members, museum curators, school board members, and others who have promoted public school employee rights and public schools.

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

You may nominate the individual online at [njea.org/serviceaward](http://njea.org/serviceaward).

You may also submit nominations by mail to:

NJEA  
Ruthann Sheer Distinguished Service Award  
PO Box 1211  
Trenton, NJ 08607-1211

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

Whether online or by postal mail, nominations must be received no later than June 18, 2021.

## SAVE THE DATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS WORKSHOP: MAY 1ST

Learn ways to keep your members informed and ready for action by attending the NJEA Communications Tools Workshop on Saturday, May 1. The program will be held virtually.

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

There will be six workshops to choose from covering topics such as social media for local associations, smartphone photography, creating compelling videos, newsletters, association websites, and more.

Look for details and a registration link in the April *NJEA Review*.

## THREE CANDIDATES VIE FOR NJEA SECRETARY-TREASURER

In the NJEA elections, which will be conducted as described on Page 8, three members are running for the office of NJEA secretary-treasurer. In alphabetical order, they are:

- Brenda Brathwaite
- Denise King
- Petal Robertson

Information provided by the candidates will appear in the April edition of the *NJEA Review*.

Current NJEA vice president, Sean M. Spiller, was the only candidate for president and was declared elected to that position for the 2021-23 term. Current NJEA secretary-treasurer, Steve Beatty, was the only candidate for vice president and was declared elected to that position for the 2021-23 term.

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## GET YOUR 2021 NJEA POLITICAL ACTION GUIDE

NJEA members know that as educators and advocates, it is our responsibility to engage in political action. To make that responsibility easier, NJEA's Government Relations Division has produced a digital Political Action Guide that contains the information you need to influence your elected leaders, from your local school board to the U.S. Congress. You can download the guide at [actioncenter.njea.org](http://actioncenter.njea.org).

## INTERESTED IN PRESENTING AT THE 2020 NJEA CONVENTION?

### *Proposal deadline extended to March 15.*

The Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division of NJEA is now accepting presenter proposals for the 2021 NJEA Convention to be held Nov. 4-5, 2021. All proposals to present at the NJEA Convention and at Digital Boulevard must be submitted electronically. The deadline for submission is March 15, 2021.

Please review your proposal carefully before submission. Once you click on the submit button, you will not be able to make any changes.

Here are a few things to keep in mind:

- Your request for audiovisual equipment must accompany your proposal submission. NJEA may not be able to provide equipment requested at a later date.
- NJEA does not provide computers.
- NJEA does not reproduce any program materials and will not reimburse you for reproductions costs.
- If you are a member, please have your PIN and password ready.

To submit a proposal, visit [njea.org/conventionproposal](http://njea.org/conventionproposal).

### *Presenting on Digital Boulevard*

The Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division of NJEA is also accepting proposals for Digital Boulevard at the 2021 NJEA Convention. This is your opportunity to demonstrate how you use state-of-the-art technology to enhance classroom instruction.

NJEA members can apply to present in the Teacher to Teacher Learning Area. This is an informal demonstration area for educators to network with other educators. Programs are two 50-minute sessions.

Please contact Janet L. Royal at [jroyal@njea.org](mailto:jroyal@njea.org) or 609-310-4322 with questions.

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# COOL STUFF



## NEW JERSEY HALL OF FAME ESSAY CONTEST OPENS

Who belongs in the New Jersey Hall of Fame? The New Jersey Hall of Fame wants your students to participate in the decision-making process. New Jersey public school students are invited to participate in the N.J. Hall of Fame Essay Contest. Students are asked to nominate potential inductees—living or dead—to the New Jersey Hall of Fame. Nominations can include famous people as well as ordinary citizens who do extraordinary things. Students should research or interview, if possible, the person they wish to nominate and write an essay no longer than 500 words.

Essays must be typed and double-spaced. The student must include their name, age, grade level as of April 1, 2021, address, phone number, parent/guardian's name, school name, and school district. If the essay is a school project, the student should also include the name of the teacher who assigned the activity. Nominations must be postmarked by April 1, 2021, to be eligible.

Send entries to NJ Hall of Fame Contest, Dawn Hiltner, 1411 S. 5th St., Philadelphia, PA 19147-5938, or email [dhiltner@njea.org](mailto:dhiltner@njea.org) with NJHOF Essay Contest in the subject line.

Entries will be divided into two age categories: intermediate (grades 4 through 8) and high school (grades 9-12). Entries will be judged by a panel of NJEA and New Jersey Hall of Fame representatives. Winners will be notified by June 1, 2021. The winning students will be invited to participate in the Virtual New Jersey Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in October 2021.

The winning students' nominations will be forwarded to the New Jersey Hall of Fame Academy for consideration in 2022. The Academy's 100 members, who represent a diverse group of New Jersey's most prominent organizations and media outlets, will review nominees and ultimately select Hall of Fame nominees to be put forth for the public vote in the fall. NJEA serves on the Voting Academy.

## APPLY TO JOIN THE 1619 PROJECT EDUCATION NETWORK

The Pulitzer Center invites educators, administrators, content specialists, and curriculum supervisors for K-12 schools and school districts to apply for the inaugural cohort of The 1619 Project Education Network. Educators and administrators working with adults and youth in jails, prisons, or youth detention facilities are also encouraged to apply.

As part of this paid, virtual program, a cohort of 40 education professionals will receive grants of \$5,000 each to support exploration of key questions of racial justice and other pressing issues in a community that also includes award-winning journalists and the Pulitzer Center education team.

Visit [pulitzercenter.org/1619](https://pulitzercenter.org/1619) and scroll down to "The 1619 Education Project Network to learn more and to apply. The deadline is March 15.



## NEW JERSEY HALL OF FAME OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS

The New Jersey Hall of Fame announces the renewal of the Arête Scholarship Fund. The Arête Scholarships will be awarded to a deserving male and female student graduating in 2021 from a New Jersey high school. Each recipient will receive a \$5,000 scholarship from the New Jersey Hall of Fame (NJHOF).

Arête is a concept that Plato, Socrates and Aristotle identified more than 3,000 years ago that refers to the act of actualizing one's highest sense of self with a moral excellence of character.

The NJHOF Arête Scholarship Award will be one of the highest honors that the NJHOF and the state of New Jersey can bestow upon a student, and each student will be recognized at the NJHOF's annual induction ceremony in October.

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

Scholarship applications are due on April 1, 2021. To access the scholarship application, visit [njhalloffame.org/arete](https://njhalloffame.org/arete).



## BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES

Media throughout the country have focused on the impact COVID-19 has had on young people's mental wellness. Social distancing has, for many, meant remote learning, no recreational sports, no birthday parties or school dances; no group outlet. For youth already struggling with grades or confidence or belonging, the pandemic has exacerbated their mood swings, emotional withdrawal, substance use or behavioral conditions. Families need to know that there is help available.

The New Jersey Department of Children and Families' (DCF) Division of the Children's System of Care has free or low-cost access to behavioral health support 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Please share the fliers and resources found at [nj.gov/DCF/news/publications/covid19.html](https://nj.gov/DCF/news/publications/covid19.html). Help spread the word so that at-risk youth can get the support they need.



## APPLY FOR A 2021 MUSIC AND ARTS GRANT FROM CALIFORNIA CASUALTY

### Ten NJ schools received 2020 grants

Ten New Jersey schools are getting financial support for creative arts programs, thanks to a Music and Arts Grant from California Casualty. The grants will enable the following schools to purchase and repair instruments, fund music and art curricular programs and secure much needed art supplies. The schools are:

- Florence Avenue School (Irvington)
- Haskell School (Haskell)
- Memorial High School (West New York)
- Dr. Frank Napier School of Technology (Paterson)
- Clifton Avenue Grade school (Lakewood)
- Grant School (South Plainfield)
- John Adams Elementary School (North Brunswick)
- Manchester Township High School (Manchester)
- Thomas Paine Elementary School (Cherry Hill)
- Smalley School (Bound Brook)

These 10 schools are among 146 public schools in 31 states receiving a total of \$36,500.

California Casualty's Music and Arts Grants will give more students a chance to learn music, act in a school play, or hone their artistic talents—virtually or in person—throughout the academic year.

California Casualty's Music and Arts Grant program receives applications year-round. To be considered for a 2021 award, NJEA affiliated public K-12 schools can apply for a \$250 Music and Arts Grant at [calcasmusicartsgrant.com](http://calcasmusicartsgrant.com).



## NEW JERSEY HEALTHY KIDS INITIATIVE OFFERS SUPPORT FOR NUTRITION AND FOOD LITERACY

The New Jersey Healthy Kids Initiative (NJHKI) offers free support for culinary nutrition and food literacy, professional development, consultation, content materials, and guest teaching opportunities. NJHKI builds upon the core values of the Rutgers New Jersey Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health with a focus on health equity and community partnership. By uniting with local families to pinpoint child health needs and explore where they are unmet, the NJHKI can develop a task force to address those needs. See "Food Literacy and Global Citizenship" on Page 28 to learn about an NJHKI-supported program. NJHKI (Grant ID 75084) is funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

If you are interested in working with NJHKI, email Dr. Erin Comollo at [erin.comollo@rutgers.edu](mailto:erin.comollo@rutgers.edu).

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# UNION SUCCESS AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS IN THE FACE OF POST-JANUS CHALLENGES

BY KAITLYN DUNPHY, ESQ.

In the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Janus v. AFSCME* decision in 2018, many lawsuits were filed against both public and private-sector unions, including against NEA, NJEA and their affiliates, seeking the return of dues deductions made prior to the *Janus* decision.

Some of these dues deductions were known as agency fees, which were collected from employees in a bargaining unit who chose not to join the association. Agency fees covered the costs of collective bargaining, contract enforcement and other services from which the nonunion employees benefited even though they did not join the union.

In *Janus*, the Supreme Court invalidated the longstanding practice of the collection of agency fees on First Amendment grounds. Plaintiffs in the ensuing legal challenges sought return of their agency fees and union dues going back many years. But unions, including our own, have been successful in fighting off these challenges at the highest levels in the federal court system.

NJEA has won a recent victory in one of these challenges before the federal Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in a case called *Fischer v. NJEA*. The plaintiffs in *Fischer* had resigned their membership from NJEA after *Janus* was decided. NJEA accepted their resignations immediately and ceased collecting their dues on the closest of the following dates: either one of the two contractual dates set by the union dues agreement, Jan. 1 or July 1, or within the 30-day window set by

the Workplace Democracy Enhancement Act (WDEA).

The *Fischer* plaintiffs argued that their First Amendment rights under *Janus* permit them to drop their dues obligations immediately and sued to challenge the constitutionality of the WDEA.

NJEA successfully defended this case at the trial court level and has now continued that success with a favorable decision from the Third Circuit court. In that decision, issued on Jan. 15, 2021, the court held that the plaintiffs lacked standing, meaning that they could not sue to challenge WDEA because their rights were not violated. Because NJEA accepted the earliest possible date for termination of dues—the window set by the WDEA—the WDEA actually helped the plaintiffs, the court held. Without the WDEA, the plaintiffs would have had to wait to until Jan. 1 or July 1 to stop paying dues.

More importantly, the court found that *Janus* did not give plaintiffs the right to terminate their dues obligations immediately. The plaintiffs were bound by the contractual obligations of the membership agreements they signed and had to abide by the two drop dates set forth in those agreements. *Janus* did not alter their contractual obligations. The case against the NJEA was dismissed.

The *Fischer* case is one of many similar cases filed nationally following the *Janus* decision. Nationwide, unions have been overwhelmingly successful in fending off post-*Janus* challenges to dues deductions.

“

***NJEA has won a recent victory in one of these challenges before the federal Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in a case called Fischer v. NJEA.***

In even more good news, the Supreme Court has recently denied hearing appeals in six similar cases, including lawsuits against the Ohio Education Association and the Illinois Education Association. The result is that the decisions in favor of the unions stand. Given these denials, while our opponents in *Fischer* may still seek to take their claims to the highest court in the land, it will be exceedingly difficult for them to convince the Supreme Court to hear their cause.

These successes give us great hope that even with the federal courts' increasing number of Republican appointments to the bench, those judges and justices can put their partisanship aside and decide the cases before them fairly. It also confirms our strongly held belief that the collection of agency fees prior to *Janus* complied with the law in effect at the time, and rightfully collected those fees to support our unions' work.

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*Kaitlyn Dunphy is an associate director of NJEA Legal Services and Member Rights in the NJEA Executive Office. She can be reached at [kdunphy@njea.org](mailto:kdunphy@njea.org).*

# NJEA Report

## Barnegat establishes staff hall of fame

When William “Chip” Junker became president of the Barnegat Education Association in Ocean County back in 2015, he knew he wanted to do something positive for his members and school community.

“I went through Barnegat Schools so I know we have a long history of dedicated and talented staff members,” he said. “We have schools named after people who worked in them, so I thought why not start a Barnegat Hall of Fame so we can recognize the contributions of more staff members?”

Junker approached Superintendent Dr. Brian Latwis about his idea.

“Dr. Latwis was on board right away,” he recalled. “He’s not only been supportive, but before COVID we were working on ways to expand our Hall of Fame ceremony to a much larger event. We talked about incorporating some of the other district awards and recognizing teachers of the year in an extensive, uplifting community event.”

Their inaugural Barnegat Hall of Fame Induction ceremony in 2019 included a dessert reception for the inductees and their families. The Hall of Fame Class included:

- Holly Carson, a teacher in the district for over 30 years, who moderated numerous clubs and after-school activities, and was a teacher of the year.
- Frank Constantine, a long-time music

teacher who launched the music program at Russell O. Brackman Middle School, and led his students to win countless music competitions.

- Cynthia Corle, a school secretary at Russell O. Brackman Middle School for over 25 years who was not only the heart and soul of the office, but the whole school.
- Louise Muth, a 25-year kindergarten and first-grade teacher who touched hundreds of lives and was named teacher of the year.
- Joseph Papernik, a physical education and health teacher for 38 years who was not only a memorable teacher, but a soccer and track and field coach.
- Rosalind Ribaud, a 20-year administrator, leader and mentor for staff and students alike who started as a principal and retired as assistant superintendent.

Like everything else in 2020, COVID presented some challenges to the last ceremony.

“In November, we rented a tent and held the event outside,” said Junker. “We had grab-and-go hors d’oeuvres and tried to make it as special as we could under the circumstances.”

Class of 2020 inductees included two retirees from Lillian M. Dunfee School. Maria Puorro who taught for 38 years and was known for her ability to differentiate instruction so that all of her students could achieve. As a staff member,



Hall of Famers Mario Sammarco and Maria Puorro display their plaques.

she was not only a great teacher and role model but a generous colleague. While Mario Sammarco served as a dedicated custodian for 32 years, he is best known for his big smile, sense of humor, and the positive attitude he brought to school each day. He brought joy to his students and was always willing to lend a helping hand.

The association forged relationships with local businesses to provide special benefits for BEA members and these businesses helped sponsor of the Hall of Fame events.

“Irene Netzel at Glenn Denning Mortgage Corporation and retirement planner Gary Brown with NEA have been HUGE helping to sponsor our Hall of Fame Events,” added Junker. “Joe Dringus who owns Sweet Jenny’s here Barnegat has also been a great partner.”

BEA sold T-shirts of with an image of Rosie the Riveter sporting a tattoo of New Jersey as a fundraiser.

Community members, parents, graduates, staff and students are all encouraged to nominate staff members, coaches, or volunteers who have either retired or been separated from the district for at least one year. Submissions are accepted through the district website and judged by a panel using a rubric.

“As school employees, what we do isn’t always tangible,” added Junker. “These awards show our members that what they do matters.”



Holly Carson is inducted into the Barnegat Hall of Fame in 2019. From left: Dr. Brian Latwis, Regina Santolla, John Germano, Holly Carson, William Junker, Dan Gundersen and Jim Barbieri.

# Governor launches adverse childhood experiences action plan

Aim is to prevent and reduce childhood trauma and adversity



Gov. Phil Murphy hosted a virtual press conference on Feb. 4 to announce the plan. Top row: Murphy, Office of Resilience Executive Director Dave Ellis, and NJDCR Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer. Bottom row: First Lady Tammy Murphy and Lt. Gov. Sheila Oliver.

Gov. Phil Murphy, Lt. Gov. Sheila Oliver, First Lady Tammy Murphy, and New Jersey Department of Children and Families Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer launched New Jersey's first Adverse Childhood Experiences Action Plan, a comprehensive statewide strategy to prevent and reduce childhood trauma and adversity. The action plan outlines several initiatives to identify, coordinate, and advance programs and services across state government to reduce and prevent adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) that have a negative impact on the developing brain and lead to lifelong social, physical, emotional, and economic challenges.

"Building a stronger and fairer New Jersey for our families has been a top priority of my administration," said Murphy. "This statewide strategy creates groundbreaking solutions to deal with issues that plague our children, such as the compounded effects of adverse childhood experiences."

"The socio-economic fallout of this pandemic is tremendous and will mean more adverse conditions for children that can sometimes lead to homelessness and ensuing trauma," said Lt. Gov. Sheila Oliver. "As commissioner of the Department of Community Affairs, we will be a partner in this Action Plan to help ensure that children and families live in good conditions with the supportive services they need—whether it be housing, health care or behavioral."

"The toxic stress of adverse childhood experiences is inextricably linked to New Jersey's maternal and infant health crisis," said First Lady Tammy Murphy. "Soon-to-be mothers who have suffered from adverse childhood experiences are at greater risk of having children with reduced birth weight, shorter gestational age, developmental challenges, and socioemotional problems. Further, the adversities that lead to these health outcomes disproportionately impact people of color."

"To prevent and reduce child abuse, neglect and other maltreatment, we first need to disrupt the cycle of trauma and help children and adults to heal from adversity," said New Jersey Department of Children and Families Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer.

"This Action Plan lays out a path of hard work and heart-work," said Dave Ellis, Executive Director of the Office of Resilience. "We are more

than our collective traumas; we are our potential for resilience and our capacity for strength."

The New Jersey ACEs Action Plan's goals are to:

- Help children and families in New Jersey reach their full potential by growing and developing in relationships that are safe, healthy, and protective.
- Reduce ACE scores in future generations.
- Continually develop resource programs and services based on the research, rather than focusing on rigid metrics of success or failure.
- Look at solutions based on community input that address root causes rather than symptoms.

The key elements to implementing New Jersey's ACEs Action Plan include:

- Gathering information about current efforts to address ACEs in the state.
- Meeting with nongovernmental organizations to let them lead and contribute to the work.
- Expanding leadership to include communities directly impacted by ACEs into the design process.
- Collecting data on the project so people can engage with it.
- Letting individuals affected by ACEs know that an online community is available for them to share their own thoughts, contributions, and opinions on the ongoing work.

While the Office of Resilience is leading the statewide implementation of the Action Plan, partners from all sectors—public, private, and philanthropic—are needed to bring it to fruition.

## Learn More

**Read the New Jersey Adverse Childhood Experiences Action Plan**  
[nj.gov/dcf/documents/NJ.ACEs.Action.Plan.2021.pdf](https://nj.gov/dcf/documents/NJ.ACEs.Action.Plan.2021.pdf)

**Join the NJ Resiliency Coalition**  
[acesconnection.com/g/NJ-Resiliency-Coalition](https://acesconnection.com/g/NJ-Resiliency-Coalition)

# NJWEC receives Hero Award



During a virtual awards ceremony, NJWEC Executive Director Debra Coyle McFadden displays the Hero Award conferred on NJWEC by the national Healthy Schools Network.

The New Jersey Work Environment Council (NJWEC) received the 2020 Hero Award from the national Healthy Schools Network for its contributions to the national conversation on student and worker safety in the midst of the COVID pandemic. NJWEC is a longtime NJEA partner, ensuring that NJEA members and their students are working in safe and healthy school environments.

Debra Coyle McFadden, the executive director of NJWEC, accepted the award on behalf of the organization.

NJWEC provides NJEA and its local associations staff expertise, research, testing, training, and on-the-ground support when potentially unhealthy and unsafe conditions emerge or are suspected.

Claire Barnett, the executive director and one of the founders of the Healthy Schools Network, singled out NJWEC's National Call to Action: *The Pandemic v. Schools*, a report that called for a state and national strategy on the safe reopening of schools in light of the COVID pandemic, rather than a piecemeal district-by-district strategy.

"We named them a national healthy schools hero because of their great work on the pandemic report, which really contributed to informing and elevating a new national dialog, bringing together the interests of children, the interests of labor, the interest about the buildings, and the interest about the occupants," said Barnett.

Dr. Chip Halverson, a board member and past president of the Healthy Schools Network noted Coyle McFadden's and NJWEC's long history of

advocacy for safe and healthy working and learning environments. Halverson, now a physician in Oregon, founded the NEA Healthy Schools Caucus when he was an educator.

"This is important work that never gets done unless we have people willing to do it," Halverson said. "Thank you on behalf of the Healthy Schools Network for your work and your participation."

NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty congratulated NJWEC and honored its important role in public education in New Jersey. He also noted the historic long-standing relationship between organized labor and public health.

"Not only at the NJEA level, but as the father of two girls who attend public schools and the husband of a public school teacher, I know the challenges we face and the work that's been done here is integral to our entire mission," Beatty said. "What I've witnessed these last 10 months and even longer than that is that our communities, our counties, our states are all full of heroes—and WEC stands on that pantheon, truly deserving of this national Healthy Schools Network Hero Award. Without their work and their expertise, we could not accomplish what we have."

As she thanked the Healthy Schools Network for the award, Coyle McFadden placed the work of NJWEC in context, providing a lengthy list of state and national organizational allies in the fight against COVID, as well as individual NJWEC staff member.

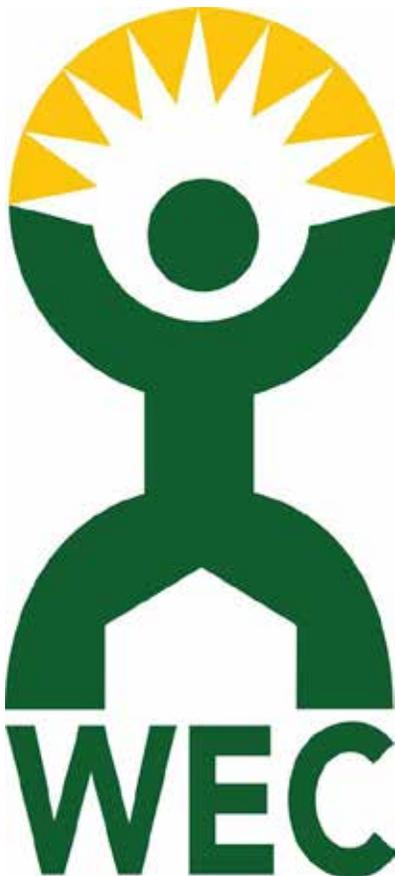
"Along with our allies in the COSH [Council for Safety and Health Network] movement, we've spent the last 10 months in the battle against COVID," Coyle McFadden said.

## NJWEC PROVIDES ADVOCACY AND TRAINING

Coyle McFadden noted that NJWEC's work with its allies led to Gov. Phil Murphy signing Executive Order (EO) 192, which she described as "one of the strongest worker rights EOs to be issued in the country." She added that NJWEC and the Rutgers Labor Education Center have conducted 37 weekly COVID webinars titled "Saving Lives, Protecting Workers." The webinars, which are ongoing, have had over 4,000 participants so far.

"We've built an online community where diverse voices gather weekly to discuss COVID," Coyle McFadden said.

Coyle McFadden said that NJWEC has fielded over 150 COVID technical assistance requests from workers, labor organizations and community members. She said that of those requests, more than 100 were from teachers, school staff, parents and community members concerned for their local



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***It's a real tribute to the work that good people do when they put their minds to it to make a difference in the world.***

schools. NJWEC has also trained more than 300 workers on COVID-prevention and awareness.

Coyle McFadden pointed out that NJWEC's work began more than two decades ago under its first executive director, Rick Engler. NJWEC and NJEA have been partnering for nearly 20 years to address school hazards and make safer learning environments for teachers, staff and students.

“COVID simply raised the ante on this work,” Coyle McFadden said. “Poor indoor air quality can cause illness that makes it harder to teach and to learn—and, on average, New Jersey's 2,500 school buildings are 50 years old. School buildings are up to four times more densely populated than office buildings. Common school problems of overcrowding and deferred maintenance contribute to

unhealthy schools. COVID multiplies the severity and the urgency of addressing these problems.”

Coyle McFadden said that she hopes school infrastructure investment is a top priority for the Biden administration, because states cannot solve this crisis on their own.

#### A LONG PARTNERSHIP WITH NJEA

“This work is only possible because of our partnership with NJEA,” Coyle McFadden said. “My sincere thanks for your unwavering commitment to President Marie Blistan, Vice President and WEC Board Member Sean Spiller, and Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty.”

She also thanked Allen Barkkume who made

significant contributions to the *National Call to Action: The Pandemic v. Schools* report. In addition, she thanked the team of industrial hygienists Barkkume leads that includes Dave Newman, Dorothy Wigmore, Peter Dooley, Tamara McNair, Brian Reyes, Uday Singh and Pam Susi. She singled out Heather Sorge, WEC's Healthy Schools Now organizer, as the driving force behind the national call to action report.

Coyle McFadden also thanked the WEC Board of Directors, and its current president, Jim Young. She said that Young, who was previously a WEC staffer, steered WEC and NJEA on their joint path when, nearly 20 years ago, he had a meeting with NJEA UniServ field reps Norm Danzig and John Ropars.

NJEA President Marie Blistan lauded the work of NJWEC and its partners “to make things right, to right the ship, to undo the wrongs, to stop the inequities, and to stop the discrimination.” She pointed out that those on the call to witness NJWEC's receipt of the award, were indeed all heroes for safe and healthy school and work environments.

“I want to thank everyone on this call,” Blistan said. “It's a real tribute to the work that good people do when they put their minds to it to make a difference in the world.”



## JOIN US AT THE NJEA TEACHER LEADER ACADEMY

### Teacher leadership is more important than ever

The NJEA Teacher Leader Academy is a one-year, 12-credit program\* for candidates seeking to earn the teacher leader endorsement. A new cohort is scheduled to begin in March 2021.

Teacher leaders create new models of professional learning, develop new systems to monitor student progress, connect with families and communities and advocate for the profession.

Join our program and collaborate with fellow educators who are finding ways to lead from the classroom as they share ideas, support their colleagues, and work with school and district leaders to create systemic change that will support high-quality teaching and learning.

\*12 credits are offered through Thomas Edison State College



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# Empowering women in education

By Angel Boose



NJEA's first woman president, Elizabeth Allen

From colonial times into the 19th century, most educators were men. Many used their teaching experience as a stepping stone into a more desired profession, thus decreasing the number of well-educated men who were called upon to teach. As public education expanded in the 19th century, many communities turned to educated women.

With the domination of women in the teaching profession also came radical change in the expectations of educators—enforcing even greater restrictions than those already imposed on all women in that era. Job security often depended on political connections, and women were typically required to resign from teaching if they married. Consequently, the financial prospects for a female, unmarried lifelong teacher were dim. With low pay and no pension plan until the early 20th century, these women faced poverty in retirement.

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*Angel Boose is a third-grade teacher at the Benjamin Banneker Academy in the East Orange School District. She is the vice president of the East Orange Education Association and an NJEA Communications Consultant. Boose represents Essex County on the NJEA Women in Education Committee.*

## NJEA WOMEN IN EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The role of women in education has been critical in fostering the transformation of the education system in this country. In NJEA, it has been critical to have women at the collective bargaining table to ensure policies and procedures are implemented to protect the rights of women. The NJEA Women in Education (WIE) committee honors these women and their work in the past and in the present.

“Often overlooked, a woman’s perspective, sensibilities, brilliance and insight are what will move education to the height of its full potential,” says Fatimah Hayes, WIE chairperson. “In the wake

“

***In the fight for racial, social and economic justice women have historically been in the forefront of those fights but have not always reaped the benefits.***

of the 2020 election and the election of our first woman and person of color vice president, Kamala Harris, women are finally being recognized for all that we bring to the table. From our schoolhouses to the White House, the critical role that women play in every space that we occupy is undeniable.”

“We work as a collective voice to highlight issues that are unique to women in the workplace, while keeping the focus on educating our youth,” says WIE Committee member Dana Lakins.

“We lend credibility and unity to women’s concerns,” says Aida Wahba, also a WIE committee member. “I believe women are critical to education, serving as role models to other women. They silently impact and encourage younger women to further their education and pursue a professional career, especially those who will be first-generation college students.”

The WIE committee works to prioritize gender equity and equal access in New Jersey schools.

“Although the field of education is a women-dominated profession, we still face barriers,” says Hayes.

According to federal data and a survey conducted by the AASA, The School Superintendents Association, 76% of the nation’s K-12 educators are women, but only 24% of superintendents are women. Hayes’ goal in leading the committee is to break down barriers that cause these inequities and bring awareness to women’s issues in the workplace and in the communities that we serve. In the fight for racial, social and economic justice, women have historically been in the forefront of those fights but have not always reaped the benefits.

“I intend to live by the notion that empowered women, empower women,” says committee member Kerrian Palmieri. “Making a positive impact means helping individuals, giving support to women so that they can turn and lend a hand to the next person.”

The WIE Committee annually confers the Elizabeth A. Allen Women in Education Award. It honors Elizabeth A. Allen, who served as the first woman NJEA president from 1913-1914, and who was pivotal in creating both tenure and a pension for teachers. As the host of the 2021 Equity Alliance Gala, the WIE committee presented the award to Assemblywoman Linda Carter, a legislator and NJEA member.

The committee also works to disseminate information at the county level and engage members in initiatives throughout the state and nation through workshops, events, and partnerships. Many partnerships have been forged between the WIE committee and other organizations, such as N.J. Women Vote, the N.J. Historical Commission, William Patterson University and the Alice Paul Institute. The committee is open to forging relationships with other organizations to expand their work and reach.

The WIE committee is represented in each of the 21 counties and includes teachers, educational support professionals, retirees, and Preservice members. There is currently no representation from Higher Education, Hunterdon, Middlesex, Ocean, Sussex, or Warren Counties. If you are interested in representing one of those counties, contact your county association president. For higher education, contact NJEA Executive Committee member Peter Helff.

In honor of National Women’s History Month, let us remember the extraordinary achievements of the women of our past and use their fight as a catalyst to continue the work they started.

# NJ Supreme Court upholds collective bargaining rights

In a unanimous decision, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled on Feb. 3 that negotiated full-time release provisions for association officers do not violate the law and are not unconstitutional under the Gifts Clause of the state constitution. The decision reversed an earlier ruling issued by the Appellate Division.

The case, *Rozenblit v. Lyles*, challenged the full-time release provisions of the collective bargaining agreement between the Jersey City Board of Education and the Jersey City Education Association, but the decision affects every local association with negotiated release time for one or more of its officers.

The plaintiff, Moshe Rozenblit had standing in the case as a taxpayer in Jersey City. Marcia Lyles, who was listed as a defendant in the case, was the superintendent of Jersey City Public Schools at the time the suit was filed. Release time provisions are a common practice in several local associations and have been supported by the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) for decades.

The state Supreme Court reinforced the principle that the payment of salaries and benefits to released local leaders does not exceed its statutory grant of authority. Rather, these arrangements are authorized by the “plain language” multiple New Jersey laws and regulations.

The court flatly rejected the Rozenblit’s

arguments that the release time amounted to a “gift” paid for by taxpayers because “release time serves a public purpose and is so consonant with the accomplishment of that purpose that it does not offend the State Constitution.”

NJEA’s officers, President Marie Blistan, Vice President Sean M. Spiller and Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty issued this statement commending the Supreme Court’s ruling:

“We are pleased that the court followed the law and respected decades of precedent in making this common-sense decision. The case was without merit from the beginning. It is well established that employees and employers have the right to

collectively bargain the terms and conditions of employment. The contract provisions at issue in this matter were part of the legal collective bargaining agreement.

“This frivolous lawsuit was never about Jersey City. It was brought by well-funded, out-of-state special interests pursuing a radical anti-union agenda that is out of line with the values we hold dear in New Jersey. After more than 50 years of collective bargaining, New Jersey’s public schools are rated the best in the nation. Perhaps these out-of-state groups should spend their time learning from our success instead of trying to undermine it.”

You can read the decision at [bit.ly/njscrozenblit](http://bit.ly/njscrozenblit).



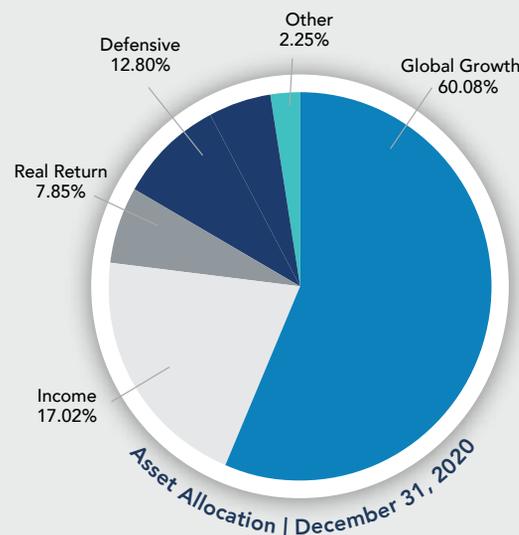
***This frivolous lawsuit was never about Jersey City. It was brought by well-funded, out-of-state special interests pursuing a radical anti-union agenda that is out of line with the values we hold dear in New Jersey.***

## PENSION UPDATE

TOTAL PENSION FUND: \$84.64 BILLION

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

	Dec 31, 2020		Aug 31, 2020	
	Market Value (\$ billions)	Asset Allocation	Market Value (\$ billions)	Asset Allocation
Global Growth	\$50.85	60.08%	\$47.53	59.19%
Income	\$14.40	17.02%	\$13.60	16.93%
Real Return	\$6.64	7.85%	\$6.56	8.17%
Defensive	\$10.83	12.80%	\$10.79	13.44%
Other	\$1.91	2.25%	\$1.82	2.27%
Total	\$84.64	100%	\$80.30	100%



# WHAT SHOULD A LOCAL LEADER SAY DURING A NATIONAL CRISIS?

## Reflections of a local president on Jan. 6

BY JULIA GUTTILLA

On the afternoon of Jan. 6, I was in a meeting when my cellphone started exploding with texts and emails from colleagues and friends. After the meeting, I turned on the news, and, along with the rest of the world, was stunned by what I witnessed. I was speechless. I received calls from several close friends and family members, but couldn't articulate anything beyond "What is happening?" and "How could this be happening?"

As an NJEA member and local president, I received statements from NJEA's officers and the officers of the Bergen County Education Association. I published those statements on our association Facebook page and continued to stare at the news in disbelief. I tried to work out what I could possibly say to my high school history students in class the next day, but I kept coming up empty.

When another local president in a group text asked if any of us were planning on making statements to our members, I very quickly responded "No." I could barely figure out how to process these events for myself, what could I possibly say to anyone else?

But the question stayed with me over the next day. Should I be addressing these issues with my members? Do I have a responsibility, as a leader, to help members sort through their own feelings

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*Julia Guttilla is a history teacher at Bergenfield High School and the president of the Bergenfield Education Association. She can be reached at [jguttilla614@gmail.com](mailto:jguttilla614@gmail.com).*

“  
**Every person  
attacking the  
Capitol on Jan.  
6 was once  
a student in  
someone's  
classroom.**”

and figure out how to address these challenging times in their classrooms? Should we, as educators, be talking to each other about what is going on in our country, and helping each other find context?

As I suppose it always does, a little bit of time started to bring some clarity. I spoke with fellow history teachers, and we shared resources and bounced ideas off of each other. I spoke to my classes on Thursday, and was, as I often am in the face of chaos, so impressed by their clear-headed thinking, the intelligent questions they asked, and their insight.

On that Thursday afternoon, I joined in the NJEA REAL Talk conversation about the

insurrection. In our breakout session, we shared our feelings, our experiences in the classroom, and what we felt we could do moving forward. One colleague expressed distress that they hadn't heard anything from their local leaders about the insurrection, which left me again wondering what my responsibility was in a time like this. (You can learn more about the NJEA REAL Movement at [njea.org/real](http://njea.org/real).)

I saw the tweets: "Imagine coming into school the day after 9/11 and not talking about terrorism because you're a science teacher or a business teacher, and not a history teacher." I knew how difficult it was for my history teacher colleagues to try and figure out what to say, how much more difficult would it be for members of other departments or at other grade levels? Could I possibly do something to make that easier?

And then I was struck by the incredibly important reminder from Fatimah Hayes that every person attacking the Capitol on Jan. 6 was once a student in someone's classroom. And somewhere along the line, their education had failed them terribly. If there was something I could do to prevent failing Bergenfield's students in the same way, no matter how small, I had to try.

So, on Thursday evening, I composed this letter to my members. I gathered resources I thought could be helpful to certified staff and educational support professional (ESP) members, for classrooms from kindergarten through 12th grade, and at all subject levels. I reached back out to my local presidents group text and let them know I had decided to make a statement. I shared it with them.

My hope is that my letter, and the accompanying resources, gave some people the courage to bring up a difficult topic in their classrooms that they might otherwise have tried to avoid. I hope it inspired conversations about democracy, the peaceful transfer of power, insurrection and white privilege. I hope that perhaps those who couldn't quite find the words to address these issues in their classroom at least took some time to talk about it with their colleagues, friends or family members. I hoped they challenged themselves, the way I was forced to, by asking themselves what responsibility they hold, as an American citizen or resident, and as an educator.

*Dear BEA Family,*

*Like the rest of you, I had to face my students today, while still processing yesterday's terrorist attack in D.C. I know it will take time for all of us, individually, and as a nation, to fully understand the consequences of yesterday's events, but I wanted to share my initial thoughts, along with some resources I have compiled to help you address this attack with your students and colleagues.*

*I had an opportunity to discuss the events, and what they mean to educators, with other NJEA members this afternoon, and something was said that is weighing very heavily on me. "Each and every one of the participants was once a student sitting in someone's classroom." Something went terribly wrong in those classrooms for these people to believe they were carrying out some sort of patriotic duty by violently disrupting our most sacred democratic process and breaching the security and sanctity of our Capitol building.*

*We have an immense responsibility to our students, to ourselves, and to our country, to address this wrong, and to right it, inside of our classrooms. I know that it is painful to think about, and difficult to process as adults, and the thought of addressing it with children can feel overwhelming and even impossible. But our students are watching us. Our students are watching our lawmakers and newscasters and political leaders, but they watch those people from a distance. They will look to their parents and educators for immediate comfort, reassurance and, most importantly, for an explanation. If we fail to address the severity of what happened, they will believe this was an acceptable form of protest, or, even worse, a normal part of our democratic process. The cornerstone of our republic is the rule of law, which will be lost if Americans do not fully understand the importance of a peaceful transference of power. We have a responsibility to ensure that the next generation knows this and believes in their own responsibility to protect it.*

*Choose your words carefully, because our students will be listening carefully, and they will hear what you say, and what you mean. But please know that if you choose silence, they will hear complicity. If we fail to address how systemic racism, white supremacy and antisemitism played a role, we will be guilty of telling half-truths out of our own fear of addressing a painful topic. I have found courage in this quote from Bayard Rustin: "To be afraid is to behave as if the truth were not true." I hope that it will inspire you as well.*

*I am thankful that our school district recognizes the educational importance of these difficult conversations, and I am looking forward to the productive work that will be done during our Martin Luther King Day Professional Development Workshops. The Equity in Education PD Committee has put together an incredibly strong collection of choices, and I know it will be a meaningful day for all of us.*

*These events transcend grade level and subject area. I hope that in this collection of resources, you will find something of value; something that might help you process what happened, and help you broach the subject in an appropriate way with your students and colleagues:*

Unpacking January 6th with Students:	Social & Emotional Learning:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Google Slide - See, Think, Feel, Wonder (<a href="https://bit.ly/3aH8h6m">bit.ly/3aH8h6m</a>)</li> <li>• PBS Classroom Resources (<a href="https://to.pbs.org/3a141h">to.pbs.org/3a141h</a>)</li> <li>• Timeline of Events &amp; Quotes from Lawmakers (<a href="https://bit.ly/3tyT1Bf">bit.ly/3tyT1Bf</a>)</li> <li>• Facing History and Ourselves Resources (<a href="https://bit.ly/2LzRrxO">bit.ly/2LzRrxO</a>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEA Resources (<a href="https://bit.ly/3aPI31o">bit.ly/3aPI31o</a>)</li> <li>• EdWeek Resources for Teaching in the Wake of a Traumatic Event (<a href="https://bit.ly/2LuU9o6">bit.ly/2LuU9o6</a>)</li> <li>• Advise for Parents and Educators from Kate Messner (<a href="https://bit.ly/3tEMzso">bit.ly/3tEMzso</a>)</li> <li>• Talking about Justice At All Grade Levels (<a href="https://bit.ly/3cUXJn4">bit.ly/3cUXJn4</a>)</li> </ul>

*I wish you all health, happiness, peace, and democracy in the new year,*

*Julia*



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To sign-up or for more information, visit [njea.org/mdpapplication](https://njea.org/mdpapplication) or call 609-599-4561, ext. 2222.



# PANDEMIC PE

## Teaching goal-setting in a challenging time

By Meghan Radimer

As an elementary physical education and health teacher, one of the most important skills I have had to master is learning how to motivate my students. Fortunately, as a lifelong athlete, I understand the physical, and sometimes mental, obstacles that can get in the way of my students enthusiastically participating in our planned activities.

At Stillwater Township Elementary School, most of my students, who range in age from Pre-K through sixth grade, come to school happy and ready to move. They generally enjoy physical education classes, which are a vital way for them to appropriately expend energy during the school day.

As an active person, I enjoy moving with the students. They take it as a challenge to beat me in whatever activity I have planned. Sometimes, I tell them that they have to tag someone else—they got me five times already and I need a break! The students truly enjoy the interaction and love to

see me involved in the activities with them. Even during a live Google Meet, I make a point to actively participate in whatever we are doing that day.

When the pandemic prevented in-person instruction last spring, it became difficult to connect with my students. After all, when I graduated from college in 2007, I never thought that I would be teaching physical education online. I had to draw on different ideas and strategies to connect with and motivate my students.

I felt like a first-year teacher again, trying to come up with fun and engaging lessons that my students could do at home even though I was not able to see them. I wanted the activities to be fun and not just another assignment that they had to complete. I continue to be amazed at the work of all my colleagues across the state as they adapted to these unique times and provided the best education they could.

Meghan Radimer, a physical education teacher and co-president of the Stillwater Education Association, is the 2020-21 Sussex County Teacher of the Year.

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*I wanted them to know that even though we couldn't be together in school, that I was still thinking about them.*

#### MY PATH TO BECOMING A RUNNER

Physical activity has always been an important part of my life. In high school, I was a three-sport varsity athlete. In college, I played soccer and was on the track and field team. My college soccer team was number two in the country in our division. We went to Nationals all four years!

In track and field, I was a three-time Nationals qualifier in the javelin throw. My junior year of college I would have been All-American, but I tore my ACL at Nationals throwing the javelin. I made a throw that would have made me All-American, but my injury caused me to fall over the foul line. I was devastated and could think only about how my torn ACL could cause me to miss competing in my senior year.

I had to decide whether I would sit out my senior soccer season so that I would still be eligible to compete the year after that—a practice called “redshirting.” Instead, I decided to make it my goal to get back on the field for my senior year. After surgery, I focused with a vengeance on my physical therapy. I am a very determined person, and I worked hard to get back out there with my team. By October, I was ready for my first game.

After college, I wanted to find an activity that would fill that athletic space in my life. I ended up getting into running. I was never a runner during my athletic career—as a goalie for soccer and a thrower in track and field, I hated running! Nevertheless, I started running marathons. I ran the Boston Marathon three times as well as eight other marathons and many half-marathons.

I've since taken a step back from marathons because of the toll they take on my body, but I still run as part of my everyday activities. I like to compete in smaller races and enjoy the local ones where I often see my current and former students.

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*Meghan Radimer is a physical education and health teacher at Stillwater Elementary School. She is the 2021 Sussex County Teacher of the Year and the co-president of the Stillwater Education Association. Radimer can be reached at [meghan.radimer@gmail.com](mailto:meghan.radimer@gmail.com).*





**5/30/2020**  
**7 miles done!**  
**5.94 miles left!!**



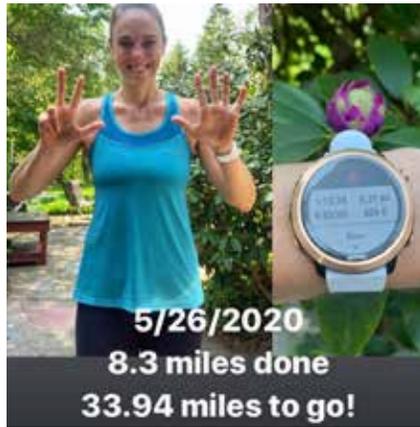
**5/29/2020**  
**Snuck in a quick 6 miles!**



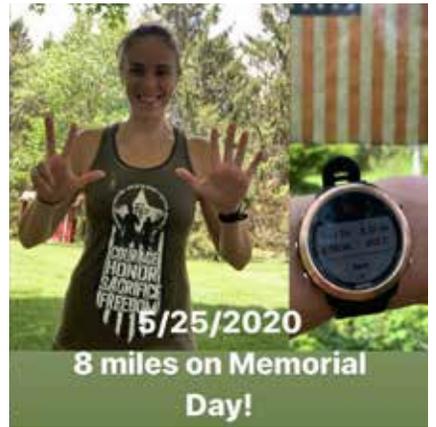
**5/28/2020**  
**8 miles done !**



**5/27/2020**  
**7 miles done!**



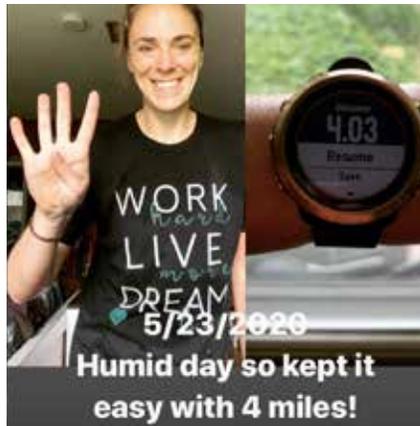
**5/26/2020**  
**8.3 miles done**  
**33.94 miles to go!**



**5/25/2020**  
**8 miles on Memorial Day!**



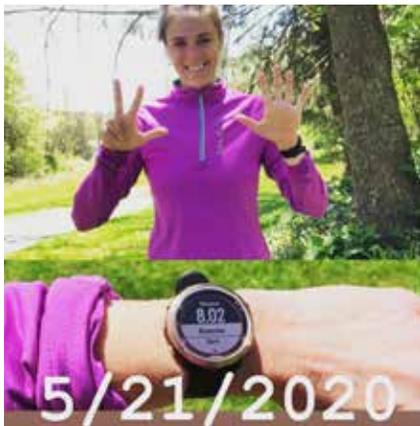
**5/24/2020**  
**Beautiful day for a run!**



**5/23/2020**  
**Humid day so kept it easy with 4 miles!**



**5/22/2020**  
**Jumping into the weekend!**  
**7.25 miles done**



**5/21/2020**



**5/19/2020**  
**9 miles done!**  
**83.99 miles to go!**



**5/18/2020**  
**7 miles done**



An avid runner, Meghan Radimer set a goal to run one mile for each of her 254 students.

## RUNNING AS A LESSON IN GOAL-SETTING

In my health classes, we talk about goal-setting. We discuss the differences between long-term and short-term goals and how to stay motivated until you reach your goal. Last spring, after the quarantine began, I searched for a way to connect with my students and continue our lessons about goal setting.

I tell my students that it's important to have visual cues to help them stay on track to reach their goals. I also discuss self-esteem. I tell my students that self-esteem is how you feel about yourself and that it is important to find something that helps you build your self-esteem but also not give up your goals.

I decided to put these elements together and set my own goal—to run a mile for every one of my 254 students. My first run was on April 27. I ran nine miles the first day and posted a picture on my Google Classroom. Every day after that, I shared a post-run photo in each of my 12 Google Classrooms. I noted how many miles I ran that day and how many miles I had left to go to reach my goal.

Regardless of the weather, I ran—either outside or on my elliptical—and the students kept up with my progress. The students would encourage me: we were in this together. It was also a great way for the students to interact with each other and with me as they commented on the pictures.

I completed my last run on May 31 and even had a homemade finish line tape to run through. All told, I ran 255 miles—one mile for each of my students plus one extra, in 35 days.

When I finished my last run, I compiled all my pictures into a video that I shared with all my students.

## BEING AN EXAMPLE FOR STUDENTS

The feedback I got from the students was powerful. I wanted them to know that even though we couldn't be together in school, I was still thinking about them. I'd be on a run and I'd think, "I just completed that mile for all of my sixth graders."

I also wanted them to realize that I was not just asking them to complete physical education and health assignments, but that I was being physically active as well. I don't just want to teach my students, I want to be an example for them.

I still have goals, and I talk to my students about them. I encourage them to set big goals for themselves. They may make it to the NFL or the NBA someday. Who knows? I'm not going to tell them they can't. It might be one of my students that I see on the big screen one day. Or maybe they want to get faster, stronger, or healthier—I make sure they know all of their goals are important!

No matter what their goals are, I want my students to see in me someone who will support them, guide them, and dream big dreams right alongside them. 🏃‍♀️



Learn more about Sussex County Teacher of the Year Meghan Radimer at [njea.org/SussexCTOY](http://njea.org/SussexCTOY)

# Providing mental health tools and support for Atlantic City's high school students

By Kathryn Coulibaly

Carla Davis-Smith was concerned about her students. As the secretary to an assistant principal at Atlantic City High School, she was aware of the challenges students faced with remote learning, even as it helped keep them, their families and their communities safe. Attendance and participation issues also signaled that students needed additional support and care. So Davis-Smith, with the support of administration and the Atlantic City Education Association (ACEA), reached out to Family Empowerment Associates, a local mental health service provider.

"I felt that our students needed additional support," Davis-Smith said. "We'd gotten through the spring, but as school started back in September, I could tell that students were struggling. They had family members who were struggling; in some cases, there were financial challenges. But we didn't know the full extent of their concerns and we didn't want to make any assumptions. In order to be sure that we were really meeting our students' needs, we sent out a very brief survey to gauge their priorities."

Davis-Smith sent out a Google survey to students with these questions:

- Are you stressed out over COVID-19? Yes ( ) No ( )
- Is there anything on your mind that you would like to share?
- How has the pandemic affected the people in your household?
- Do you need help managing your time during remote learning?  
Yes ( ) No ( )

Thanks to the survey responses, Davis-Smith felt that she had a better idea of the specific issues confronting students.

## HELP FOR ISOLATED AND OVERWHELMED STUDENTS

"The main issue was the feeling of isolation," Davis-Smith said. "Some were affected by parents or guardians losing their jobs. Some had money issues in the family. Overall, there was a feeling of being overwhelmed and the perception that there was a lot more demand on them to produce school work than pre-COVID. A lot of students were struggling just to keep up with their work. They were going to bed late at night because they were up working on assignments for school."

Davis-Smith reached out to the director of Family Empowerment Associates to identify a clinician to address these students' needs. Rosa Allen, an alumna of Atlantic City High School, was the perfect choice. She knew and understood the community and had actually walked in the students' shoes.

Davis-Smith shared the survey responses with Allen so she could directly address students' concerns.

In addition to identifying the right clinician, Davis-Smith wrote an NJEA Families and Schools Together Work for Children (FAST) grant that enabled

her to provide another tool to help students struggling with the demands of the pandemic. She successfully sought funding for 50 Amazon Dots for the purpose of helping students wake up on time, provide weather and general information, play music, and even help with research for school.

The Dots were also useful in helping to motivate students to participate in the Zoom meeting with Allen, which was scheduled for Dec. 18. The first 50 students who registered would receive the Dot as well as a detailed explanation of how they could use it to help them with school.

"We are really concerned about attendance at school," Davis-Smith said. "Even with students attending school remotely, attendance *still* matters. The Amazon Dots will hopefully help motivate them and lessen the feeling of isolation."

## ZOOM EVENT PROVIDES SUPPORT, DEMONSTRATES ONGOING NEEDS

On Dec. 18, approximately 60 students, parents, administrators, ACEA members, the ACEA's Pride and FAST chair, and ACEA President Phillip Dollard logged onto the Zoom meeting.

"The ACEA was instrumental in holding this event," Davis-Smith said. "Our librarian handled admitting participants on the Zoom, and a teacher fielded the questions. And I had tremendous support with the grant and implementing it."

Atlantic City High School's administrators were also on the Zoom meeting, which helped them better understand the demands on the students.

"This anxiety with the kids is real," Davis-Smith said. "We all heard it firsthand."

The meeting was scheduled to begin at 6 p.m. Davis-Smith was surprised that students were still eagerly asking questions at 8 p.m.

"I wasn't sure how the students would receive this; it can be hard to open up and be vulnerable around your peers. But it was clear that the need was so great, and that Ms. Allen was really helping them, that they just opened up."

Davis-Smith finally ended the Zoom meeting just before 9 p.m., but she

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**As the secretary to an assistant principal at Atlantic City High School, Carla Davis-Smith was aware of the challenges students faced with remote learning.**

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*Kathryn Coulibaly is the associate editor of the NJEA Review and provides content and support to [njea.org](http://njea.org). She can be reached at [kcoulibaly@njea.org](mailto:kcoulibaly@njea.org).*

knew it could have gone on much longer.

“Ms. Allen was really kind and put the students at ease quickly,” Davis-Smith said. “Once she started, the students were all in. The questions just came rolling in because they felt like they were talking to someone trustworthy.”

Allen also provided follow-up resources that were sent to the students electronically, and she also encouraged them to use the school district’s resources by talking to their counselors and the school’s social workers.

The students were really enthusiastic and said the Zoom meeting with Allen was very helpful. Davis-Smith followed up the event with another Google survey to gauge the event’s success.

She asked:

- What was the most meaningful advice you got from this mental health session?
- Are there any other topics that you think the presenter should have addressed?
- On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “not at all” and 5 “very,” please rate the effectiveness of the presenter.
- How helpful was the mental health resources that the presenter provided for you? This information was emailed to you.
- Comment on how you felt before this session and how you felt afterwards.

Based on the responses, Davis-Smith felt that students could benefit from more of these sessions. She has plans for additional activities to reach out to students to let them know they are valued and cared for by their school family.

“I think a lot of students were expecting a more normal life a year after the beginning of the global pandemic,” Davis-Smith said. “National data shows that we’re seeing more younger children being depressed and thinking about suicide. I can’t stop; I have to continue. And the students are asking us for more. This is hitting the mark for them.”

#### ONGOING SUPPORT

On Valentine’s Day, Davis-Smith distributed care packages to students who are eligible for the McKinney-Vento program, which serves homeless youth.

“Valentine’s Day can be hard for anyone,” Davis-Smith said. “These students often feel overlooked and isolated. This is a great time to remind them that they are valued by their school community.”

The care packages included toothpaste, a toothbrush, lotion, shampoo, and chocolate.

Davis-Smith also organized a Zoom paint party for students in February. Once students registered for the paint party, they were invited to come to school to pick up paint materials.

More opportunities to discuss mental health issues are also planned. For Davis-Smith, it’s all about the students and she will use every resource and connection she has to provide and care for them.

“The kids need this,” Davis-Smith said. “We have to protect our future.”

## What is FAST?

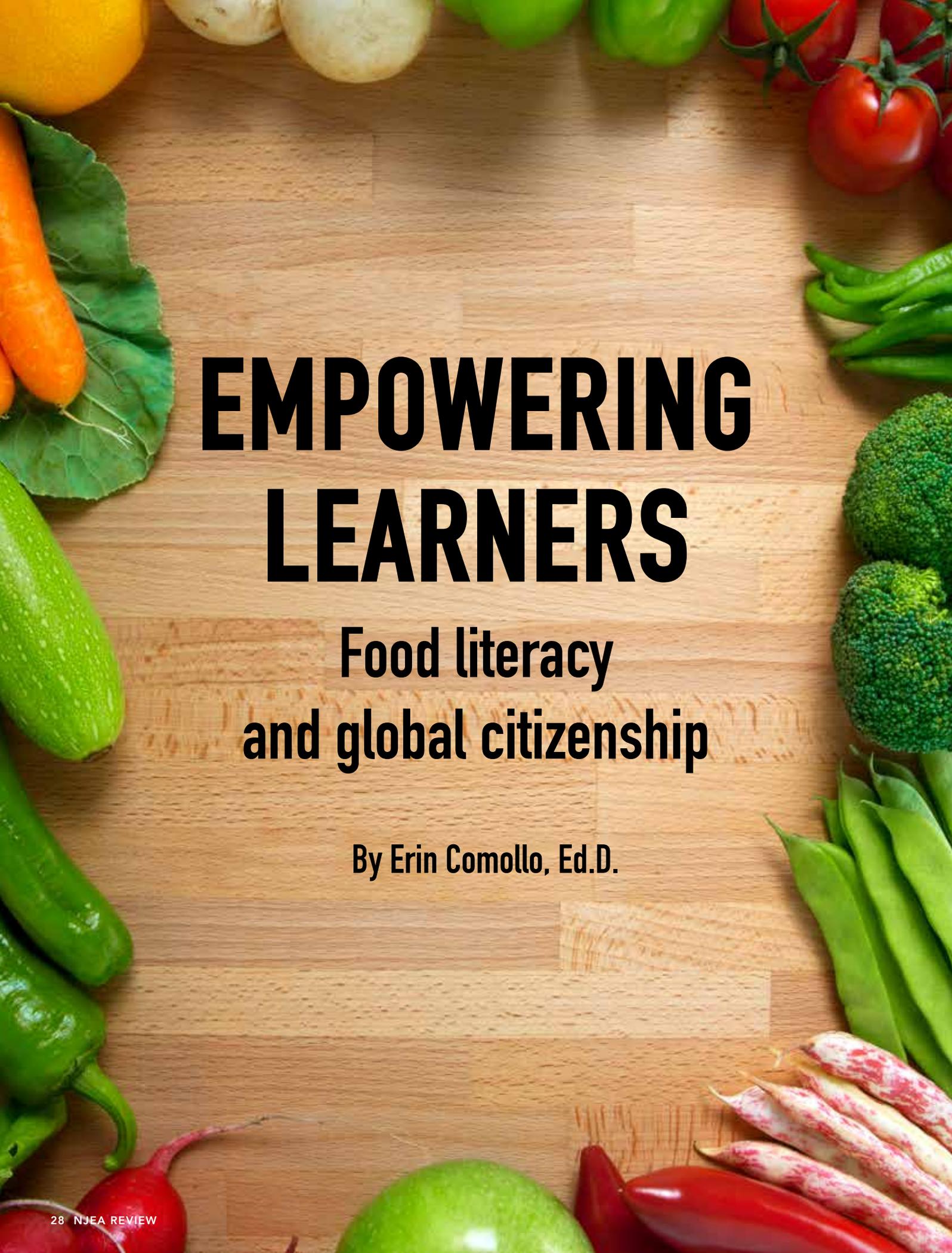
Carla Davis-Smith wrote an NJEA Families and Schools Together Work for Children (FAST) grant that enabled her to provide another tool to help students struggling with the demands of the pandemic.

NJEA FAST works to encourage families to be involved in their children’s education, to enhance their academic progress, and to feel welcome in public schools. FAST is a coalition of education advocates, community groups, and schools working together to foster family involvement.

Learn more at [njea.org/fast](https://njea.org/fast).



The first 50 Atlantic City High School students who signed up for a Zoom event to discuss the school community’s social-emotional needs received an Amazon Dot. Here, Carla Davis-Smith, a school secretary who initiated the program, and student Navaro Bernard, safely distribute the Dots.



# **EMPOWERING LEARNERS**

**Food literacy  
and global citizenship**

**By Erin Comollo, Ed.D.**

Food is universal. We all have a story, an experience and an emotional connection to food. In this way, food is the perfect vehicle to teach students complex concepts using a tangible, relatable topic.

As a former classroom teacher and in my current work as program development administrator for the New Jersey Healthy Kids Initiative, I have firsthand experience with the transformational learning that occurs when we teach food literacy and global citizenship education to students of all ages. These topics offer a unique opportunity for multidisciplinary instruction that addresses learning standards and 21st-century skills across content and age groups. As a result, students become active citizens and advocates, making their schools, homes, communities and planet healthier, happier places to live.

What's more, research shows that if we teach children to cook, they shop differently, fill their plates differently and consider their impact on the environment differently (Amin et al., 2018).

Inherent in food literacy is the understanding of food systems. It is often said that "everyone eats, so everyone is involved in a food system." According to the definition provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a food system encompasses all the stages of keeping us fed: growing, harvesting, packing, processing, transforming, marketing, consuming and disposing of food.

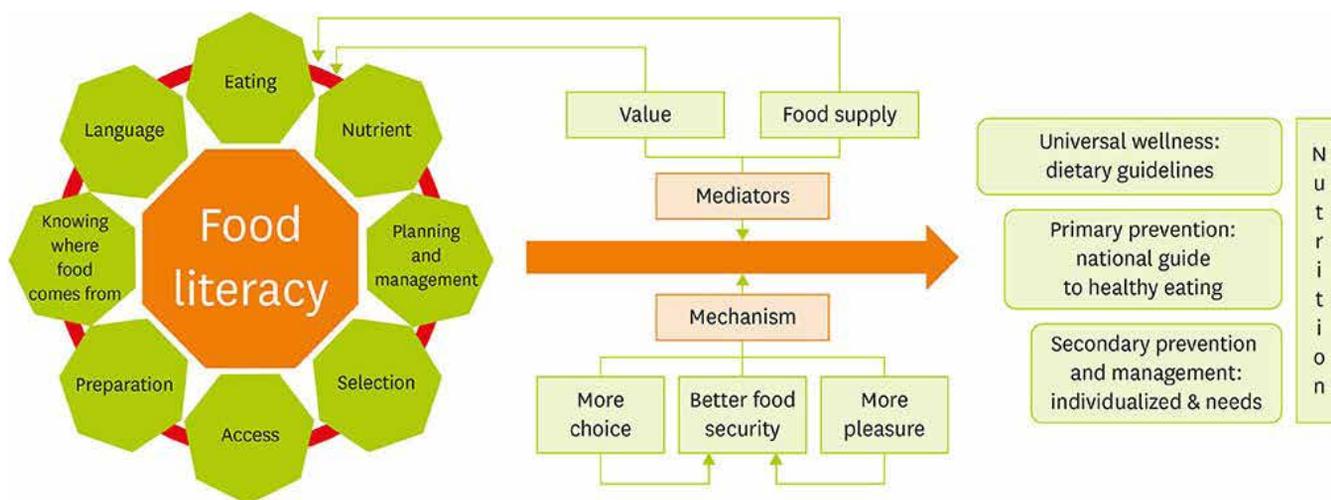


Figure 1: A conceptual model for the relationship between food literacy and nutrition. Adapted from Vidgen and Gallegos (2011) [37]. Clin Nutr Res. 2019 Apr;8(2):79-90. doi.org/10.7762/cnr.2019.8.2.79 Copyright 2019. The Korean Society of Clinical Nutrition.

## FOOD LITERACY

Food Literacy (Figure 1) is the understanding that our food choices affect our health, the environment and our economy. The emerging framework of food literacy is a comprehensive concept that addresses nutrition knowledge, culinary literacy (the ability to select, prepare, and eat foods), and behavioral change. Food literacy has been linked with improved nutritional intake and health outcomes (Amin et al., 2018, 2019; Muzaffar, Metcalfe & Fiese, 2018).

*Dr. Erin Comollo is the program development administrator for the New Jersey Healthy Kids Initiative (NJHKI) in the Institute for Food, Nutrition, and Health at Rutgers University. A former classroom teacher, Erin holds a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and fine arts from The College of New Jersey, a master's degree in early childhood education and supervision from The College of New Jersey, and a doctorate in education with a teacher leadership concentration from the Rutgers University Graduate School of Education. Comollo can be reached at erin.comollo@rutgers.edu.*

## GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION AND THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Global Citizenship Education, or GCE (Figure 2), has become a hot topic in education as teachers and institutions realize their responsibility to teach content knowledge and the skills, attitudes and dispositions to be citizens in a global economy. GCE is based on a foundation of:

- Respect for human rights, democracy, nondiscrimination, diversity and sustainability.
- A framework of connectedness.
- A sense of belonging: High-quality GCE should generate action and engagement.

Effective GCE should teach students global competencies. According to the Asia Society, global competence is the capacity to examine local, global and intercultural issues; to understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others; to engage in open, appropriate, and effective interactions with people from different cultures; and to act for collective well-being and sustainable development.

These competencies also focus on inequality and oppression across contexts, as well as historical and fundamental interdependence. Global competencies address assumptions, worldviews and power relations.

# Global Citizenship Education

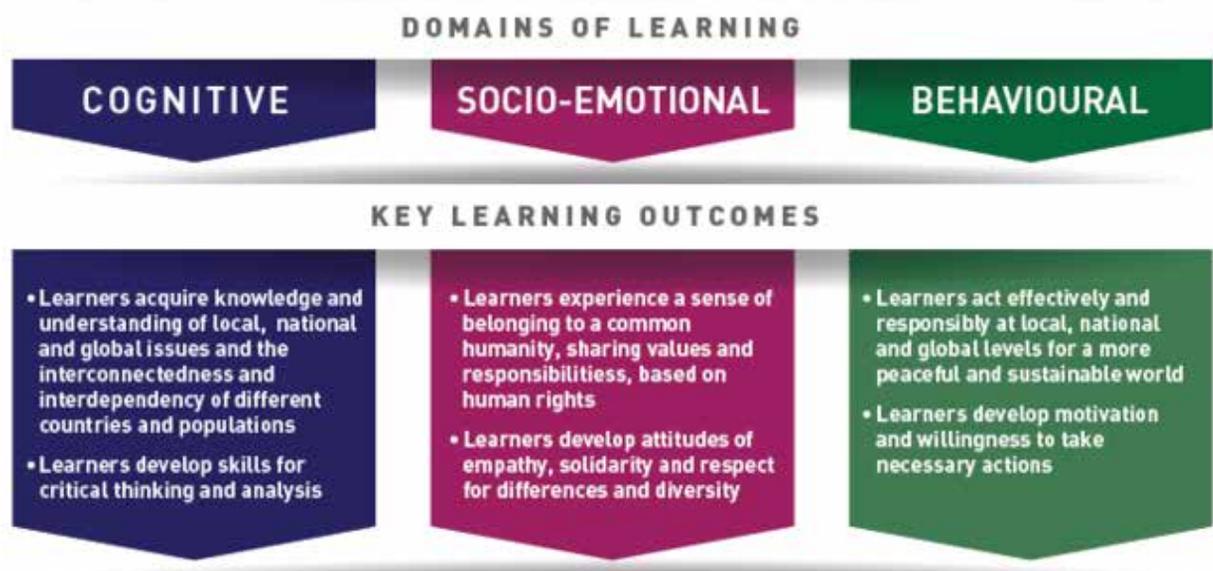


Figure 2: UNESCO

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***Food is the perfect vehicle to teach students complex concepts using a tangible, relatable topic.***

Food Justice (Figure 3) is where food literacy and global citizenship education intersect. It is as a social movement with “multiple layers ... of producers, processors, workers, eaters, or communities, for whom race, ethnicity, class, and gender issues are at the forefront of an agenda that includes a mix of producing food, local preference, environment, economic development, health food for all, preparing, cooking and eating, and public health and nutrition.” (Gottlieb & Joshi, 2010, as cited by Holt-Giménez and Wang, 2011, p.88). Food justice links food system processes and players to issues of inequality, climate change, and health.

### CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

Putting these topic areas into practice across disciplines and age groups requires an elegant blend of pedagogical approaches, including inquiry-based learning, project-based learning, and service learning. Using these modalities, teachers can foster lifelong participatory learning across contexts, dispositions of openness, caring, and empathy, and critical, creative, and innovative thinking.

When my co-teacher Jessica Howe and I began to develop

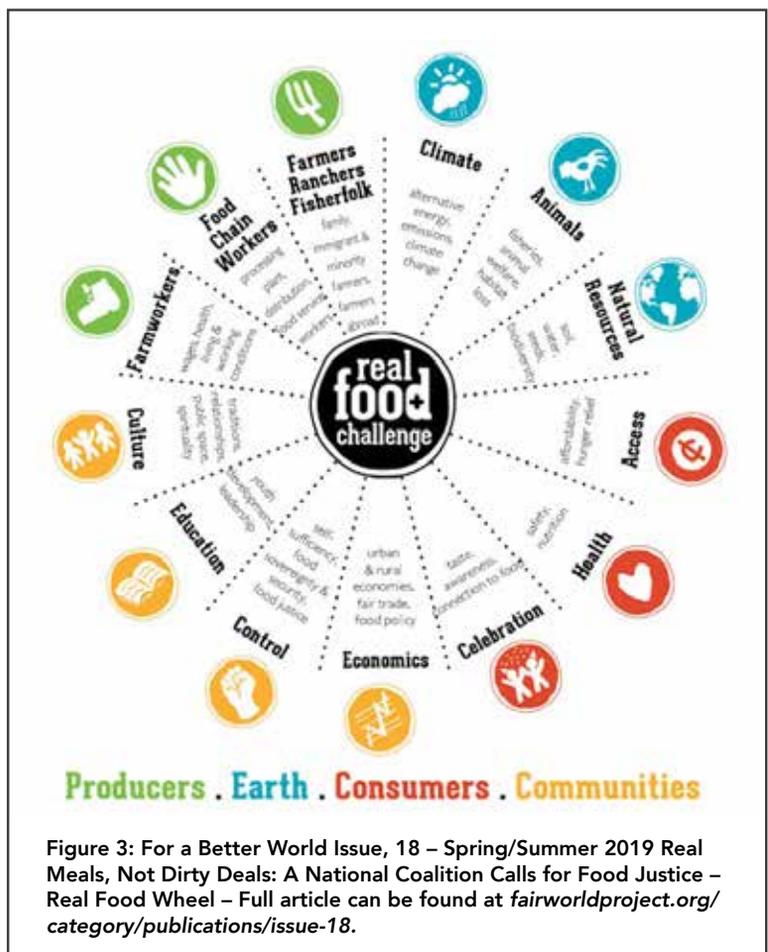


Figure 3: For a Better World Issue, 18 – Spring/Summer 2019 Real Meals, Not Dirty Deals: A National Coalition Calls for Food Justice – Real Food Wheel – Full article can be found at [fairworldproject.org/category/publications/issue-18](http://fairworldproject.org/category/publications/issue-18).



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

17 GOALS TO TRANSFORM OUR WORLD



Figure 4

our curriculum, we started by applying the “micro to macro” thinking approach that GCE encourages. We created five broad units based on our belief that for students to have a deep and meaningful understanding of the community and the world, they first need a layered development of the self and the interpersonal.

The units were:

1. **Identity:** exploring ourselves, diversity and mindfulness
2. **Ourselves and Nature:** observing our natural world, changes and threats
3. **Local Community:** recognizing types of communities; their history, changes and issues
4. **Global Community:** finding parallels between history, changes and issues to a global location
5. **Advocacy:** application of learning for change

We decided to use the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to guide our goals and objectives. The SDGs (Figure 4) were formed in 2015 by world leaders and the U.N. The goals address worldwide issues such as poverty, inequality, and climate change, hoping that global collaboration toward meeting the goals would ensure a better future for all.

Using the Understanding by Design approach to curriculum development, we started developing some “big ideas” base on the SDGs. We used these to form specific objectives, long-term transfer, and essential questions linked to those big ideas (see sidebar). Next, we examined what skills, attitudes, values and attitudes we wanted to adjust based on the GCE competencies. From there, we planned instructional experiences and activities across content areas with corresponding formative assessments.

## Big Ideas

### Cause and Effect and Interdependence

- Geography, climate, and the natural resources of a region influence how people live and work.
- Human interaction with the natural environment is driven by needs and wants as well as access to resources and scarcity.
- Human interaction can impact the natural environment both positively and negatively.

#### Essential Questions:

- How do our choices affect ourselves, the environment, and the world?
- What causes changes over time?
- What effect do economics have on a community? The environment?
- How do geography, climate, and natural resources affect the way people live and work?
- What effect do people have on their environment?
- For what reasons do humans change their environment?
- How are communities alike and different?

#### Specific Objectives & Long-Term Transfer Goals:

- Recognize and respect that people have different perspectives based on their beliefs, values, traditions, culture, and experiences.
- Recognize their relationships to the people, places, and resources in the local community and beyond.
- Engage in dialogue and debate.
- Make choices that can make their homes, schools, and communities a better place to live and that can protect the environment.
- Collect information and present findings about real-life issues.
- Make informed and reasoned decisions by seeking and assessing information, asking questions, and evaluating alternative solutions.
- Take appropriate action against unfairness.
- Work together on collaborative projects to address real life issues at home, at school, in the community, and beyond.

## EXAMPLES IN PRACTICE

### *Early childhood*

Culinary literacy and cooking are the perfect opportunities for young children to develop fine motor skills such as cutting, rolling, pouring and scooping. It also provides sensory processing opportunities as the children touch, taste, feel, and smell new ingredients and recipes. Children learn best from hands-on, multisensory experiences such as these.

Research has shown that culinary nutrition education programs can increase feelings of self-esteem, confidence and self-efficacy from a social-emotional perspective. Cooking in the classroom also supports executive functioning and social skills such as cooperation, communication and following directions.

Instruction can incorporate early literacy such as food-related read alouds, sequencing the plant life cycle or recipe steps. Children can apply early math concepts like measurement and volume while measuring out different ingredients. In science, they can learn about the seed-to-plate process, observe batter turn into baked goods in the oven or explore their senses as they sample different foods.

### *Elementary school*

For older students, inquiry- and project-based learning encourages students to do some real-world problem-solving in authentic experiences, tied to real-life global issues, with the opportunity to present to a real audience. We used this opportunity to teach student-led discussion techniques and thinking routines that linked our local issues of deforestation with issues in Ghana caused by cacao farming and production. This parallel led to an in-depth study of cacao, chocolate and Ghana.



**At left and above: Preschool students voted on which seeds they wanted to plant in their classroom aero garden. They read books about the plant life cycle, enacted it with their bodies during gross motor time, and observed and journaled the growing process. This class uses the leafy greens and herbs in lunches, snacks, and cooking lessons.**

Teaching about food provided us with content that lent itself to deep, meaningful learning in our classroom. Our students considered how geography, climate and the natural resources of a region influence how people live and work. They observed how human interaction with the natural environment is driven by needs and wants and access to resources and scarcity, which led to conversations around food insecurity, clean water and health care. They learned how to engage in dialogue and debate while developing open-mindedness and an appreciation for different cultures' complexities.

### *Secondary and Higher Education – Global Citizenship*

Because of these topics' depth and breadth, they can easily be integrated into secondary and higher education curricula. Applying the same topics, themes, frameworks, and even some activities, I had the pleasure of working with an impressive group of Douglass College students during a yearlong course called Global Cuisine.

Over the year, we explored food systems through the lens of feminism, i.e., how women are affected by agriculture, marketing, consumption and the culinary industry. As you can imagine, lots of issues regarding equity and food insecurity arose. Students researched and presented changemakers, foods and food movements and brainstormed how they could make their lives to reflect their learning. Their presentations challenged and inspired their classmates, leading to changes in perspectives, purchasing and consumer behavior.

**Q: Looking at store prices, do the prices reflect the production costs?**

A Hershey Milk Chocolate 7oz bar (11% cacao) costs 2\$

A Lonohana (70% cacao) 2.3oz bar costs \$14:

- Its cost of making each bar is \$2.50 for labor, \$1 for packaging, \$2.35 for the other resources used such as sugar and solar light, \$1.22 facilities cost and a bar is \$7.07. Then for retailers to make a profit of \$6.93, it ends up at \$14 for the bar.

The prices don't reflect the production cost as they least focus on harvesting, processing, etc.



**College level cacao/chocolate study**

The year culminated with a student service-learning project that addressed the topic of food systems and U.N. Sustainability Goal 10 to reduce inequality. Students wrote a white paper on maternal and child insecurity for the Central Jersey Diaper Bank.

**ADAPTING TO VIRTUAL LEARNING**

These are all ideal activities for in-person instruction, and the forced pivot toward virtual learning has posed some challenges. This past summer, my team and I implemented a six-week curriculum designed for third through fifth-grade students to explore some of the facilitators and barriers of presenting a food literacy program in a virtual format. We used WebEx as our video platform and ClassDojo as our student portfolio system.

Our co-teachers took turns leading instruction and moderating the chat box and technical issues each lesson. Children attended live classes on Tuesdays and Thursdays (either morning or afternoon) for 30-40-minute lessons on different aspects of food literacy. They would complete follow-up hands-on activities on their own time at home. These activities included planting seeds, making recipes and playing games. Children loved the program's hands-on, experiential aspects and engaging with their teachers and peers on screen.

**CLOSING THOUGHTS**

Students as young as six and as old as 20 learned that as citizens, they have the power to make choices that can make their homes, schools and communities a better place to live and that they can protect the environment. They learned how to make informed and reasoned decisions by seeking and assessing information, asking questions, and evaluating alternative solutions. They worked together on collaborative projects to address real-life issues at home, school, in the community, and beyond and what taking appropriate action against unfairness looks like.

Educating students with topics that relate to their daily lives, such as food, can empower them to be healthy, happy, and engaged citizens. 🏡



Social studies and science: a guest speaker discusses his work in the cocoa industry from bean to bar.

# Teaching students to think like EXPLORERS



By Lisa Abramovitz

One hundred fifty muddy feet stomped across a two-mile expanse of grassy knoll as students carried heavy buckets filled with murky lake water. This water was then dumped into a makeshift water filter intended to teach students about how Ugandan school children obtain potable drinking water.

This was just one of many opportunities that stemmed from my introduction to the National Geographic Educator Certification. This free opportunity for educators has broadened my global mindset and has had a profound impact on my teaching career.

The National Geographic Educator Certification program is available to PreK-12th grade formal and informal educators. It consists of three phases that include participating in an online course, designing and implementing two activities related to skills gained in the seminar, and developing a

capstone project. The commitment to becoming a National Geographic Certified Teacher involves 20-30 hours of work over a three-month period.

## PHASE ONE

Phase One involved participation in an online course that introduced the National Geographic Learning Framework which, according to National Geographic, “lays out what we believe children and youth should learn from their experiences with the Society. It communicates National Geographic’s core beliefs and values, and provides guidance for every product, resource, service, and experience we design.”

First, the framework stresses the importance of cultivating the mindset of explorers. This mindset encourages curiosity, responsibility and empowerment. Next, it identifies skills



Third-grade students carry water for a two-mile trek to approximate the experience of some children in Uganda to obtain water.

needed to support exploration, such as observing, communicating, collaborating and problem solving. Finally, the framework focuses on knowledge, or key subject areas, that must be addressed, including the human journey, the changing planet and wildlife. The online course provided an extensive overview of these frameworks.

### PHASE TWO

Phase Two takes advantage of National Geographic's exclusive network of like-minded educators passionate about geo-literacy. In reviewing the resources submitted by my fellow educators, I came across the idea of teaching my students about global access to clean drinking water. Many American students take for granted the fact that they wake up, turn on their spigots, and have clean drinking water.

For this phase of the project, I created a lesson on potable drinking water that integrated the National Geographic Learning Framework. Students played the role of explorers, as they discovered maps and global statistics. They were shocked to learn that nearly 800 million people worldwide lack access to clean drinking water. They expanded their vocabularies to include words such as potable, aquifers, filters, desalination, contamination, drought, and sanitation.

Students then communicated and collaborated to develop possible solutions for the global water crisis. Students researched the advantages

and disadvantages of each solution to the global water crisis that they had proposed.

Looking at this global crisis with the mindset of an explorer, my students developed a solid understanding of challenges faced within the human journey, which was one of the core concepts introduced in phase one.

### PHASE THREE

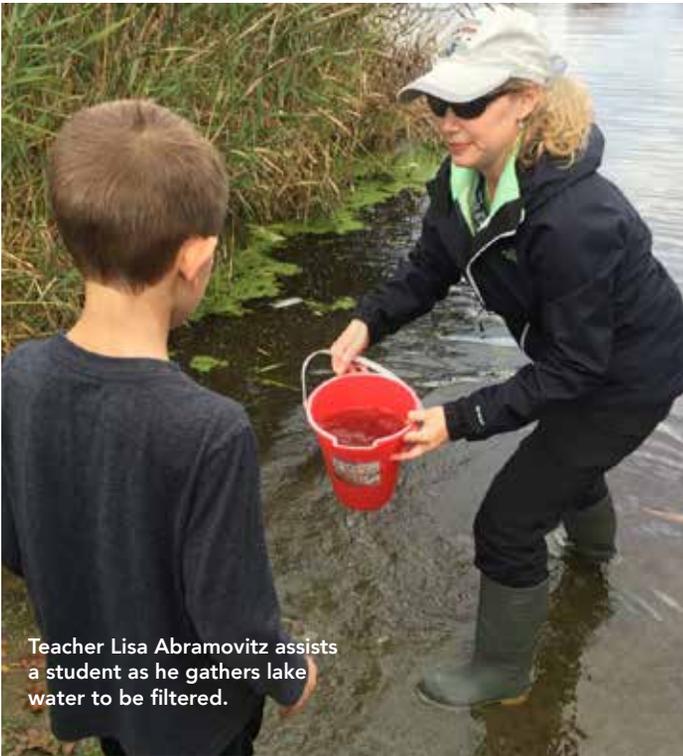
Phase Three involved developing a capstone project that detailed the story of student learning and professional growth. To expand on my clean drinking water concept, I contacted a nonprofit organization in Australia, the Water Works Program, that fosters team building opportunities through building water filtration systems that are then donated to villages in Africa that lack clean drinking water.

Students participated in a two-mile trek to a local creek, which represented the distance that many children in Africa have to walk each day to gather drinking water for their families. The students placed the dirty water they carried back into one of the filters from the Water Works Program. The filters were funded by a generous grant from the Shamong Township Foundation for Educational Excellence.

Parents and community members were invited to join the students as they constructed additional filtration systems themselves, which were donated to refugee camps in Northern Uganda. Students even created original stickers that adorned the completed water filtration equipment, supporting a message of unity and inspiration.

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*Lisa Abramovitz is the K-4 teacher in the gifted and talented program at Indian Mills Elementary School in Shamong. She holds the National Geographic Certification. Abramovitz can be reached at [labramovitz@shamongschools.org](mailto:labramovitz@shamongschools.org).*



Teacher Lisa Abramovitz assists a student as he gathers lake water to be filtered.

**“**  
***My affiliation with National Geographic have exposed me to a level of student engagement that keeps students curious, empowered and ready to change the world.***

#### **NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC EXPLORERS FESTIVAL**

The benefit of obtaining my National Geographic Teacher Certification did not end with the completion of my capstone project. I was suddenly exposed to the broader opportunities that National Geographic offers.

Every year, National Geographic holds its Explorers Festival. I applied for a free opportunity to have my students paired with a National Geographic explorer. They were matched with Tashi Dhenup, a Bhutanese researcher, who uses infrared sensors to track and study big cats.

My students worked with the art teacher, Kimberly Shaw-Hartman, to create big cat masks. Students filmed an informative video about this explorer while wearing their masks. This video was viewed by Tashi Dhenup at the National Geographic Explorers Festival in Washington, D.C. Students received a video response from the explorer.

#### **REACH THE WORLD EXPEDITION**

Through my National Geographic Educator Certification, I also learned about a wonderful opportunity to join a live expedition to Antarctica. This free opportunity provided my students with the chance to partake in a 45-day sea expedition that replicated the famous Weddell Sea Expedition. Originally led by Ernest Shackleton in 1914, the Weddell Sea Expedition was a sailing excursion to Antarctica that ended in a shipwreck.

This current expedition chartered the same course and taught the students about underwater technology used on the research vessel. Students learned about marine biology, glaciers, archeology and sea creatures.

The highlight of this project involved a live question-and-answer Skype session between my students and the researchers in Antarctica. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for students to interact with the crew of a major expedition.

#### **NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ONLINE COURSES**

Another no-cost enrichment opportunity offered by National Geographic is its diverse selection of free online courses. Last year, I registered for a course titled Integrating Service with Learning. I learned about the importance of demonstrating to students that they can be agents of change. By using service learning, educators can empower students to make connections between their own actions and the well-being of others.

This 15-hour online course required participants to design a service project to implement with their students. I taught my students about illiteracy and the importance of early literacy and exposure to high quality picture books. My students used their knowledge to develop a schoolwide book drive. They created posters, made announcements, and developed incentive programs for our entire student body to donate books.

Their month-long efforts resulted in the donation of over 2,000 picture books to Book Smiles, a local nonprofit organization that donates books to underserved children in Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey.

#### **NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC GEO-CHALLENGE**

The National Geographic Geo-Challenge provides students the opportunity to work collaboratively to solve real-world problems. Last year, my students participated in a Plastic Pollution Challenge.

National Geographic provided valuable resources, including a teacher's guide filled with links to articles, maps, visuals and videos. Students were challenged to learn about plastic pollution affecting our oceans and local waterways. My students created a three-dimensional clay map that modeled plastic pollution at a local waterway. The map was featured in a five-minute movie written, filmed, and edited by the students. The film was submitted to a nationwide Geo Challenge competition. National Geographic awarded certificates to all of my students for their participation.

Not only were my students proud of their efforts, but they were introduced to the world of documentary filmmaking.



Students created stickers that adorn the makeshift water filters they constructed for citizens of Uganda.

## What is geo-literacy?



Geo-literacy is a newly coined term adopted by National Geographic. It focuses on the interactions, interconnections, and implications of how our world works. It involves using geographic understanding and reasoning to make crucial decisions affecting our planet.

### NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC GIANT MAPS

National Geographic has designed some unique tools to assist with the instruction of geo-literacy. Funded by a generous grant from the Shamong Township Foundation for Educational Excellence, the school purchased giant continent maps that covered the floors of our gymnasium.

I collaborated with our physical education teacher, Scott McIntyre, to design interactive lessons that integrated geography and physical activity. These 30 by 30 foot maps provided students with the opportunity to engage in kinesthetic geography lessons. Students hopped from coast to coast, slithered around the borders of countries, and “swam” across major bodies of water. Students immediately became more geographically competent.

### WILD EARTH SAFARI LIVE

One of the key subjects addressed in the National Geographic Framework is wildlife. Wild Earth Safari Live is a program that allows teachers to travel virtually with their students to the hidden gems of Africa’s game parks.

My students enjoyed the virtual bumpy ride in a four-wheel drive vehicle across the African veld. As they encountered elephants and unique birds, they asked the guides questions over Skype. This unique platform for building knowledge about wildlife was another perk available through National Geographic.

### NEXT STEPS FOR INTERESTED EDUCATORS AND RELATED RESOURCES

Signing up to pursue my National Geographic Educator Certification has expanded my knowledge of the world, strengthened my repertoire of teaching strategies, and connected me with like-minded colleagues. The powerful activities that I have developed as a result of my affiliation with National Geographic have exposed me to a level of student engagement that keeps students curious, empowered and ready to change the world.

I should also note that the incredible support provided by my principal, Nicole Moore, and my superintendent, Dr. Christine Vespe, has been instrumental in providing unique and well-rounded educational experiences for my students.

American essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson appropriately stated, “The mind, once stretched by a new idea, never returns to its original dimensions.” I would highly recommend the National Geographic Teacher Certification to any educators looking to foster global citizenship. 🏠

## Resources for educators

National Geographic Teacher Certification  
[bit.ly/natgeotc](https://bit.ly/natgeotc)

Reach the World Expedition  
[reachtheworld.org](https://reachtheworld.org)

Wild Earth Live Safari  
[wildearth.tv/tag/national-geographic](https://wildearth.tv/tag/national-geographic)

National Geographic Free Online Courses  
[bit.ly/natgeoedpd](https://bit.ly/natgeoedpd)

National Geographic Explorer Classroom  
[bit.ly/natgeoclsrn](https://bit.ly/natgeoclsrn)

National Geographic Giant Maps  
[nationalgeographic.org/education/giant-maps](https://nationalgeographic.org/education/giant-maps)

Water Works Program  
[waterworksprogram.com](https://waterworksprogram.com)

# DISCUSSING CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS IN THE CLASSROOM

By Norman Goldman and Eric Fieldman

We are living in turbulent times. Now more than ever before, classroom teachers are faced with addressing students' concerns and questions they have over events unfolding before their eyes.

The divide in the country, ideology, culturally and racially has rarely been wider. Never has the plethora of misinformation and hate speech been so prominent in everyday life. Students look to us for gaining information and developing answers. They need guidance in navigating the massive maze of media onslaught.

Many teachers either feel unqualified to discuss controversial issues and events with their students, or believe it is not their place to address such topics. Teaching in some classes, such as history and civics, is inherently about political activities. If our charge is to teach our students how to be better citizens and active participants in shaping and advancing our country, we need to have these hard conversations to help our students learn and grow.

We cannot stand by ignoring what is going on around us, and what our students see every day. Educators need to be for equity and justice and encourage dialogue and interaction to better serve our students.

## RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, in 2017 the percentage of Black and brown students in American public schools was 42%, while white students accounted for 48%. Roughly 50% of our students are from historically disenfranchised groups. All of our students live with the consequences of systemic racism in our racially divided nation. They need to

have a forum to express their thoughts, fears and ideas. Many of our students turn to us for advice, guidance, and a haven to freely express the fear they are experiencing.

Teachers may worry about their ability to answer students' questions about race and racism. Do not purport to be an expert handing down wisdom and solutions. Commit to accepting that you don't have all the answers. Embrace the opportunity to learn with your students.

Why talk about race and diversity? Students need to learn about the world, know how to analyze information, and think for themselves. You may have planned conversations; other times it may be spontaneous. Students may make discriminatory comments. Don't overreact to comments or questions. Don't ignore them either. There are phrases that will help move the conversation in a thoughtful direction:

- "Let's talk about that for a minute ..."
- "What made you notice that?"

Just "winging it" is never a good idea, especially when it comes to controversial, sensitive or difficult issues. Ignoring or dismissing a student's concern is disrespectful to the student. It's OK to "buy time" by acknowledging the concerns and giving all stakeholders time to gather themselves and set up a time and space to address the matter.

When you plan on addressing the topics, consider what your goal is in teaching controversial issues. They may be used as teachable moments to learn how to have discussion and build consensus. Students increase their ability to recognize and accept different sides of an issue through critical thinking.

## CREATING SPACES TO BE BRAVE

Before jumping in, it is essential you do some self-assessment and examine your bias. We are all biased because we are all human. You can't be unbiased, but you can be aware of it. Being authentic with your students is critical to gaining their trust.

Helping your students feel safe is good. Encouraging them to be brave is better. Being too safe can lead to an environment that is too polite. Students will not ask difficult questions out of fear they will hurt someone's feelings or be labeled racist, sexist, homophobic, etc.

If the goal in discussing controversial issues is to gain other perspectives, then students need to be brave enough to share their views honestly and to listen to the views of others, even if it is unpleasant. Keep in mind, you are not facilitating a debate. Debate implies there is a winner and loser. That does not move the conversation forward. Teachers need to foster dialogues where the goal is to understand the reasons for an event or for an individual's actions. The aim is not to condone or accept, but to gain insight and reason.

One of the biggest concerns teachers may have regarding discussing hard issues is possible resistance from parents or administrators. This is a valid concern. Good preparation and good communication will help. If you have a clear set of goals and a precise plan, you can answer critical questions with confidence. If proper guidelines have been set in your class, student buy-in will be high and they will be an avenue of support for this effort.

It may be time to start getting comfortable with being uncomfortable! You owe it to your students—and to yourself.

## PREPARING FOR DISCUSSION

It is not only teachers who may need help addressing controversial issues in the classroom. Some basic ideas on civil discussion would also be helpful with neighbors, friends and family who

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*Eric Fieldman is a special education teacher at Collingswood High School. He is the adviser to the Collingswood Social Justice League and a member of the NJEA South Jersey Social Justice Coalition. He can be reached at [fieldmanfamily@verizon.net](mailto:fieldmanfamily@verizon.net).*

*Norman Goldman is a former editor of the NJEA Review. He was the first director of what was then called the NJEA Instruction and Training Division. After NJEA retirement, he served as director of community relations at Monmouth University. Currently as a volunteer, he is a guest columnist on education in Florida. He can be reached at [normg68@aol.com](mailto:normg68@aol.com).*

think differently about today's political and economic issues. Basic ideas such as:

- We all have freedom to express our opinion.
- Opinions may differ, but all words must be truthful and factual.
- Hate speech is not an opinion, nor is it factual. It will not be allowed.
- Valid opinions require relevant and factual examples.
- When listening and speaking, respect flows both ways.

In the classroom, there is always the possibility a student unexpectedly raises a controversial issue. Younger students often bring into the classroom what they have seen on television or the computer or what they have overheard from parents or friends. Older students usually wait for a topic in class that is somewhat related to a controversial issue. A natural response is to acknowledge the student and mention other students may have different ideas.

The teacher has a key decision: discuss it now or think about it and prepare for it. Whenever a controversial topic is raised, a structure should have already been created that leaves room for productive and respectful discussion. Ground rules created by and with the students will provide safer and braver spaces to deliver their ideas appropriately while respecting other ideas.

## GROUND RULES

To include all students in a whole-class discussion of ground rules is difficult. Using small groups (that safely accommodate social distancing) and report-outs, the class will hear from students who may not speak otherwise.

Examples of rules such as these may emerge:

- Respect each one of us.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Do not criticize people—just ideas.
- Share information.
- Avoid inflammatory language.
- Everyone has a chance to speak.

The teacher should also submit a ground rule: to facilitate discussion, to provide information, but not to offer a personal opinion.

When proposing a ground rule, a student explains why it is important.

Maximum student ownership develops with this process. But the question will come

up: "How do we make sure all members of the class follow the rules?" and "What happens if someone does not follow the ground rules?"

Whether the teacher has listed the rules on chart paper or a Google Doc, there should be a way for students record their assent. For a potential rule breaking, suggestions from students might include comic relief to bring the violator back on track, but immediate recognition of the rule violation by classmates may be sufficient.

## NJ STUDENT LEARNING STANDARDS

Naturally the words "controversial issues" may evoke concern about the appropriateness of such classroom discussions in the school district. Fortunately the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Social Studies call for an education that fosters a population that is "civic minded, globally aware, and socially responsible" and that:

- Exemplifies fundamental values of American citizenship through active participation in local and global communities.
- Makes informed decisions about local, state, national, and global events based on inquiry and analysis.
- Considers multiple perspectives, values diversity, and promotes cultural understanding.

In response to domestic terrorism at the U.S. Capitol Jan. 6, acting Commissioner of Education Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, sent a special broadcast to school districts, writing, "There is a responsibility that the education system must bear for this travesty: how can we effectively improve education in civics and government?" To that end, Allen-McMillan's broadcast included 11 resources for educators. You can read the broadcast and examine the resources at [bit.ly/njdoebcjan7](http://bit.ly/njdoebcjan7).

What are the advantages of preparing for, engaging in, and modeling respectful discussion of controversial topics? It develops critical thinking to help understand the complexity of issues. It intensifies personal skills to discuss and document positions in other classes. It relates a classroom discussion to the role a citizen has within the community to identify a core problem creating conflict and explore possible answers to the problem. 🗳️

# A recipe for controversy

## Ground Rules

### Preparation

1. Explain the importance of creating ground rules for considering—in a respectful way—different points of view.
2. "You (the students) will create the ground rules."
3. I (the teacher) will facilitate the discussion and provide information. Please do not ask me for my opinion."
4. "Before we begin, let's define ground rules, consensus, and commitment."
5. Discuss why ground rules are essential.

The teacher is prepared with either chart paper and markers or an open Google Doc (or other collaborative digital file) accessible to all students.

### Format

6. Divide class into small groups (4-5 students) as appropriate with respect to social distancing guidelines. Provide task: "Develop two to three ground rules for a respectful discussion, pick someone to report out, and when you report out, tell why the ground rule is important."
7. Time to share. Teacher is ready with chart paper/poster board/Google Dock with heading "Ground Rules" to list rules. Each group's rep shares their ground rules with class.

(Discussion for clarity if necessary)

8. For repeats on rules, mark a star on the one already listed to indicate support.

### Discussion

9. "How do these rules make for an accurate, respectful discussion? Do you want to vote on each one?"
10. "How can we make sure we follow these ground rules?"
11. "And what happens if someone does not follow these ground rules?"

After consensus on the ground rules is reached, students are asked to commit to the rules by signing the document, either on a physical chart (if it is safe to do so with respect to pandemic guidelines) or electronically. When posted, it serves as a visual reminder. Students are commended for their efforts to understand and strategize for an appropriate way to handle the complexity of a controversial issue.



# VACCINATIONS PROMOTE SCHOOL NURSES' ROLE

## But health and safety questions must be addressed

By Dorothy Wigmore

Asking questions is important these days. Many deal with pandemic health and safety issues for education staff and students. Who answers the questions matters. For education staff, school nurses and health and safety specialists are key sources.

“We can provide vaccine confidence, the evidence, the right information, and help people who are hesitant by promoting school nurses who are getting vaccines,” says Robin Cogan, Legislative co-chair for the New Jersey State School Nurses Association (NJSSNA). “We’re the medical interpreters.”

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*Dorothy Wigmore is a long-time health and safety specialist, trained in occupational hygiene, ergonomics and “stress.” A Canadian, she also has worked in the U.S. and Mozambique, focusing on prevention and worker participation to solve job-related hazards..*

### MESSAGING IS IMPORTANT.

“It’s so important that it comes from members of a community,” Cogan says. “From a public health standpoint, we have to do a good job as the credible folks in our community. For schools, that’s what school nurses are—we’re trusted. People look to us for information. We can translate information. It’s been confusing. There’ve been lots of changes and the CDC has constant updates. Now, thankfully, with a new director, the CDC’s reviewing the prior messaging and revising it.”

The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) also is changing its COVID requirements. President Joe Biden has appointed a new deputy assistant for pandemic and emergency response at OSHA. His responsibilities include a possible emergency temporary standard about pandemic health and safety by March 15. It would apply to all workplaces, including schools.

### VACCINE CONFIDENCE

There are questions about the vaccines themselves, the roll-out process, and the health and safety issues that go with giving them. NJEA has a FAQ (see references). So how can school nurses respond to questions?

“I try my best to share the importance of protecting ourselves,” Cogan says. “A typical vaccine is not 95% effective, like the Moderna and Pfizer vaccines. That’s quite amazing. Our children now are protected from 14 childhood illnesses because of vaccines. We have to remind people how vaccines have changed the world and kept us from so much harm.”

Eileen Gavin, the other NJSSNA Legislative co-chair, likes the term “generational amnesia.”

“Some people—many of them younger—say they’ll wait for FDA approval,” says Gavin. “They didn’t have the experience of classmates paralyzed with polio, in iron lungs, so they really don’t understand the history of vaccines and

how many diseases they'd eradicated. They don't have that generational confidence. I do because I saw the wreckage in many families from vaccine preventable diseases."

"The stars aligned so the vaccines could come out quickly, but the science isn't new," Gavin says. "And they're approved as an emergency measure because we need them now. For those concerned about the mRNA versions, others are expected to be available."

"We're asked about adverse reactions," she added. "So we share experiences about the normal reactions to the vaccines like the flu shot, role-modeling and building vaccine confidence. We say it's well worth it because of the devastation of COVID—500,000 US deaths, they're saying, by mid-February."

Like Gavin, school nurses can be recruited to be vaccinators. If they do that in school buildings—which may happen to increase access with vaccines that don't need special refrigeration—others, such as custodial staff, also will be needed.

#### VACCINATORS NEED HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTECTIONS

"Occupational health specialists want to ensure that those giving vaccinations, and people working with them, are properly trained and protected," says Allen Barkkume, an industrial hygiene consultant with the New Jersey Work Environment Council (NJWEC).

"Vaccinators need respirators, such as N95s that filter and fit, in case someone is infected with something. PEOSH's [Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health] respirator standard requires employers have effective programs, with medical evaluations, fit testing, training, etc."

"Don't forget the bloodborne pathogens (BBP) standard also requires safe needles to avoid needlestick injuries," Barkkume adds.

Under state law, if workers might encounter blood or other bodily fluids, employers must have a BBP program to avoid needlestick injuries that can lead to bloodborne diseases like hepatitis and HIV. Employers must provide training, reporting processes and record needlestick injuries on their NJOSH-300 work-related injuries and illnesses log.

Safe devices have a covering designed to ensure no one gets stabbed by a syringe needle. Combined with a sharps container for disposal, they also protect those cleaning up after others use needles.

"Safe needles can be more awkward to use," Gavin says. "Still, it's not right to avoid using the shield. They're expecting vaccinators to do things quickly and a lot of retired people are involved, who aren't used to this. They need the safe needle training."

"Just because someone doesn't have COVID, it doesn't mean they don't have hepatitis or

## Resources

**NJEA Vaccine FAQ**  
[njea.org/njea-vaccine-faq](https://njea.org/njea-vaccine-faq)

**National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), "COVID-19 Vaccine Information for Workers"**  
[bit.ly/nihc19vac](https://bit.ly/nihc19vac)

**National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), "Injection Safety for COVID-19 Vaccinators and Vaccine Administrators Preventing Needlesticks and Blood Exposures"**  
[bit.ly/nihinjectionsafety](https://bit.ly/nihinjectionsafety)

**PBS, "3 things you should know about coronavirus vaccines"**  
[bit.ly/pbsc19vac](https://bit.ly/pbsc19vac)

**PEOSH Revised Bloodborne Pathogens Standard**  
[bit.ly/peoshbps](https://bit.ly/peoshbps)

**PEOSH respiratory protection standard**  
[bit.ly/peoshrps](https://bit.ly/peoshrps)



Deptford school nurse Bonnie Boucher receives her first dose of the Moderna vaccine at the ShopRite in Mullica Hill from staff pharmacist Adam Fanelle.

something else that spreads through blood. Vaccine sites need to have universal precautions," Barkkume says.

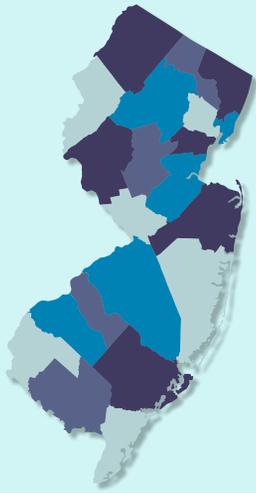
If school nurses are giving the vaccine, Barkkume says they need to be familiar with whatever they're using, and have the time to use and dispose of it properly. They also need easy access to hand-washing facilities and extra sharps boxes.

"If it's happening in a makeshift arrangement, the vaccinator needs to know their way around and have stable surfaces to work on. And there's no using your second hand to recap the needle."

Barkkume recommends health and safety committees work with school nurses to ensure all staff involved with school site vaccinations are properly protected.

"They can encourage people getting the vaccine to be patient, so there's less chance of needlestick injuries," he says. "They also can remind members that we still need to distance and wear face coverings, even if you've had the vaccine."

"It's the kind of solidarity we need these days."



# SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

## 2021 NJTESOL/NJBE VIRTUAL SPRING CONFERENCE

### *Equity for Language Learners*

Three prominent keynote speakers and a special guest speaker, Dr. Stephen Krashen, will be featured at this year's NJTESOL/NJBE Virtual Spring Conference to be held May 25, 26, and 27. The keynotes are Dr. Jose Medina (Meeting the Needs of Emergent Bilinguals), Jane Hill (Language and Discourse for English Language Learners), and Dr. Kate Seltzer (Translanguaging Practices of Emergent Bilinguals).

All three days will include matters of general interest, content area instruction, bilingual/ESL Pre-K through 12, higher ed, teacher ed, adult ed, K-12 administrators, dual

language/biliteracy, and the new 2020 WIDA Standards. There is one rate for all three days. Registration includes one free year of membership. There will be over 20 presentations each day (pre-recorded presentations followed by live Q&A sessions). Each paid attendee will have three-month access to all conference presentations on demand. Explore the virtual sponsor and exhibit halls. Learn about the latest products and services.

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Visit [njtesol-njbe.org/spring-conference](http://njtesol-njbe.org/spring-conference) for more information and to register. For other conference questions email Sandee McBride at [conference-coordinator@njtesol-njbe.org](mailto:conference-coordinator@njtesol-njbe.org) or Michelle Land at [vice-president@njtesol-njbe.org](mailto:vice-president@njtesol-njbe.org).



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# One year with NJEA Learning

## Learning our way through the pandemic

By Mike Ritzius

One year ago, everything came to a screeching halt. It became clear that the pandemic had arrived in the U.S., with New Jersey experiencing one of the early outbreaks. Staying safe meant staying home. At NJEA, this meant canceling all of our events—meetings, conferences, professional development—all of them were put on hold for the safety of members. This posed special challenges for us as a union. Our style of organizing has always been in person through intentional gatherings, conversations of meals, handshakes and hugs.

Professional Development was especially hard hit. County and local affiliates typically organize more than 200 learning opportunities for members each year. These learning demands skyrocketed as schools abruptly transitioned to a fully remote teaching. NJEA had never offered a webinar before but we decided to give it a shot. With less than one week's notice, 163 people joined that first event in late March. NJEA Learning was born.

### WHAT IS NJEA LEARNING?

NJEA Learning is the new home of all things professional development. There members can find upcoming workshops on a wide diversity of topics—online pedagogy, equity and inclusion, educational support professional needs, the NJEA R.E.A.L. Movement, health and safety, technology tools, and so much more. The workshops are organized in the “Upcoming Events” tab where members can search for topics and add events to personal calendars. Members may also subscribe to email notifications for upcoming events through the “About” tab. Attendees will have certificates of attendance added directly to their NJEA PD transcripts. ([njea.org/transcript](http://njea.org/transcript))

NJEA Learning also has a growing resource tab where members and leaders can find advocacy tools, such as our interactive video on evaluation changes and advisories, resources for helping parents, and classroom tools. Previously

recorded sessions can be found under the “Session Recordings” tab.

### LEARNING OUR WAY THROUGH IT

As we launched NJEA Learning, one of the first things we learned was that we were no longer limited by geography and room capacity. In a typical year, members would have access to approximately 10 to 20 workshops a year offered by their county or local association. Now, members from across the state could attend any workshop. By the middle of April 2019, we were offering daily workshops on NJEA Learning on a wide range of topics—169 to date.

We were able to partner with several organizations to diversify our offerings with a wide range of topics including pedagogy, equity and inclusion, health and safety, arts integration, and educational technology. Realizing that parents were also struggling with the transition to remote and hybrid schooling, participants in the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy began offering workshops and resources to them as well through the site. The events calendar grew to also include member-interest events such as Degrees, Not Debt and health care workshops offered by other NJEA Divisions.

### A sampling of resources at [learning.njea.org](http://learning.njea.org)

**Upcoming webinars**  
[learning.njea.org/events/month](http://learning.njea.org/events/month)

**Session recordings**  
[learning.njea.org/category/webinars](http://learning.njea.org/category/webinars)

**Interactive advocacy resources**  
[learning.njea.org/advocacy-tools-for-fair-evaluation-and-sgos](http://learning.njea.org/advocacy-tools-for-fair-evaluation-and-sgos)

**Parent resources (member created)**  
[learning.njea.org/category/resources/parents](http://learning.njea.org/category/resources/parents)

### LOOKING FORWARD

As hard as the pandemic has been on all of us, it has taught some positive lessons. In a post-COVID future, NJEA Learning will persist and evolve. Attending professional development in person will remain the gold standard for us, but NJEA Learning will help overcome in person limitations. It will be a place for highly popular workshops, such as our partnership with The Reading and Writing Project, which attracted more than 200 attendees. It will also serve members seeking specialty workshops, overcoming the challenge of small numbers in a specific geography.

NJEA Learning is also poised to become an organizing platform to elevate your work. New Jersey's county teachers of the year helped develop an example of this with model lessons, such as [learning.njea.org/SELebrating-characters](http://learning.njea.org/SELebrating-characters).

Whatever the future holds, NJEA Learning will be here to help us learn our way through it. 📖

## NJEA learning stats

**Number of workshops: 169**  
(at time of writing)  
**Number of attendees: 4,256**  
(at time of writing)  
**Site visitors since launch: 26,495**

### Partner organizations

- NJ Work Environment Council (WEC)
- Bayard Rustin Center for Social Justice
- Make It Better for Youth
- Garden State Equality
- Arts Ed NJ
- Sustainable Jersey
- The Reading and Writing Project – Teachers College, Columbia
- NJEA Teacher Leader Academy
- Google Certified Teaching – Rich Kiker Learning, LLC

*Mike Ritzius is an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. He can be reached at [mritzius@njea.org](mailto:mritzius@njea.org).*

# BLACK HISTORY AND THE AMISTAD CURRICULUM MUST BE TAUGHT IN NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS

By Sundjata Sekou

On Dec. 9, the New York Post reported that Connecticut had become the first state to require that schools offer Black and Latino studies. If we bypass the headline and read the law, it states that “The State Education Resource Center shall develop a black and Latino studies course. Such course shall be one credit and offered at the high school level.”

In other words, this is an elective and won't be mandatory. It also means that Black and Brown children searching for “knowledge of self” will fill these classes. While white students who love hip-hop and Black culture will bypass this class en masse! If Connecticut wants to make this meaningful, the state should make it a graduation requirement that is enforced and evaluated as part of its exit-testing requirements.

While it is beneficial for all students to learn about Black and Latino history, such mandates anywhere in the nation would face resistance, backlash or indifference. The resistance could come from white families who may think that a mandatory graduation requirement that focuses on race, racism, systemic racism and anti-Blackness is a course in hating white people. But white families who are inclined to think in this manner should pay attention to a paper authored by Christine E. Sleeter and published by the National Education Association (NEA). Titled “The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies,” it found that “both students of color and white students have been found to benefit academically as well as socially from ethnic studies.” The paper also stated that “ethnic studies plays an important role in building a truly inclusive multicultural democracy and system of education.” (You can read the paper at [eric.ed.gov/?id=ED521869](http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED521869).)

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*Sundjata Sekou is a third-grade math and science teacher at Mount Vernon Avenue Elementary School in Irvington. He can be reached at [sundjata.sekou@gmail.com](mailto:sundjata.sekou@gmail.com) or 908-247-7136.*

A Black and Latino graduation requirement may also face backlash from other ethnic, religious or marginalized groups who feel that their history and achievements in America should also be highlighted. While I agree that other groups' stories should be told, there should be a dual track, where a graduation requirement for Black and Latino studies is firmly established while creating a pathway for other groups to be studied.

But when it comes to the indifference toward the teaching of Black history, New Jersey is a leader because of the lack of implementation of its own Amistad law.

The Amistad bill was signed into law on Aug. 27, 2002. It states, in part:

- b. All people should know of and remember the human carnage and dehumanizing atrocities committed during the period of the African slave trade and slavery in America and of the vestiges of slavery in this country; and it is in fact vital to educate our citizens on these events, the legacy of slavery, the sad history of racism in this country, and on the principles of human rights and dignity in a civilized society;
- c. It is the policy of the state of New Jersey that the history of the African slave trade, slavery in America, the depth of their impact in our society, and the triumphs of African-Americans and their significant contributions to the development of this country is the proper concern of all people, particularly students enrolled in the schools of the state of New Jersey.

Nearly 20 years have elapsed since the Amistad law was passed, but if administrators, teachers, students, and parents were surveyed about it, the results would show that people are only vaguely aware of it.

NJEA, in partnership with the Department of Education, created a task force in 2018 to address the lack of implementation and to also look at model schools. In addition, the State Board of Education approved the proposal of former New Jersey Commissioner of Education Lamont Repollet to mandate that school districts be held accountable for meeting the Amistad mandate by making it as part of the oversight monitoring of New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum (NJQSAC).

Moreover, at the 2019 NJEA Convention, NJEA, Gov. Phil Murphy and the New Jersey Department of Education announced the formation of the Amistad Journey, a program designed to allow educators to travel to some of the historic sites of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

With a nearly 20-year-old law, adding the Amistad curriculum as a requirement to the NJQSAC, NJEA forming a task force and announcing the Amistad Journey, why isn't the Amistad law fully implemented from Exit 0 to Exit 172?

Dr. Stephanie James Harris, the executive director of the New Jersey Amistad Commission, shared the following thoughts and recommendations with me:

- The original Amistad bill created underutilization and underfunding of the Amistad Commission. A bill was passed in October 2020 that strengthens the original Amistad bill. This bill intends to make the Amistad Commission in, but not of, the New Jersey Department of Education. It also requires the commission to elect a chairperson and appoint an executive director. It also requires public schools to include instruction on accomplishments and contributions of African Americans to American society.

- College teacher-preparation programs should ensure that prospective teachers take courses on African American/Black history. Currently, a New Jersey educator can teach African American/Black history and not take courses or answer questions on a Praxis about the subject. This is equivalent to teaching biology and never taking a course or answering biology questions on the Praxis.
- African American/Black history should be infused across curricula. The Amistad Curriculum should be infused into language arts, math and science. If taught as a separate course, African American/Black history should interpret, ask probing questions, reveal universal truths, and provide project-based learning opportunities about the African American experience.
- New Jersey school superintendents should show more fortitude and willingness to install the Amistad Curriculum in their districts.
- New Jersey school districts shouldn't just have the Amistad Curriculum a part of their history curriculum. The Amistad Curriculum needs to be taught in all classes.

The preceding recommendation and thoughts are juxtaposed with the feeling that too many people think that the teaching of Black history is divisive. But according to the NEA paper referenced above, "rather than being divisive, ethnic studies helps students to bridge differences that already exist in experiences and perspectives."

While Black history is generally not being taught in New Jersey schools, or is reserved for February, the irony is that June 19, 2021, will be the first time that Juneteenth is honored as a state holiday in the state. Juneteenth commemorates Union soldiers bringing news of the Emancipation Proclamation to Texas and declaring that all Africans enslaved in America must be freed. But without the study of history and the constant disregard for the Amistad Curriculum, students will not know why Juneteenth needs to be celebrated and why we must keep fighting for freedom, justice and equality for Black people! 🇺🇸

## The NJEA Amistad Stakeholder Group

In his column, Irvington teacher Sundjata Sekou notes that NJEA, Gov. Phil Murphy and the New Jersey Department of Education announced the Amistad Journey, a program designed to enable educators to travel to some of the historic sites of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The Amistad Journey, which NJEA has donated \$75,000 to fund, came from among 12 recommendations of the NJEA Amistad Stakeholder Group.

In September of 2018, NJEA President Marie Blistan met with the Leadership for Excellence in Education (LEE) Group to discuss the implementation of Amistad Law. The LEE group is composed of statewide public education stakeholder organizations, including the NJDOE. Eventually, representatives sent from each organization in the LEE Group formed the NJEA Amistad Stakeholder Group. It defined its purpose as "to ensure that students receive an intentional, authentic, and inclusive learning experience, which will develop students' academic strengths and cultural sensibilities about the inclusive nature of history and acknowledge the contributions of Africans and African Americans to U.S. history through the New Jersey Amistad Curriculum."

To that end, the NJEA Amistad Stakeholder Group developed, and committed to acting on, the following recommendations to ensure implementation of the Amistad mandate:

- Develop relationships with organizations that hold educational and advocacy conferences, including, but not limited to the NJEA, NJSBA, NJPTA, NAACP, the New Jersey Black Issues Convention, and The Latino Institute.
- Develop workshops through the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division.
- Reinstate and expand upon an Amistad Recognition Award, through the NJDOE.
- Use educator publications, such as the NJEA Review and Educational Viewpoints, to promote Amistad education.
- Develop relationships with college and university educator preparation programs.
- Ensure that the goals of the Amistad mandate are embedded in the courses of study in educator preparation programs.
- Explore existing college-based educator programs for models of successful ventures and lessons learned from less successful ventures.
- Seek insights of and participation of those preparing to enter the teaching profession.
- Explore the development of middle and high school pilot programs.
- Review and revise, as needed, the Amistad Commission's web-based interactive curriculum.
- Create and implement the Amistad Journey through a collaboration of the NJDOE and NJEA.
- Reconvene the Amistad Task Force in June 2021 to review implementation.

# REBUT ... BUT ... BUT ... I DON'T AGREE!

BY HANNAH PAWLAK



## Early Career Network

You are a hard working educator. You go to work every day, you come prepared, and then ... you're observed. Someone who doesn't do the same job as you, who doesn't see the same students every day, and who doesn't have

relevant context in your environment, comes to evaluate your proficiency in your job.

Sometimes, the experience is positive, self-reflective, and supportive while other times the experience is disheartening, frustrating, and feels unfair. Either way, your response to the evaluator's comments is valuable.

### WHAT IS A REBUTTAL?

Although the word "rebuttal" itself has a combative or negative connotation, in the case of educator evaluations this could not be further from the truth. Think of it like a response to the evaluator and the score. A rebuttal is not meant to be argumentative toward the evaluator, but rather to give a thoughtful reflection to accompany your evaluation. You may comment on aspects in which you both agree and disagree depending on your perception of your evaluation. Either way, these responses put your voice

### WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

#### *Be positive*

Start with some positivity by acknowledging the pieces of the evaluation on which you both agree. Perhaps you want to thank the evaluator

for their time, or maybe you received some praise you feel warrants a comment.

#### *Use evidence and documentation*

If you'd like to comment on aspects of the evaluation with which you disagree, use evidence and documentation when pinpointing these areas. This, again, is not meant to be hostile, but rather meant to shed light on your point of view.

#### *Be reflective*

Be as reflective as possible. Maybe you tried a suggestion from a previous administrator that you'd like to comment upon. Maybe you tried a new academic strategy or engagement approach for your class that you want to point out. Perhaps even you agree with an administrative suggestion and would like to consider this an area for potential growth.

#### *Conclude with your values*

End with a few sentences that really embody you as an educator. Talk about how proud you are of your lessons, and how dedicated you are to your students. Talk about your growth potential or even something about you that is unique.

#### *Ask your association for help*

Never be afraid to ask for help if you are not sure what to say in writing your rebuttal. Find a trusted local association building rep who can guide you through the process.

### YOUR VOICE IS POWER

Let your voice be heard and be proud of it. Ultimately, evaluations do not make you a terrific educator, but your reflection of your lessons can push your pedagogical practice to the next level. Your own opinion of your own teaching matters. Evaluations have the ability to really take an emotional toll on us—after all, we are human. Yet, no matter what the evaluative outcome, always know you are passionate, you are ever-learning, and you are enough. 🙌

*Hannah Pawlak is the Local Evaluation Committee chair for the Highland Park Education Association, and a teacher at Highland Park High School. She represents Middlesex County on the NJEA Certification, Evaluation, and Tenure Committee. Pawlak is an NJEA organizing consultant. She can be reached at hpawlak@njea.org.*

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Register for an upcoming event at [www.njea.org/mbwebinars](http://www.njea.org/mbwebinars):

- March 13 at 10 a.m. – NJEA Homebuyer's Program Panel Discussion Part 1: Financial Preparation
- March 20 at 10 a.m. – NJEA Homebuyer's Program Panel Discussion Part 2: Homebuying Process

Questions? Contact (609) 599-4561 x2222 or [bbuonsante@njea.org](mailto:bbuonsante@njea.org).



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# STANDING TOGETHER

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: April 1, 2021

## 9-10 A.M.

### KEEP CALM AND PREPARE FOR RETIREMENT: GET THE MOST OUT OF THE ALTERNATE BENEFIT PROGRAM (ABP)

**Presenter:** Kimberley Brown, consultant specialist for ABP

As we anticipate new stages in our lives we plan for them, except when it comes to retirement. We expect to transition into a stress-free life with sandy beach walks. Retiring comfortably and being able to do the things you dream about requires a steady stream of income that lasts as long as you do. Join us to learn how to plan and manage your ABP account.

### YOU AND YOUR PENSION (PERS)

**Presenter:** Bob Bobik, NJEA associate director, Research

This workshop provides an overview of the New Jersey Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS). The workshop is recommended for all higher education members enrolled in PERS to learn the ins and outs of the system.

## 10:15-11:15 A.M.

### COVID-RELATED EMPLOYMENT ISSUES

**Presenter:** Keith Waldman, Esq., Selikoff & Cohen, P.A.

This workshop addresses a broad range of issues relating to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the higher education workplace, both in person and remote. Topics include:

- Emergency paid sick and family leave provisions of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act have expired. What's next?
- Are employees who refuse in-person work because of COVID-related concerns eligible for unemployment?
- When is remote teaching a "reasonable accommodation" under the Americans with Disabilities Act and/or NJ Law Against Discrimination?
- Can a college force its employees to quarantine?
- What policies can a college impose without negotiation?
- Can the COVID vaccine be mandated by colleges?
- What whistleblower protections are available for employees who report workplace safety violations?

## 11:30 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

### MEMBERS OF COLOR HIGHER ED ROUNDTABLE – ELEVATING YOUR VOICE, MAXIMIZING YOUR INFLUENCE

**Presenters:** Naomi Johnson-Lafleur, NJEA field rep., UniServ Reg. 9-Monmouth Co.; Eric Jones, NJEA field rep., Organizational Development

This interactive, engaging workshop explores individual and collective strategies to ensure the power and sustained presence of higher education members of color in their professional communities and beyond. Join us.

## 12:30-1:15 P.M.

### GREETINGS / BREAK

**Keynote:** Sean M. Spiller, NJEA vice president

## 1:15-2:15 P.M.

### NEGOTIATIONS 101: THE BASICS

**Presenters:** Nicholas DiCicco, Mingyon McCall, NJEA UniServ consultants, Higher Education

Learn the fundamentals of negotiating a collective bargaining agreement. Basic organizing, planning, membership engagement, communicating, and negotiating strategies will be discussed. Our goal is for you to understand and be able to execute the basic steps in the negotiating process.

### STRESS MANAGEMENT FOR COLLEGE SUPPORT AND ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF

**Presenters:** Michael A. Rollins, NJEA field rep., Organizational Development; Heather L. Sorge, organizer, Healthy Schools Now, NJ Work Environment Council

**Stress.** The mere mention of the word can bring on feelings of anxiety. Work pressure, hectic schedules,

life events, and financial obligations all contribute to the constant strain placed upon us. But what can we do about it? This interactive, engaging and entertaining workshop helps members learn how to:

- Define it and understand it
- Identify the causes
- Find ways to manage it

## 2:30-3:30 P.M.

### BUILD YOUR POLITICAL POWER TO MOVE HIGHER EDUCATION EVEN HIGHER

**Presenters:** Marybeth Beichert, Fran Pfeffer, NJEA associate directors, Government Relations

As the organizer Ernesto Cortés once said, "If I want to organize you, I don't sell you an idea. What I do, if I'm smart, is to try to find out what's your interest. What are your dreams? I try to kindle your imagination, stir the possibilities, and then propose some ways in which you can act on those values and act on your visions. You've got to be the owner." Join us as we learn how to understand your power, build it, and use it to influence those who make the decisions about your professional life as a higher education member.

### THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF A DIGITAL MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN

**Presenters:** Justin Conley, NEA senior digital strategist; Justin Tzuanos, NEA organizational specialist, NEA Center for Organizing

In this session, participants will be introduced to the research, best practices and digital platforms needed to implement a strategic virtual component to their membership campaign efforts. Participants will be led through case studies, take part in interactive exercises around content creation, and learn how to initiate and receive the resources to launch a digital membership campaign on their campus.



### CONTRACT ENFORCEMENT

**Presenters:** Ed Carmien, Oron Nahom, NJEA UniServ consultants, Higher Education

Participants will receive guidance on how to draft a Statement of Grievance following review of a nuanced case study as well as applicable contract language. Distinctions will be drawn between grievable contract violations and nongrievable actions.

To register, go to [njea.org/2021higheredconf](https://njea.org/2021higheredconf)

Members will need their NJEA PIN to register. For more info, email [highered@njea.org](mailto:highered@njea.org)  
The Higher Education Conference will be virtual this year. There will be no cost to participate.

# FIVE WAYS TO IMPLEMENT SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING IN THE CLASSROOM

BY KEVIN DIPPOLD, NJEA PRESERVICE, ROWAN UNIVERSITY

There are very few, if any, careers that require its employees to wear as many hats as educators are expected to wear. Many of the jobs teachers perform on a day-to-day basis go beyond what is expected of them. One of these more recent jobs is that of a mediator for students to develop not only academically, but emotionally as well.

The New Jersey Department of Education defines social-emotional learning as “the process by which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to do the following: understand and manage emotions; set and achieve positive goals; feel and show empathy for others; and make responsible decisions.” As teachers, SEL is another part of our responsibility and finding ways to incorporate it in the classroom can be intimidating for both novice and veteran teachers.

To help alleviate some of the fear behind including SEL in the classroom, here are five strategies to get you started.

## 1: START THE DAY WITH A MORNING MEETING OR CHECK-IN

Outside the walls of the school building, students lead a life comparable to teachers. They enter the building and come to the classroom with experiences and emotions unique to each of them. By providing students with a morning meeting or check-in, they have an opportunity to share these experiences and learn about their classmates and themselves. These check-ins can be as short as 15 minutes at the start of the day where they allow students to make connections and develop empathy for one another. In upper grades where students may be on a period schedule, check-ins may need to be modified to a weekly occurrence unless circumstances arise that require more frequent check-ins.

## 2: TEACH STUDENTS TO SOLVE PROBLEMS WITH PEER MEDIATION

As educators, we know that our days with our students are seldom dull. There is always a scrape to take care of, a head that is hurting, or students that are struggling to get along. Instances such as these can be used as teachable moments. Take the time to address the conflicts that students are having, whether including the whole class or discussing it with a small group, and then model how to come to an understanding. Ask students to give each side of their stories and challenge them to find common ground. If we continue to model these behaviors for our students, then they will begin to use them without any prompting.

## 3: USE ROLE PLAYING ACTIVITIES

Empathy is a skill that even adults have a hard time mastering, so it comes as no surprise that students have a hard time being empathetic. Including activities that allow students to role play can really help them understand a new perspective.

Try this game the next time you feel your students need a reminder

about empathy: Gather your students wherever you meet for whole group instruction, and pass out cards with different feelings (anger, sadness, grief, fear, etc.). Have students, one at a time, come to the front of the classroom and act out the feeling written on their card. The other students must correctly identify how the students are feeling. This can be followed up with a discussion about the best ways to navigate those feelings and strategies they can use to help them feel better.

## 4: USE ANCHOR CHARTS TO TEACH SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Anchor charts allow teachers to have a discussion with their students and take live notes for students to look back to when they need a reminder. Anchor charts can be a great addition to any lesson, but they play an especially important role in SEL. By using anchor charts to teach children social-emotional skills, we are not only modeling behaviors on students' behalf, but we are also providing them with a resource that they can feel free to look at whenever they are having issues.

Anchor charts can cover a variety of different skills, including, but not limited to various breathing activities, positive affirmations, the three As to be an active listener (attention, attitude, adjustment), the definition of peer mediation, and ways to own your learning.

## 5: CHECK OUT JUST AS MUCH AS YOU CHECK IN

End your day with a quick discussion about how students felt throughout the day. As a class, discuss what went well and what did not go so well for the day. Sit down with the students and come up with goals for the next day. Send students home with the hope of a better tomorrow because, let's face it, we are all looking for a little hope. 🏠

## References

The following resources informed this column.  
 “Keeping Our Kids Safe, Healthy and in School,”  
 New Jersey Department of Education. [bit.ly/2LfgxSw](https://bit.ly/2LfgxSw)

Mulvahill, Elizabeth. “21 Ways Teachers Can Integrate Social-Emotional Learning.” We Are Teachers. Posted on 4 Oct. 21, 2016: [bit.ly/3ctZ0B1](https://bit.ly/3ctZ0B1)

“Social Emotional Learning (SEL) & Why It Matters for Educators,” National University. Posted November 2020: [bit.ly/3jb2gCW](https://bit.ly/3jb2gCW)



# How to *write* for the NJEA Review

## WHAT CAN I SUBMIT FOR PUBLICATION?

### Feature article

*Review* feature articles address areas of interest to NJEA members. This is an opportunity to help your colleagues improve their skills by describing a successful approach or strategy. A feature article should range between 1,400 and 2,000 words. Remember to use subheads to break up sections; consider listing resources or tips as a separate sidebar.

### Letter to the editor

Respond to content that has appeared in the *Review* by submitting a letter to the editor that is about 250 words or less. A letter/email must be received by the 10th of the month in order for it to appear in the subsequent issue (e.g., Sept. 10 for the October *Review*).

### Quick tip

Do you have a great idea regarding classroom management? A better way to complete a mundane task? A favorite website? An app you and your students can't live without? The *Review's* "Bulletin Board" column includes quick tips from experts like you. Submissions should be 250 words or less.

### Speak out

This occasional column lets members opine about a hot topic in education. If you have strong feelings about a current issue that would be of interest to other members, speak out in an essay of 650 words or less.

### I Am NJEA

Are you involved in a local, county or state association activity such as a workshop, a rally, a meeting, a protest or other event? Consider snapping a few photos to be considered for this page, which consists primarily of photos and captions of members engaged in association activities. Make sure your local president is informed if you are sending photos from local association events and activities.

### Proud moments

Has your local association used Pride funds to promote our great public schools? Send a brief description and your best photo to [ProudMoments@njea.org](mailto:ProudMoments@njea.org).

### Toolbox

If you have a great way to incorporate technology to boost student learning, consider writing about it in the "Toolbox" column. Share your expertise in 1,000 words or less.

## HOW DO I SUBMIT FOR PUBLICATION?

### Submitting content

Email submissions to [njeareview@njea.org](mailto:njeareview@njea.org). Be sure to include your name and contact information, the name of your district and what you do there, the name of your local association, as well as the name and contact information of your local association president. Submissions for the Proud Moments page can be sent to [proudmoments@njea.org](mailto:proudmoments@njea.org).

### The review process

You will receive an email acknowledging receipt of your submission, but the review process can take several weeks. Please be patient; the editor will get back to you and let you know if we will use your submission. You may be asked to revise the piece but will be given specific suggestions on what needs to be changed.

If your submission is not accepted for publication in the *Review*, don't be discouraged! While your article may not be right for the *Review*, it may be appropriate for another publication. All submissions, even letters to the editor, may be edited for length, style and content.



## *Classroom Close-up NJ looks back at*

# Living History Museum

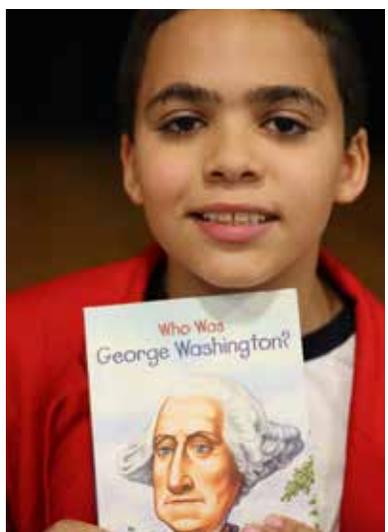
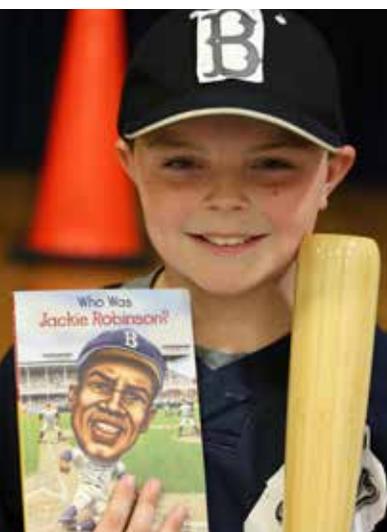
South Harrison Township Elementary fourth graders created a Living History Museum and invited the community to learn more about historic figures. The students researched biographies, created time capsules and performed in character during a schoolwide event.

The interdisciplinary project highlighted famous people such as Rosa Parks, Amelia Earhart, Harriet Tubman, Louisa May Alcott, Albert Einstein and many more. Students also took away a message that despite the obstacles they might face in life, they also can achieve great things.



Over its 25-year run, NJEA's Classroom Close-up NJ has won 16 Emmy® Awards. While it is no longer producing new episodes, it has a treasure trove of content that inspires and educates the public about the great things happening in New Jersey public schools – and it is a valuable resource for educators.

Watch Classroom Close-up on NJTV. The show airs on Sundays at 7:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 7:30 p.m. Follow @CCUNJ on Twitter and Facebook at [facebook.com/crcunj](https://www.facebook.com/crcunj) and visit [www.classroomcloseup.org](http://www.classroomcloseup.org).



## IMPORTANT PRESCRIPTION INFORMATION



Late December some retirees received an erroneous letter about their prescription coverage being canceled, while other retirees inadvertently disenrolled from their prescription program. It's important to understand the situations that may affect retiree prescription coverage and the steps you can take to ensure you remain covered.

### Medicare Part D

Retirees who are members of the School Employees Health Benefits Plan (SEHBP) and are enrolled in Medicare are automatically enrolled in the OptumRx Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan (PDP). Retirees may waive the OptumRx

Medicare PDP only if they are enrolled in another Medicare Part D plan.

To request that your coverage be waived, you must submit a Cancel/Decline/Waive Retired Coverage Form, along with proof of other Medicare Part D coverage, to the New Jersey Division of Pensions and Benefits (NJDPB) at the following address:

New Jersey Division of Pensions and Benefits  
Health Benefits Bureau  
P.O. Box 299  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0299

### Medicare Supplement Plan (Horizon)

Retirees who choose to enroll in another Medicare Part D plan, such as their spouse's, will lose any prescription drug benefits provided by the SEHBP. However, their medical benefits will continue.

### Medicare Advantage Plans (Aetna)

Retirees who are enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan may only waive their prescription drug coverage for another group Medicare Part D plan. Please note: If you waive coverage for an individual Medicare Part D plan, your SEHBP Medicare Advantage Plan for both medical and prescription will be terminated.

### Returning to the SEHBP

Retirees who have previously waived their prescription drug coverage for another Medicare Part D plan and wish to reenroll in the OptumRx Medicare PDP must send proof of their termination from the other Medicare Part D plan. Acceptable proof is a letter from the other Medicare Part D plan confirming the date upon which you officially are disenrolled. The NJDPB must receive this proof within 60 days of the termination from the other Medicare Part D plan.

Retirees who have additional questions and/or wish to learn more can visit the division's website at [nj.gov/treasury/pensions](http://nj.gov/treasury/pensions) or by calling 609-292-7524.

## Around the counties

*Due to COVID-19 concerns and restrictions, all meetings/events subject to change. For questions, call your county REA. For trip details, check the county newsletter*

### CAMDEN COUNTY REA'S

next meeting/luncheon will be held via Zoom on Thursday, May 6. Please check the CCREA newsletter for more details. To attend, call Gary Milby at 856-574-4212 or Sue Ronca at 856-816-1289.

### Join MIDDLESEX COUNTY REA

for its spring meeting/luncheon on Thursday, March 11 at the Grand Marquis in Old Bridge. An NJEA Member Benefits fair will be held. The cost is \$34. To attend, call Anne Chomko at 732-675-1734.

### MORRIS COUNTY REA

welcomes you to its spring meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, March 10 at the Birchwood Manor in Whippany. The cost is \$35. To attend, call John Beekman at 973-514-1080.

### The OCEAN COUNTY REA will

hold its next meeting/luncheon on Thursday, March 11 at the Clarion Hotel in Toms River. The cost is \$28. To attend, call Janice Sovinee at 732-477-1711.

### WARREN COUNTY REA'S

next meeting/luncheon will be held on Wednesday, April 7 at the Hawk Pointe Country Club in Washington. The cost is \$30. To attend, call Vicki Rhinehart at 908-319-1995.

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Do you aspire to be a supervisor, principal, or administrator but lack the necessary certification?

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Do you really want to take the time and pay the cost for a second master's degree through a college or university?

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**Together, we'll do this.**

# STAFF NEWS

## HIRES AND PROMOTIONS



NJEA welcomed **TRACIE YOSTPILLE** to full-time staff on Jan. 28 as a UniServ field representative in the Region 9 office in Wall Township. Yostpille had been employed by the Freehold Township School District as a third-grade teacher for 15 years and a seventh-grade social studies teacher for the last 18 years.

She had been president of the Freehold Township Education Association since 2005 and the negotiations chair since 2003. Yostpille had been the second vice president of the Monmouth County Education Association since 2014. She also worked as a part-time UniServ consultant assigned to the Region 9 office in Wall since 2013 and as a crossover consultant in the Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division assigned to the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy since 2019.

Yostpille holds a bachelor's degree in history and elementary education from Georgian Court University. She lives in Jackson with her husband of 30 years, John, and their two dogs. Their daughter, Shay, is studying at Hofstra University to become a licensed speech pathologist. Their son, John, works as a field coordinator for "The Late Show with Stephen Colbert."



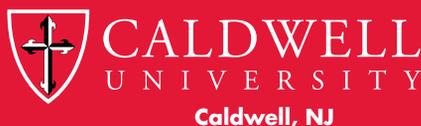
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- M.A. in Higher Education (online)
- M.A. in Literacy Instruction (Reading Specialist Certificate)
- M.A. in Special Education (TOSD Endorsement, LDT-C Certification and ABA Course Option)
- Off Campus Leadership Development (OCLD); Fast Track M.A. in Educational Administration
- Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Certification
- Post-Master LDT-C Certification
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- English as a Second Language (ESL) Certification (online)
- Special Education Certification

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# T.E.A.C.H. VIRTUAL CONFERENCE 2021

Teaching, Equity, Access and Childhood Healing

**SATURDAY,**  
**APRIL 17, 2021**

*In these changing times, we must come together to enhance our professional learning, support one another on our professional journey and expand our educational community. Join us for this powerful conference.*



## KEYNOTES:

**Dr. Gholdy Muhammad,**  
*Culturally and Historically Responsive Education for Equity and Excellence*

**Priya Vulchi and Winona Guo,**  
*Racial Literacy*

**Michael Eric Dyson,**  
*In Caricature: Racial Profiling and Its Impact on Students of Color*

## SCHEDULE:

**8:30-9 a.m.**  
Virtual Platform Opens

**9 a.m.**  
Keynote and Debrief

**10:30 a.m.**  
Keynote and Debrief

**11:45 a.m.**  
Lunch and Entertainment

**12:45 p.m.**  
Afternoon Focus Sessions (*Select One*)

**2:15 p.m.**  
Keynote and Closing

In addition to the keynote addresses, participants can select one focus session for the afternoon.

Cost: **FREE** for NJEA Members.

*The conference provides five hours of professional learning credit. Participants must attend the entire conference to receive a certificate.*

### The Power of Student Voice Guiding Our Growth – **Shan Byrd (she/her):**

Student voice helps teach us to become more self-aware, self-reflective and inclusive practitioners. In this session, we will lift up students' voices to share youth perspectives on issues of equity and inclusion in the classroom. We will explore strategies for professional growth through self-reflection.

### STEAM Teacher Leaders for Racial Literacy – **Kristin Nakaishi (she/her), Jim Hall (he/him) and Ikechukwu Onyema (he/him)**

In August 2020, a group of STEM teachers came together with the ambition of using our content areas to contribute to the broader movement for Black lives. Since then, we've co-designed a space of peer learning, self-organizing, and collaboration for STEM teachers to advance racial justice. Come and learn what we do and how we do it.

### AMHOTINO Curriculum Implementation (Spotlight on K-6) – **Tamar LaSure-Owens**

The AMHOTINO (Amistad, Holocaust, Latino) curriculum implementation allows educators to offer students an extension, expansion, and enlightenment into American history that is inclusive, accurate and unbiased. Throughout this session, participants will focus a lens on learning progressions that will identify areas of understanding upon which to build.

### Asbury Park Healing Together with KYDS – **Alisha De Lorenzo (she/her) and Rodney Salomon (he/him/they)**

In 2015, a movement began to center healing and transformational experiences for youth and adults who work with youth in Asbury Park. All members of a community have access to grow and thrive when we engage minds, bodies and souls in the process of healing. Hear from Asbury Park's "Konscious Youth Leaders" about what it takes to create a self-healing community.

### The Role of Collective Efficacy to Address Inequity – **Dr. Stefani Arzonetti Hite (she/her)**

When school leaders—both formal and informal—work to flatten hierarchies long present in schools, the resulting empowerment develops cadres of equity champions, motivated to ensure ongoing collaboration to meet the needs of marginalized or disadvantaged students. In this session, we learn how two schools successfully closed opportunity gaps for their students with an intentional focus on building collective efficacy.

### Healing Justice and The Impact of Incarceration and the Carceral State on Muslim Youth in the Classroom – **Reda A. Taleb, J.D. (she/her/hers),**

*Detroit-based entrepreneur and criminal justice reform advocate*

What does healing justice look like when educators are informed about the impact of incarceration and the carceral state on Muslim youth? Research demonstrates that addressing the root of the trauma will substantially change the trajectory of a person's life. Join Reda Taleb in learning about trauma-informed care for educators seeking to help Muslim youth transition from trauma to transformation in the classroom and beyond.

### Healing Centered Schools – **Linsey McMurrin and Stacy Bender-Fayette**

We know that students do best when they feel safe and connected. This session will discuss how understanding NEAR Science (Neuroscience, Epigenetics, ACEs and Resilience) can help transform schools to meet the needs of students and their families.

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teaching • equity • access • childhood healing

Register at  
[njea.org/teach.](https://njea.org/teach)

# Full-Tuition Scholarships in Orton-Gillingham Teacher Training

These scholarships for educators – each valued at \$10,200 – are offered at New Jersey's Children's Dyslexia Centers. Both the scholarships and centers are funded through the generosity of the Scottish Rite Masons. All classes and practica are offered at these five locations: **Burlington, Northfield, Tenafly, Hasbrouck Heights, and Scotch Plains.**

## Join Us for an Upcoming Virtual Information Session!

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for more information go to [NJEA.org](http://NJEA.org)

# MARCH & beyond

Unless otherwise noted, all meetings and events are virtual.

## 3/6

Saturday

Winter  
Leadership  
Conference III

## 3/26

Friday

NJEA Executive  
Committee  
and County  
Presidents  
Council meetings

## 3/27

Saturday

NJEA  
Delegate  
Assembly

## 4/10

Saturday

NJEA Higher  
Education  
Conference

## 4/10

Saturday

NJEA Preservice  
General  
Membership  
meeting

## 4/14

Wednesday

NJEA Executive  
Committee  
meeting

## 4/15

Thursday

NJEA PAC  
Operating  
Committee  
meeting

## 4/17

Saturday

NJEA  
T.E.A.CH.  
Conference

## 5/1

Saturday

Communications  
Tools  
Workshop

## 5/14

Friday

NJEA Executive  
Committee and  
County Presidents  
Council meetings

## deadlines

**4/1** Higher Education  
Conference  
Event date: April 10

**4/10** NJEA T.E.A.CH.  
Conference  
Event date: April 17

## Employment Opportunities at NJEA

Questions? Call the NJEA Human Resources  
office at 609-599-4561.

NJEA is an equal opportunity employer.

Visit [njea.org/jobs](http://njea.org/jobs).



## NJEA Preservice

### General Membership Meeting and Officer Nominations

**April 10**  
**10-11:30 a.m.**  
**Virtual**

NJEA Preservice officers and chairs will deliver  
reports on their work during the 2020-21  
membership year.

Nominations will be taken for the 2021-22 officer  
positions: President, Vice President, Secretary

Registration for this virtual event is required  
at [njea.org/psmtg21](http://njea.org/psmtg21).



# Science, not politics, must guide the reopening of schools

If there is one goal that the previous presidential administration and the current one share, it is the reopening of schools for full-time, in-person instruction. And as the survey data reported in last month's *NJEA Review* reveals, it's a goal that NJEA members share as well.

NJEA members are as anxious as any parent, student or presidential administration to return to full-time, in-person instruction. Members reported that working from home or in a hybrid environment isn't less stressful, it's more stressful. It's also a lot more work. NJEA members reported a 20% workload increase—equivalent to an additional day of work without an extra day of the week in which to do it.

The difference between the Biden and Trump administrations—and NJEA members—was not the goal of reopening schools, but how to get there.

Last summer, as the new school year approached, former Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos' and former President Donald Trump's plan was to bully schools into reopening. In July, for example, *Politico* reported that DeVos pledged to "use the 'bully pulpit' to pressure states to reopen schools amid the pandemic."

In the interest of opening schools at any cost, Trump and DeVos repeatedly downplayed the risks, basing their intransigence on scant evidence regarding the risk of serious illness among children or the risk of coronavirus transmission from children to each other and to adults. Meanwhile, Drs. Deborah Birx and Anthony Fauci cautioned that the issue needed more study.

In what often appeared to be more about his own chances for reelection than the health and safety of children and educators, Trump insisted through public remarks and tweets that schools must reopen. The resources to make that possible,

however, were sorely lacking.

President Biden, concerned about the economy and the health of children and educators, also wants schools to reopen, but his plan does not involve bullying states into opening school buildings no matter the cost. On his second day in office, President Joe Biden issued his "Executive Order on Supporting the Reopening and Continuing Operation of Schools and Early Childhood Education Providers." It was a breath of much-needed fresh air.

The executive order opens with two principles to guide the federal government's response to the COVID-19 crisis with respect to preK-12 schools and institutions of higher education, putting public health in the lead.

"First, the health and safety of children, students, educators, families and communities is paramount," the order contends. "Second, every student in the United States should have the opportunity to receive a high-quality education, during and beyond the pandemic. Accordingly, it is the policy of my administration to provide support to help create the conditions for safe, in-person learning as quickly as possible; ensure high-quality instruction and the delivery of essential services often received by students and young children at school ... and address educational disparities and inequities that the pandemic has created and exacerbated."

Throughout the executive order, evidence-based health and safety come first. The order requires the secretary of education, in consultation with the secretary of health and human services, to use scientific evidence to decide whether and how to reopen, and how to remain open, for in-person learning; and in safely conducting in-person learning, including by implementing

mitigation measures such as cleaning, masking, proper ventilation and testing."

The order requires the secretary of health and human services to "facilitate the collection of data needed to inform the safe reopening and continued operation of elementary and secondary schools ... and ensure that such data are readily available to state, local, tribal, and territorial leaders and the public, consistent with privacy interests, and that such data are disaggregated by race, ethnicity and other factors as appropriate."

As that directive implies, the order also addresses the uneven educational impact of the pandemic. It directs the Department of Education's assistant secretary for civil rights to "deliver a report as soon as practicable on the disparate impacts of COVID-19 on students in elementary, secondary and higher education, including those attending historically black colleges and universities, tribal colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and other minority-serving institutions."

The order does not expect the federal government to work in a vacuum, directing the secretary of education to consult with students; educators; unions; families; state, local, tribal, and territorial officials; and members of civil rights and disability rights organizations.

For students, families and educators entering a school building full time will come down to trust. That trust cannot be earned by angry tweets at 3 a.m. or unscientific claims shouted at rallies. It is earned when science and public health, not politics and pressure, are guiding the decision to fully reopen. President Biden's executive order goes a long way in restoring that trust. 

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Thank you for all you do on behalf of children, and for ensuring school meals are part of their academic day. Contact us for support at: [schools@milk4u.org](mailto:schools@milk4u.org)



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