

# REVIEW

OCTOBER  
2023

njea.org



*an education and advocacy resource*



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FIELD TRIP EXPERIENCES

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THAT ELECTIONS MATTER

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CAN MAKE

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*Amistad  
field trip  
experiences*



## 6 REASONS NJ EDUCATORS CHOOSE ROWAN UNIVERSITY

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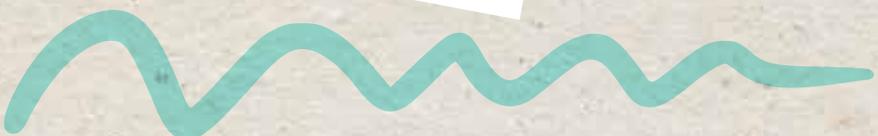
NJEA President Sean M. Spiller and NJEA's leadership team congratulated the 2023-24 N.J. County Teachers of the Year.



Cape May County EA Secretary June Camizzi presents to NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson a CMCEA donation to the NJEA Disaster Relief Fund.



Morris County Council of EAs donated 200 books to the NEA RA Banned Book Rally and gave away 2,000 Dum Dum lollipops because only a "dumb dumb" would ban books. (l-r) Melissa Matarazzo, Jon Coniglio, Lee Ann Brensinger and Brian Adams.



# FEATURES



## 20 | AMISTAD IMMERSIVE FIELD TRIP EXPERIENCES

The story of slavery and the Underground Railroad in New Jersey is one of solidarity, where towns such as Lawnside, Paterson, Princeton, Newark and others became places where African Americans could enjoy some level of family, community, entrepreneurship, fellowship and freedom. These locations can offer valuable opportunities for local research and field trips to help students understand the full history of our state.

BY SARI ALBURTUS, SHAN BYRD, MUNEEARAH HIGGS, TAMAR LASURE-OWENS, TALENA LACHELLE QUEEN, TARIQ RAHEEM, AND SUNDJATA SEKOU



## 28 | SICK LEAVE EXPANSION BILL SHOWS THAT ELECTIONS MATTER

Your voice matters. When you talk with policymakers about an issue that matters, your advocacy has an impact. The power of Lisa Riziello's story led to a major new right for school employees—to use their sick days to care for others. But such stories are less likely to make an impact if you cannot get in the door to tell them. Riziello's story, and those of countless other members, serve as an example of why elections and endorsements matter.

BY FRANCINE PFEFFER AND PATRICK RUMAKER



## 34 | CONNECTING EDUCATORS WITH HOLOCAUST EDUCATION RESOURCES

NJEA Review Associate Editor Kathryn Coulibaly spoke with Helen Kirschbaum, director of the Esther Raab Holocaust Museum & Goodwin Education Center at Cherry Hill's Jewish Community Relations Council, to discuss all the center has to offer NJEA members and their students.



## 37 | THE DIFFERENCE ONE PERSON CAN MAKE

In a darkened auditorium at Egg Harbor Township's Fernwood Middle School, Jeff Zeiger stands in front of 150 silent middle school students. He is there to tell them the story of how one man saved his family during the Holocaust. Zeiger tells his family's story not only as a history lesson, but to help students recognize anti-Semitism and overcome intolerance and bullying.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



## 38 | ESP MENTORING IN OLD BRIDGE

With a boost from an NEA grant, 2022 NJEA Educational Support Professional (ESP) of the Year Nancy Cogland is leading the implementation of an ESP mentoring program in the Old Bridge School District. Cogland believes the program will make the district an attractive place for ESPs to work, will help retain staff and improve educational outcomes for students.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY

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## THE NUMBER 120



### The number of seats up for election in the New Jersey General Assembly and Senate

On Nov. 7—and sooner for those who choose early voting or vote by mail—New Jersey voters will elect 120 state legislators. See pages 31-32 to see which candidates earned the endorsement of NJEA PAC.

Sources: NJEA Government Relations Division

## GOOD NEWS

### Student Loan relief available

New Jersey teachers who work in high-need fields in eligible schools qualify for student loan relief of up to \$5,000 per year and \$20,000 over four years. See Page 8 for details.

Source: New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority



The authors of this month's cover story, Amistad Immersive Field Trip Experiences, gathered in Lawnside to explore the borough's unique history. From left: Tamar LaSure-Owens, Sari Alburtus, Muneerah Higgs, Talena Lachelle Queen, Tariq Raheem, Shan Byrd and Sundjata Sekou.

PHOTO BY  
Kathryn Coulibaly

# REVIEW

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Send address changes to:  
New Jersey Education Association Review  
Attn: Membership Processing  
180 W. State St., P.O. Box 1211  
Trenton, NJ 08607-1211

## Organizational Directory

### NJEA headquarters, Trenton

To reach any of the offices at headquarters, call NJEA's main number, 609-599-4561.

**Executive Office:** includes NJEA's statewide officers and the offices of the Executive Director; Human Resources; Human and Civil Rights, Equity and Governance; Legal Services; Organizational Development; and the Labor Management Collaborative.

**Business Division:** includes the offices of Accounting and Finance; Information Systems, Facilities, Mailroom and Production; Membership; and Comptroller.

**Communications Division:** responsible for all aspects of the association's communications efforts, both internal and external. The division produces the *NJEA Review* and [njea.org](http://njea.org); manages the Hipp Foundation and assists local and county affiliates with internal and external communications.

**Government Relations Division:** includes the Office of Policy and Politics, which addresses legislation, administrative code, policy and advocacy at a statewide and federal level, and the Office of Member and Political Organizing, which works with members at the county and local level to organize around local, state, and federal issues that affect public education.

**Professional Development and Instructional Issues:** assists members and local and county affiliates with instructional issues and professional learning. The division also monitors state level and school level implementation of administrative code as promulgated by the New Jersey Department of Education.

**Research and Economic Services:** Provides information to support state and local association programs and activities, including collective bargaining and policy analysis. Offers guidance on retirement issues and administers NJEA Member Benefits.

### UniServ regional offices

Provides extensive field services to members and local and county affiliates throughout the state, including negotiations assistance, contract administration and grievance adjudication, member organizing and local member consultation and representation. UniServ field representatives train local leaders and assist in the coordination of NJEA and NEA resources. UniServ regional offices are organized under four zones.

#### UniServ South

Reg. 1-3  
Director's office  
856-234-0522

Region 1 (Atlantic and  
Cape May counties):  
609-652-9200

Region 2 (Cumberland,  
Gloucester and Salem  
counties):  
856-628-8650

Region 3 (Burlington and  
Camden counties):  
856-234-2485

#### UniServ Central

Reg. 7-9, 11, 13 and 29  
Director's office  
732-287-6899

Region 7 (Ocean County):  
732-349-0280

Region 8 (Mercer County):  
609-896-3422

Region 9 (Monmouth County):  
732-403-8000

Region 11 (Middlesex County):  
732-287-4700

Region 29 (Higher Education):  
609-689-9580

#### UniServ Northeast

Reg. 15, 19-21, and 25  
Director's office  
973-321-3221

Region 15 (Union County):  
908-709-9440

Region 19 (Hudson County-  
North and Newark):  
201-861-1266

Region 20 (Hudson  
County-South):  
201-653-6634

Region 21 (Essex County,  
except Newark):  
973-762-6866

Region 25 (Bergen County):  
201-292-8093

#### UniServ Northwest

Reg. 13, 17, and 27  
Director's office  
973-347-0911

Region 13 (Hunterdon,  
Somerset and Warren  
counties):  
908-782-2168

Region 17 (Morris and  
Sussex counties):  
973-515-0101

Region 27  
(Passaic County):  
973-694-0154

## MEMBERSHIP

Active professional: \$1,038 (full time); \$207.60 (full time \*low-earner); \$519 (part time); \$519 (on leave); \$207.60 (part time \*low-earner). Active supportive: \$505 (full time); \$101 (full time \*low-earner); \$252.50 (part time); \$101 (part time \*low-earner); \$252.50 (on leave). Retired professional: \$93; \$1,170 (retired life). Retired ESP: \$48; \$585 (retired ESP life); Preservice \$17. General professional (outside N.J. public education employment): \$250. Subscribing \$250. Only those in education positions in N.J. public schools and colleges are eligible for active membership. Payment of annual dues entitles a member to receive the *Review* for one year, from January through December. Dues include \$5 for the *NJEA Review*. \*Low-earner threshold 2023-24 is \$22,500.





# PRESIDENT'S *Message*

## Teaching history to create a better future

New Jersey has the distinction of being the “Crossroads of the American Revolution,” and while we are proud to bear that title, we know that our history is so much more than that.

Knowing and understanding our history is critical to our identity—as New Jerseyans, Americans and human beings. It impacts how we relate to others and the kind of future we want to build.

But history has become a fraught topic for some, and it’s important to look at why. Confronting the dark chapters of human history is not a uniquely American obligation. It’s something that everyone on the planet must grapple with in order to create a future that is free, just, mutually respectful and compassionate.

As NEA President Becky Pringle wrote, “Teaching all of our children—regardless of their race or ZIP code, whether Native or newcomer—means teaching them the truth.” That is important because we are a nation founded on ideals of freedom, liberty and democracy that students should learn to celebrate. We are also a nation that has too often fallen short of those ideals in ways that students should understand, so we can all do better in the future. Teaching the truth isn’t comfortable, but it’s critical to becoming the more perfect union that our constitution calls us to pursue.

Teaching the truth requires us to be honest with ourselves and our students. It requires a deft touch to ensure that discussing difficult issues is done in a way that is thoughtful, sensitive and age-appropriate, but never obscures the reality.

New Jersey has been at the forefront of bringing honest conversations to our classrooms with the Holocaust, genocide, human and civil rights and Amistad curricula. In 1994, Gov. Christine Todd Whitman signed legislation mandating the teaching of the Holocaust and genocide. In 2002, Gov. Jim McGreevey signed the Amistad law, requiring public schools to implement materials and texts that integrate the history and contributions of African Americans and the descendants of the African Diaspora. In 2023, Gov. Phil Murphy strengthened the law by signing legislation that separated the Amistad Commission from the Department of Education and provided a separate line item for funding. NJEA strongly supported these changes.

NJEA is proud to be part of the conversation about how and when we talk to students about our shared history, and, as always, we are working with parents, boards of education, administrators and other stakeholders to do so.

In this issue, we share two articles that touch on how and when we talk to students about the Holocaust and New Jersey’s role in slavery and its abolition. At the NJEA Convention on Nov. 9 and 10, there will be many workshops where educators can learn more about these topics and others, including a workshop titled “A Celebration of the History of New Jersey’s Indigenous People.” We hope that these opportunities spark greater conversations about our history and how we face it together so we can build a better future for our students for generations to come.



### SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

@SpillerforNJEA: Congratulations again to our 2023-2024 New Jersey County Teachers of the Year! I had the privilege of recognizing them at today’s Delegate Assembly. It was exciting being able to celebrate them and their exemplary teaching experience and expertise.

On Sept. 9, NJEA President Sean M. Spiller posted a group photo of the 2023-24 County Teachers of the Year with him and his fellow NJEA officers and leaders. He recognized the teachers of the year at the beginning of the Delegate Assembly meeting where each honoree received a certificate and a thunderous round of applause from the delegates and guests.

### STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: Thanks to the members who came out to the State Board to speak on behalf of their profession and students! We must never be silent!

On Sept. 6, NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty, NJEA members and leaders testified before members of the New Jersey State Board of Education. Any topic related to education was welcomed. He used his time to share the stories from some of the 40 school districts he visited over the past year. He called on the State Board members to listen to educators’ voices on issues such as school climate and culture, student growth objectives (SGOs), ESP issues, book bans and curriculum challenges, educator recruitment and retention, school safety, social emotional learning and educator wellness, special education, and more.

### PETAL ROBERTSON

Facebook

@PetalforNJEA: Today, I had the honor of swearing in Joe Macaluso, the man that hired me for my first public school job (it’s a great story) and spend time with the leaders of our Essex County retirees. Congratulations to all of the newly sworn in ECREA officers. Best of luck on your term.

On Sept. 6, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson posted a photo with several Essex County Retirees Education Association (ECEA) leaders and newly inducted officers. She had the honor of leading the ceremony inducting them into office. She also listed them in her Facebook post: President – Joe Macaluso; First Vice-President – Clarence Osborne; Second Vice-President – Perry Jackson; Recording Secretary – Ilene Greenfield; Corresponding Secretary – Carla Hinds. ECREA Treasurer Patricia Landon’s term began last year and runs through this year.

OFFICERS ONLINE

# The ADVOCATE

## RESOURCES FOR YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATION

### New Jersey Teacher Loan Redemption program



#### Applications open Nov. 1

Teachers who work in high-need fields in eligible schools qualify for student loan relief through the New Jersey Higher Education Student Assistance Authority (HESAA).

Under the New Jersey Teacher Loan Redemption program, relief will amount to 25% of principal and interest of a program participant's eligible student loan expenses for up to four years.

Redemptions shall not exceed \$5,000, in return for each consecutive full school year of approved employment service. The total loan redemption amount for four years of program participation shall not exceed \$20,000.

#### Program eligibility

To participate in the program, an applicant:

- Must be a New Jersey resident and maintain residency in the state during program participation.
- Must not be in default on any eligible qualifying loan.
- Must be certified by the New Jersey Department of Education to teach in New Jersey.
- Must have been hired on or after Jan. 18, 2022, to teach in a high-need field in an eligible school.
- Must be employed in a high-need field in an eligible school at the time of application.
- Must not have been selected previously for participation in the program.
- Must enter into a written contract with HESAA to participate in the program. The contract shall specify the duration of the participant's approved employment service obligation, not to exceed four school years, and the total amount of loans to be redeemed by HESAA in return for service.

For more information, including a list of eligible New Jersey schools and application instructions, visit [hesaa.org/Pages/NJTLRP.aspx](https://hesaa.org/Pages/NJTLRP.aspx) or scan the QR Code.

Questions? Email [LoanRedemption@hesaa.org](mailto:LoanRedemption@hesaa.org).

### Help for educators affected by Maui wildfires

Hawaii State Teachers Association members and staff on the island of Maui were affected by the raging wildfires that struck the historic town of Lahaina on Aug. 8. At least 20 educators have lost their homes to the flames while others have had their classrooms destroyed. Some lost both. Visit [bit.ly/hstaj-maui](https://bit.ly/hstaj-maui) to learn how you can help.

### Honor a colleague on Veterans Day

NJEA provides a special certificate of appreciation for members who have served in the U.S. military.

If you plan to present the certificate in person at an association meeting, Veterans Day assembly or other event, email the veteran's name, local association and your postal address to Meredith Barnes at [mbarnes@njea.org](mailto:mbarnes@njea.org) by Oct. 21.

If you prefer to have the veteran receive the certificate directly in their own postal mail, send the veteran's name, local association and the veteran's postal address to Barnes at the email address above.

#### Veterans breakfast at NJEA Convention

NJEA members who have served or are currently serving in our military are invited to breakfast at the NJEA Convention on Thursday, Nov. 9 at 8 a.m. To reserve your seat, email Meredith Barnes now at [mbarnes@njea.org](mailto:mbarnes@njea.org).

### Plan now for American Education Week

American Education Week—Nov. 13-17—presents an opportunity to celebrate public education and honor individuals who are making a difference in ensuring that every child receives a great public education.

The National Education Association was one of the creators and original sponsors of American Education Week. The first observance was held in 1921, with NEA and the American Legion as co-sponsors. A year later, the then-named U.S. Office of Education joined the effort as a co-sponsor, and the PTA followed in 1938.

Visit [nea.org/aew](https://nea.org/aew) to learn more about American Education Week and to find resources that will assist in planning your local or county association's celebration.

## Travelers Insurance to become NEA/NJEA endorsed insurance provider

### California Casualty exiting New Jersey

California Casualty, the NEA/NJEA endorsed provider for auto and home insurance, has informed NEA Member Benefits that it will exit New Jersey and many other states. After an extensive process over the summer, NEA Member Benefits has selected Travelers Insurance to be the new NEA-endorsed provider for auto and home insurance.

California Casualty is required by the New Jersey Department of Banking and Insurance (NJDOBI) to notify all policyholders of its intent to withdraw from the state. While that notification is not a nonrenewal notice for existing policyholders, NEA Member Benefits will be emailing California Casualty policyholders to explain the notice.

The letter that policyholders should have received from California Casualty in late September or early October is not a nonrenewal letter. It is a regulatorily required notification to ensure policyholders are aware of California Casualty's intent to withdraw from New Jersey. No immediate action is needed by policyholders, and there is no impact to them until they get their formal notice of nonrenewal.

California Casualty has proposed to NJDOBI that its nonrenewals will begin with policies with expiration dates on or after Jan. 1, 2024. Policyholders will receive a notice of nonrenewal for their auto policy at least 60 days prior to the policy expiration date and for their homeowner's policy at least 30 days prior to the policy expiration date.

### Obtaining quotes from Travelers Insurance

For those members who wish to be proactive, below are contact numbers for Travelers, the new NEA Auto and Home Insurance partner. You can call to get a quote as well as take advantage of any discounts you can get by being an NEA/NJEA member.

Call Travelers Insurance, the new NEA-Endorsed Auto and Home Insurance provider, for new auto or home insurance quotes, as follows:

- For existing California Casualty policyholders, call 833-200-3559.
- For policyholders with carriers other than California Casualty or Travelers Insurance, call 866-605-6045.



EARN 12 GRADUATE CREDITS\*



The NJEA Teacher Leader Academy (TLA) admits candidates of any race, color, creed, national origin, ethnic origin, disability, marital status, domestic partnership status, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the NJEA TLA. It doesn't discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, ethnic origin, disability, marital status, domestic partnership status, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, or scholarship programs.

# TEACHER LEADERSHIP

## It's MORE IMPORTANT than ever!

The NJEA Teacher Leader Academy is a N.J. Department of Education approved one-year 12 credit program\* for candidates seeking to earn the NJ Teacher Leader Endorsement. A new cohort opens in July 2024.

For further details, visit [njea.org/tla](https://njea.org/tla).

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.

WEB: [njea.org/tla](https://njea.org/tla)

EMAIL: [teacherleader@njea.org](mailto:teacherleader@njea.org)

\*12 credits offered through Thomas Edison State College



# COOL STUFF



## EMPOWER YOUR STUDENTS TO PROMOTE SAFE DRIVING

Educators like you play a pivotal role in shaping responsible young drivers and passengers. Teenagers face the highest risk of motor vehicle crashes, with drivers aged 16 through 19 being three times more likely per mile driven to be involved in a fatal crash than other age groups. Fortunately, in New Jersey, there's a proven way to enhance driving safety among teens, that starts in the classroom.

The Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey's (BIANJ) Champion Schools Program is a research-based, peer-to-peer program that is proven to increase awareness about graduated driver license (GDL) laws and safe driving, resulting in actual changes to driving behaviors. In its 14th year, the Champion Schools Program calls upon New Jersey's high schools to lead the charge in crafting campaigns that champion safe driving practices. Campaigns can include topics such as seat belt safety, distracted driving, pedestrian safety and more. Participating schools are provided a \$1,000 stipend and the necessary tools and support to execute their impactful campaigns. Schools come together in May at Six Flags Great Adventure, and the top three winners each receive \$10,000.

In the Champion Schools Program, students creative energy and enthusiasm take center stage. While teachers are instrumental, their role is one of guidance and support. Students are the driving force behind this campaign, channeling their creativity and passion into promoting engaging campaigns. Teachers play a crucial role by providing mentorship and expertise, empowering students to lead and positively impact their communities. Together, educators and students create a powerful partnership that forges responsible driving habits and creates a safer environment on the road.

To apply or to learn more about how teachers impact teen driving safety through the Champion Schools Program, visit [jerseydrives.com/champion-schools](http://jerseydrives.com/champion-schools) or email [koconnor@bianj.org](mailto:koconnor@bianj.org).

Together, we can shape responsible young drivers and ensure the safety of our students.



## COURTROOM NEWS REPORTER COMPETITION

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation has created a new contest: the Courtroom News Reporter competition. New Jersey high school student journalists will cover high school mock trials in their counties. Their articles must describe courtroom presentations by their schools' mock trial teams or other teams to which they will be assigned if their schools do not participate in the Vincent J. Apruzzese High School Mock Trial Competition.

Register to enter the competition by Oct. 27, 2023, at [mocktrial.njsbf.org](http://mocktrial.njsbf.org). Article submissions are due after each county competition.

A free webinar to help teachers prepare their students for the Courtroom News Reporter Competition, led by former legal affairs reporters, will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 17, from 10 to 11 a.m. Professional development credit will be provided. Visit [mocktrial.njsbf.org](http://mocktrial.njsbf.org) for more information and to register.



## CHECK OUT THE FALL 2023 EDITION OF THE LEGAL EAGLE

The fall 2023 edition of The Legal Eagle, a legal newspaper for kids, is now available. The issue, published by the New Jersey State Bar Foundation, includes kid-friendly articles on lowering the voting age in New Jersey, Ticketmaster's practices and how young is too young when it comes to working. Order copies for classrooms at [publications.njsbf.org](http://publications.njsbf.org).

# A+ EFFORT

## NEW JERSEY DANCE EDUCATORS SELECTED FOR NATIONAL PROJECT WITH CONNECTED ARTS NETWORKS



Rebecca Visintainer



Elizabeth Zwierzynski

In January, the Connected Arts Networks (CAN) announced the selection of 70 teacher leaders in visual and media arts, theatre, music, and dance. Of the 17 dance teachers named nationwide, two are New Jersey educators and NJEA members. They are also members of the National Dance Education Organization (NDEO), which identified them for CAN's teacher leader program in May 2022.

Rebecca Visintainer is a dance educator at North Plainfield middle and high schools. Elizabeth Zwierzynski is a dance educator at Trenton High School.

CAN brings together dance, theater, music and art educators nationwide to build a sustainable model of professional learning seeking to strengthen pedagogy, instruction and leadership skills. The work is grounded in developing best practices in equity, diversity, inclusion, and social-emotional learning in order to serve students better.

These 70 arts educators from around the country, including Visintainer and Zwierzynski will spend the next four years engaged in virtual professional learning communities (PLCs) through one of the four partnering arts education organizations: National Art Education Association (NAEA), National Association for Music Education (NAfME), Educational Theatre Association (EdTA), and NDEO.

In the first year of the project, teacher leaders receive specialized virtual training to build their capacity to address social-emotional learning and equity, diversity and inclusion within arts instruction. They will conduct action research

within virtual PLCs centered on problem solving for their classrooms and deepening their own practice.

By equipping teachers with skills in these pressing areas, CAN believes it can both support educators and positively impact students. Members of the four initial PLCs will begin to form and facilitate their own virtual learning communities of arts educators and maintain these communities of support until the end of the project.

For more information about CAN and NDEO Teacher Leaders, visit the CAN website at [bit.ly/arts-can](https://bit.ly/arts-can).

### CAN invites participants to next phase in PLCs

CAN invites educators in visual/media arts, music, theater, and dance to apply to be part of a professional learning community. Right now, CAN is recruiting up to 600 arts educators—150 per art form—to serve as PLC participants. These PLCs will meet virtually each month of the school year from January 2024 through June 2026 and will focus on professional learning in the areas of equity, diversity and inclusion; social emotional learning; and teacher leadership through standards-based arts instruction.

Connect with colleagues nationwide through online Professional Learning Communities. Together through the arts, we CAN make a difference in student learning!

Visit [arteducators.org/promo/can](https://arteducators.org/promo/can) to apply. The deadline is Oct. 16.

## HELP PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR LOVED ONES

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## An advocate in and outside the classroom

### Meet 2022 Sussex County ESP of the Year Nancy Richeda

Wantage Elementary School paraprofessional Nancy Richeda fell in love more than 27 years ago.

"I was babysitting at home when my children were young, and I decided I didn't want to do that anymore," Richeda said. "A good friend of mine told me to come work at the school. I went in, and I immediately fell in love with the autistic population. I was with them for about eight years before I was transferred, but fortunately, I've been with a great teacher, Jess Musilli, for a little over 18 years. We have a great relationship, so they never break us apart. They even moved us from one school to another."

Early on, Richeda was approached about being an association representative, helping to advocate for members and provide information and support.

"I went from association rep to building vice president to treasurer to being on the negotiations team," Richeda said. "Contract after contract, I worked with Pam Niles, the NJEA field representative at the time. After about 10 years, she suggested that I would make a good NJEA Consultant, but I didn't even know what a consultant did. I had only ever worked with field representatives. She told me what it would entail and I thought, 'I can do that!'"

For more than 10 years, Richeda has been an NJEA consultant, assisting local associations, providing training, and bringing back a wealth of knowledge to her own local association.

"Your own local association is your own little world, but when you meet people from all over the state, you see what everyone else is going through," Richeda said. "You might think you have the worst board or principal, but then you see what everyone else is dealing with. NJEA is really there to help its members and support them. A lot of people aren't aware of everything NJEA is doing for them."

Richeda is proud to be the 2022 Sussex County Educational Support Professional (ESP) of the Year, and believes that more recognition should be paid to ESP members.

"Our support staff doesn't get the support they



2022 Sussex County ESP of the Year Nancy Richeda speaking at the NJEA Educational Support Professionals Conference in February 2022.

**Your own local association  
is your own little world, but  
when you meet people from all  
over the state, you see what  
everyone else is going through.**

deserve," Richeda said. "They aren't respected enough. People act like anyone can do these jobs, but that couldn't be further from the truth. I see what the people in my district do, and what ESPs in other locals are contributing. Our unions are strong because of the contributions of every member in our associations."

Richeda was previously honored with the NJEA Career Achievement Award for ESP. She was touched by all of the nomination letters, but one, in particular, stood out.

"It was written by the parents of a student who had since passed away," Richeda said. "Every year, her family, friends and I celebrate her birthday. Some of these special education kids just grab your heart and never let go, and she was one of them. That was a nice honor." 🇺🇸

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# Attorney general provides guidance on discrimination in school discipline

By David Bander, Esq.

The New Jersey Attorney General's Office on Civil Rights, in collaboration with the Department of Education, recently published enforcement guidance concerning the potential for discriminatory practices in student discipline based primarily on race, national origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation and disability. The materials are the result of an Interagency Task Force to Combat Youth Bias convened by Gov. Phil Murphy.

The guidance is intended to provide district administrators, students, school boards, parents and other stakeholders with information on how to prevent students from receiving discriminatory discipline. In addition to data on the variation in student discipline based on legally protected classes, the guidance explains how school district disciplinary policies and practices should be reviewed to ensure that they are compliant with the Law Against Discrimination (LAD).

Some students experience harder discipline than others. State data reveals that Black students are suspended at 3.3 times the rate of white students, and Latino and multiracial students are suspended at 1.5 times the rate of white students. Students with disabilities are suspended at 1.7 times the rate of their nondisabled peers. And although there is no NJ-specific data, national figures indicate that LGBTQ+ students are suspended at 1.7 times the rate of their non-LGBTQ+ peers. The guidance notes that these disparities have "profound and long-ranging consequences," including loss of instructional time, lower graduation rates and lower earnings in the job market.

## Discriminatory intent and discriminatory impact

Schools may be held accountable for two types of disciplinary discrimination. The first is differential treatment, where a student is disciplined more severely because of a protected characteristic. The second is disparate impact, which applies where a neutral practice or policy leads to students with a protected characteristic being disciplined more severely than other students.

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*David Bander is an associate director of NJEA Legal Services and Member Rights in the NJEA Executive Office. He can be reached at [dbander@njea.org](mailto:dbander@njea.org).*

A policy that authorizes educators to restrain students with disabilities, but not their nondisabled peers, would be one that, on its face, shows discriminatory intent. It treats disabled and nondisabled students differently.

A disciplinary policy could also show discriminatory intent if it penalizes something that is "intertwined or closely associated with" a protected characteristic. For example, a dress code that penalizes students for wearing their hair in a way that is closely associated with a racial or religious group would violate the LAD.

Finally, a school policy may show discriminatory intent if it is enforced differently where students have engaged in the same misbehavior.

Examples of discriminatory impact include disciplinary policies that negatively affect members of a protected class disproportionately. This is typically shown through statistical evidence—for example, if African American students make up 20% of a student population, but 30% of all law enforcement referrals, then the school's policy has a disparate impact on African American students.

Other policies with a discriminatory impact include most "zero-tolerance" disciplinary policies and policies that permit severe punishment for minor infractions, because studies have generally shown that they are in practice imposed unequally.

The guidance provides clear suggestions on how disciplinary policies should be consistently applied. It compels districts to ensure that students receive the same discipline for engaging in the same misconduct and that all employees are properly trained on the nondiscriminatory enforcement of disciplinary policies, including a discussion of implicit or unconscious bias. Districts are required to take proactive steps to identify policies that may be contributing to disparities. 🗺️



The 2020 Report of the Interagency Task Force to Combat Youth Bias, which formed the basis for much of the AG's guidance, is helpful for local association and districts to review. You can find it through this QR Code or at [bit.ly/3Pdu0XI](https://bit.ly/3Pdu0XI). For additional resources, reach out to your NJEA UniServ field representative who can connect you with the appropriate NJEA staff.

# NJEA Report



A large delegation of NJEA members lobbied for public education on July 20. They met with the entire New Jersey Congressional Delegation or their staff, including Rep. Rob Menendez Jr. (center) who represents New Jersey's 8th Congressional District.

## NJEA members advocate for school funding, ESPs in the nation's capital

The NJEA Congressional Contact Committee (CCC) hosted a lobby day in Washington, D.C. on July 20, drawing members from across the state. Composed of CCC and Government Relations Committee members, NEA Directors, and members of county Legislative Action Teams, the group went to Congress to demand more resources for our schools and fair treatment for educational support professionals (ESPs).

Over the course of 24 hours, members met with the entire New Jersey Congressional Delegation or their staff. Of primary concern was a just-introduced budget

proposal in the U.S. House of Representatives to slash Title I education funding by 80%. NJEA members demanded a reversal of these cuts, which would cost over \$300 million in lost funding for New Jersey's public schools.

Members also promoted the ESP Family Leave Act, which would close an unconscionable loophole in federal family leave that makes large numbers of ESP members ineligible for the benefit. Members secured new co-sponsorships of the law during the lobby day.

With more work to do, the advocacy will continue with lobby days throughout the year.

# The New Jersey Chinese Teachers Association

## “Language Brings Us Together”



NJCTA Conference presenters with NJCTA's president and vice presidents. From left: Noemí Rodríguez-Grimshaw (Pascack Valley Regional), Dongdong Chen (Seton Hall University), NJCTA President Shihong Zhang (Glen Ridge), NJCTA Vice President Linlin Hu (Linden), Anahita Keiller (Old Bridge), Shagun Kukreja (Newark), Lening Wang (Columbia University), Jenny Yang (Rutgers University), Jing Wang (Princeton University), NJCTA Vice President Shanman Liao (Old Bridge). Liao is also the 2023 NJCTA Teacher of the Year.

Centered on the theme, “Language Brings Us Together,” the New Jersey Chinese Teachers Association (NJCTA) hosted a conference on Sept. 2 at Montclair State University, drawing scores of Chinese and Chinese-language educators. The conference emphasized culturally responsive education, student engagement and technology integration.

“It was a wonderful day to kick off the new school year with almost 100 educators, moon cakes, teas, guest speakers from Princeton University, Columbia University, Rutgers University, Seton Hall University and top K-12 educators from 16 schools,” said NJCTA Chair Shihong Zhang, a founder of NJCTA.

Morning workshops, moderated by world language teachers, focused on effective teaching strategies. Afternoon breakout sessions addressed Chinese culture, artificial intelligence and various apps and useful products for Chinese language instruction.

“We have featured many established, well-known language educators,” said Linlin Hu, an NJCTA vice chair and a Linden Education Association member. “We got together to brainstorm, recharge and reenergize to get ready for the new school year.”

Among the attendees was NJCTA Teacher of the Year Shanman Liao. The Old Bridge Education Association member is also a vice chair of NJCTA.

Paterson Education Association member Tracy Chuan-chu Hong Syz proudly shared that she and her colleagues applied for and received an NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education grant titled

“Opening the Door to Asian Cultures.” The grant will fund an International Club that recognizes the diversity of the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities and their contributions to American society with a goal of educating students, building self-esteem for AAPI students, addressing harassment and hate directed toward the community and creating a bias-free school climate.

“I am proud and honored to have this opportunity to promote Asian culture in my school district,” said Hong Syz.

NJCTA was established in September 2021. Its mission is to promote the study, teaching and research of the Chinese language and culture at all grade levels in New Jersey and to provide a platform for Chinese instructors to share and exchange instructional experiences, ideas and information.



Workshops addressed Chinese culture, artificial intelligence, and various apps and useful products for Chinese language instruction.

# STEAM Tank returns to the NJEA Convention

At the 2023 NJEA Convention, the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA) will once again present the STEAM Tank High School Challenge Showcase.

Facilitated by teachers and advisers, the STEAM Tank Challenge encourages students to work collaboratively. They identify and develop innovative solutions to issues such as climate change, societal problems, and situations that need resolution in our schools, communities, state, nation and around the globe.

STEAM Tank is open-ended to maximize student creativity and to allow students to take the challenge in any direction they wish. Students, no matter what they create or problem-solve, must learn to consider the impact of environmental and climate change, whether direct or indirect.

The STEAM Tank Challenge has elementary, middle, and high school participants. The challenge took place over the course of the spring and includes regional and state-level rounds of competition. Each level has a first, second and third-place prize.

You can meet the student STEAM entrepreneurs as they dazzle the NJEA Convention with their award-winning inventions and ideas. You'll find them on Digital Boulevard on Thursday, Nov. 9.

## Research confirms benefits of STEAM Tank

Working through the Rutgers School of Public Health, researchers conducted a survey in early 2023 of teachers and administrators who served as STEAM Tank coaches. The New Jersey Safe Schools Program conducted the survey in collaboration with staff of the NJSBA STEAM Tank Challenge and New Jersey Audubon.

The objective was to capture the coaches' experiences with STEAM Tank during years 2021-2022, as presented as a virtual program during COVID-19. Based on their responses, the NJSBA STEAM Tank Challenge was found to be a successful educational enrichment experience for students throughout New Jersey.

You can read more about the survey and its analysis at [njea.org/STEAMTank-survey](https://njea.org/STEAMTank-survey).



Top: A STEAM Tank team from Aldrich Elementary School in Howell Township took first prize in 2019.

Middle: STEAM Tank competition winners receive congratulations at the 2019 NJEA Convention.

Bottom: STEAM Tank teams from Howell Middle School South are recognized for their accomplishments at the 2019 NJEA Convention.

## NJEA celebrates three cohorts of teacher leaders



Three cohorts of graduates from the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy gathered with NJEA staff and former NJEA President Marie Blistan to celebrate the academy's success.

On Aug. 21, the first three cohorts of the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy gathered for a festive luncheon at the Princeton Marriott at Forrestal to celebrate their completion of the program. Former NJEA President Marie Blistan reflected on the role that NJEA played in the creation of the Teacher Leader Endorsement. Richard Wilson, the coordinator of the Teacher Leader Academy, reflected on the incredible variety of ways in which the graduates have leveraged their influence and their leadership in their

schools, their districts and on any number of statewide academic initiatives.

The Academy has graduated 45 candidates who have earned the Teacher Leader Endorsement from the New Jersey Department of Education. For more photos from the event, visit [flickr.com/njea/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/njea/albums).

For more information about the academy, visit [njea.org/tla](http://njea.org/tla) or visit the Teacher Leader Academy booth at this year's NJEA Convention.

## Former NJEA President Barbara Keshishian passes



NJEA is mourning the passing of former NJEA President Barbara Keshishian, who died on Aug. 19. Keshishian, who served as an NJEA officer from 2001 to 2013, held the position of NJEA president from 2009 to 2013. A high school mathematics teacher in New

Milford, Keshishian previously served as the president of the New Milford Education Association and president of the Bergen County Education Association, among many other leadership roles.

"Barbara served NJEA members for many years with dignity and integrity," said NJEA's officers, President Sean M. Spiller, Vice President Steve Beatty, and Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson, in a joint statement. "She was deeply committed to protecting and advancing the rights of school employees. She believed in the importance of the work we do, because she knew that respect for school employees was a prerequisite for strong schools and successful students."

Keshishian served as the first chair of NJEA's Pride in Public Education Committee and helped spearhead the

campaign to share the good news about New Jersey's public schools. She took her commitment to public education very seriously and felt firsthand the power it has to change lives.

"Her advocacy made her a great leader, but her kindness and compassion made her an even better mentor, colleague and friend," the officers said.

In a 2009 interview, Keshishian said, "I believe 100% in public education—it's what makes this country strong. When public schools are attacked, I take it personally. It's a shame there's not enough time to sit with everyone and change minds one at a time. I know we'd be able to convince people of all the good things we do."

Throughout her career in public education—as a teacher, union member, leader and advocate—Keshishian did her best to change minds and lives by emphasizing the value of great public schools.

Keshishian was a proud graduate of St. Peter's College in Jersey City. A scholarship is bestowed every year in her honor to a graduating senior at New Milford High School. To learn more about Keshishian's life and legacy, read this September 2009 *NJEA Review* interview found at [njea.org/Keshishian](http://njea.org/Keshishian).

# AMISTAD IMMERSIVE FIELD TRIP EXPERIENCES

Honor Amistad, teach the truth,  
speak the truth, spread the truth

*by Sari Alburtus, Shan Byrd, Muneerah Higgs, Tamar LaSure-Owens,  
Talena Lachelle Queen, Tariq Raheem, and Sundjata Sekou*



Tariq Raheem, Muneerah Higgs, Tamar LaSure-Owens, Shan Byrd, Talena Lachelle Queen, Sari Alburtus, and Sundjata Sekou stand with the plaque commemorating the Peter Mott House Underground Railroad Museum's place on the National Register of Historic Places.

## “Why didn’t I know this history?”

The Dutch arrived in Bergen (now Jersey City) in 1660 with enslaved Africans. Although the area had been inhabited by the Lenni Lenape for thousands of years, the English claimed the colony for themselves in 1664. Enslaved Africans were brought to the colony that became New Jersey from West Africa and the Caribbean through ports in New York and Perth Amboy. Slavery in New Jersey became entrenched and white families with names like Berkeley, Carteret, Beverwyck, Morris, Livingston and Schuyler became wealthy and powerful.

By 1830, New Jersey was home to 67% of the entire enslaved northern population in the United States of America. New Jersey became known as the slave state of the North. New Jersey went on to become the last northern state to ratify the 13th Amendment outlawing slavery. The last 16 enslaved people in New Jersey were not freed until 1866—three years after Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

In order to address this historical injustice, Assemblywoman Shavonda E. Sumter has sponsored a bill in each session of the New Jersey Legislature since 2018 to establish the “New Jersey Reparations Task Force.” This task force would “research, write, and publish a report, providing a historical and current case for state-based reparations.” The report would also outline what reparations would look like in New Jersey. The Democrat-led New Jersey Legislature has neglected to move the bill.

**Guess where I didn’t learn this history? I did not learn it in my New Jersey elementary, middle and high school classes or in the two universities I attended. I feel anger, sadness, and disappointment in our New Jersey educational journey because this history was erased and kept from us.**

– Sundjata Sekou

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*Sari Alburtus is an NJREA member who retired from the Howell Township School District. Shan Byrd is a teacher in New Brunswick. Muneerah Higgs is an NJREA member who retired from the Lawnside School District. Tamar LaSure-Owens is a teacher in Pleasantville. Talena Lachelle Queen is a teacher in Paterson. Tariq Raheem and Sundjata Sekou are teachers in Irvington.*



The authors stand outside the Peter Mott House in Lawnside, one of many historic locations in Lawnside that students and educators can visit to learn more about our history.

## Amistad Mandate: Every city has an Underground Railroad story

The Amistad Mandate became law in New Jersey in 2002. It calls for the history of African Americans to be taught from kindergarten through twelfth grade. Many teachers have participated in Amistad workshops. Some educators have researched and collaborated to actualize the Amistad mandate in their classrooms.

Many more educators are unaware of the mandate and were never trained on how to infuse New Jersey’s African American history into their content area. Consequently, many educators have found it difficult to implement the Amistad mandate.

The writers of this article organized and met with NJEA Executive Director Kevin Kelleher and Deputy Executive Director Denise Graff Policastro to impress upon them the importance of this work. The outgrowth of those meetings are Amistad immersive field trip experiences with an Underground Railroad theme designed to engage educators.

The Underground Railroad experience in New Jersey is an American story of survival and determination to obtain freedom. It’s a story of collaboration with Black and white abolitionists, who supported the network of safe houses



Talena Lachelle Queen stands inside the Peter Mott House, looking into the cellar where many people found refuge on their journey for freedom.

and travel routes through their resources, time and expertise.

Participants in the Underground Railroad risked their lives to help African Americans to be free and found new ways to hide from slave catchers. The story is one of solidarity and security where places such as Lawnside, Paterson, Princeton, Newark and others became places where African Americans could enjoy some level of family, community, entrepreneurship, fellowship and freedom.

### Lawnside – a special place along the Underground Railroad

In the late 1700s, an African American community called Snow Hill was founded. It is now known as Lawnside, a town born out of slavery. It was a secret hamlet for freedom seekers, freedmen and a station on the Underground Railroad.

This historic town has survived the dangers of the Underground Railroad, the horror of the Civil War, the abolition of slavery and the end of Reconstruction.

During the pre-Civil War period many freedom seekers escaped the brutality of slavery by fleeing north along the Underground Railroad. They found a safe place to live in this “settlement for free people of color,” according to the records of Snow Hill Church.

Lawnside’s favorable geographic features made it welcoming from the start. Its mixture of large and small



# Connecting the past to the present

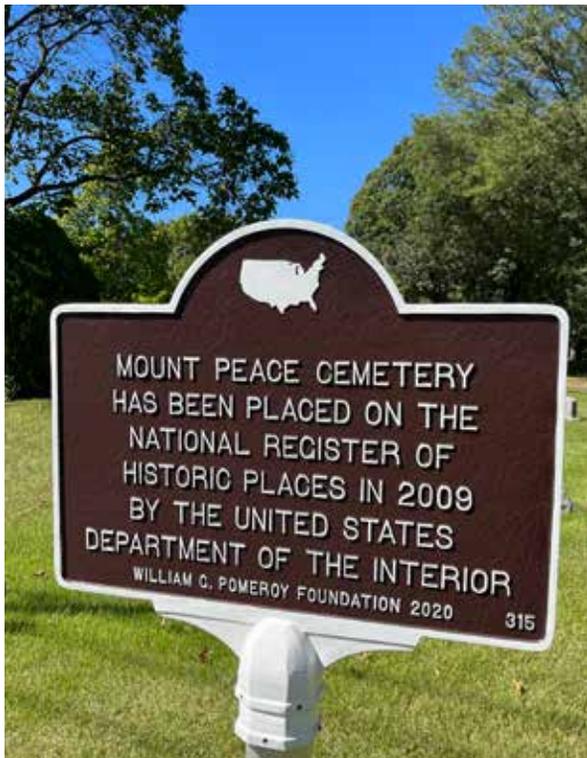
NJREA member and Lawnside historian, Muneerah Higgs shared a story about a formerly incarcerated young African American man who had attended a workshop about Lawnside and Juneteenth. He was captivated by the rich history of resilience and resistance he learned about the town, which is revered for its protection of freedom seeking humans.

Hearing the story led me to believe the young man was able to connect with a greater sense of himself, an identity that could not be caged, guilted or oppressed.

Why? Because on some level he understood that there were once people who walked on the very same land as he, who refused to be regulated to servitude, who were bold enough to aspire to a higher purpose, and who quite possibly shared a common ancestry with him.

My hope is that the young man continues his quest for learning the history of the African experience in and before America. It leads me to imagine what advantages he might have had if he had been given the opportunity to know the whole truth about the fortitude of his ancestors. The town’s history speaks to their intelligence, ingenuity, perseverance and joy!

– Shan Byrd



**The Underground Railroad experience in New Jersey is an American story of survival and determination to obtain freedom.**

Mount Peace Cemetery is an important part of American history. At a time when Black people were not permitted to be buried in the same cemetery as white people, the cemetery was founded and became the final resting place for many area residents, as well as Black soldiers from across the country. Honored veterans, artists, professional athletes, labor leaders and many other Americans rest here.



Top: The authors learn more about the history contained in Mount Peace Cemetery with volunteer caretaker Neil Butler.  
 Bottom: Sundjata Sekou and his son, Kamau Campos-Sekou, visit the graves of one of the many soldiers buried at Mount Peace.

trees standing close together with paths and long roads made it difficult to find. People built log cabins scattered in small clearings which were concealed from the roads. Sitting high on a hill, the town resembled a fort settlement.

“It was a perfect place of secrecy which concealed its inhabitants from the oppressors,” according to author Charles Smiley.

Among several of Lawnside’s historic sites, the Peter Mott House Underground Railroad Museum was the first to be nationally recognized. Rev. Mott used his home as a safe haven for freedom seekers. Other sites include Mount Pisgah African Methodist Episcopal Church, Mount Zion United Methodist Church, Mount Peace Cemetery and Lawnside School.

We find Black joy in what our community has accomplished, despite its past struggles. Lawnside’s contributions to American history are too valuable to be lost. Built on the belief in freedom, this history must never be forgotten. Without it, the history of America is inaccurate and incomplete.

You can arrange a school tour to the Mott House at [petermotthouse.org/visit](http://petermotthouse.org/visit).

### **Paterson, the Underground Railroad and the historian**

Paterson is a historically rich place. The National Park Service commemorated the Underground Railroad stop in Paterson with a statue of two of the prominent conductors: a white man named Josiah Huntoon and his friend, a free African American man, William Van Rensalier.

The site is nestled between two fast-food franchises across from Passaic County Community College. When the “Network to Freedom” was in operation, the site was a business owned and operated by Huntoon. Visitors to the historic site can see the statues, ring the Liberty Bell and read information about these two Underground Railroad conductors.

Van Rensalier was one of many free African Americans in Paterson during the time of enslavement. Others lived in a community known as the African Shore. The African Shore was built along the Passaic River. The site is unmarked and is part of Paterson’s oral history.

Among his many interests, Paterson’s local historian Jimmy Richardson, shares his knowledge of the city’s Underground Railroad site and the African Shore.

Richardson gave us a guided tour as part of our research for the NJEA Immersive Field Trip Experience on the Underground Railroad. Richardson is responsible for obtaining historical recognition for several sites in Paterson, including the Underground Railroad.

For more information about these sites visit [nps.gov/pagr/index.htm](http://nps.gov/pagr/index.htm).

To learn more about the history of enslaved persons and freedom, download *Slavery at the Rivers Edge* by Jimmy Richardson from [bit.ly/slavery-richardson](http://bit.ly/slavery-richardson).

To contact Great Falls National Historic Park, call 973-523-0370.

### Background knowledge for students prior to a trip

Field trips to museums and historical places are meant to be informative, engaging and exciting. It's important for students and teachers to be prepared and knowledgeable about the museums and historical places they will visit prior to going.

Learning begins in the classroom with intentional lesson planning that allows time and brave spaces for students to further their intellectual development and understanding and to conduct research with their peers. These brave spaces allow students to process their emotions, to make mistakes, to become thinkers and problem solvers, and work together as a community.

Lessons on the Underground Railroad should include the history of slavery in New Jersey, Underground Railroad terminology and code words, primary sources, documentaries of slave narratives, and people to know such as William Still (the Father of the Underground Railroad), Harriet Tubman, David Ruggles and Quaker abolitionist Levi Coffin (the unofficial "President of the Underground Railroad").

Students should also analyze interactive maps of Underground Railroad locations throughout New Jersey to gain a realistic account of the distance and sacrifice African Americans escaping to freedom endured. "New Jersey Underground Railroad Stops: Black History in the State of New Jersey," by Maya Thomas and Shashuana Anderson is one such map. It can be found at [bit.ly/ur-stops-nj](http://bit.ly/ur-stops-nj).



## Learn more about Lawnside at the NJEA Convention

Lawnside holds a unique place in the state's history as the only incorporated African American municipality. The Lawnside Historical Society promotes the borough's heritage founded by free Black people and fugitives from slavery.

The society restored the Peter Mott House Underground Railroad Museum, named for the local preacher and Underground Railroad agent, and has offered paid tours to families, school groups and scholars for more than 22 years.

Online and in-person lectures, book talks, workshops, and Underground Railroad summer camps fulfill the society's mission. The young docent program launched this fall trains middle and high school students as tour guides while teaching them local history and the stories of ancestors. The society is completing projects in digitizing oral histories, records and archival photographs documenting the community's past during the Civil War, World War I, the Great Depression and World War II through the Civil Rights Movement.

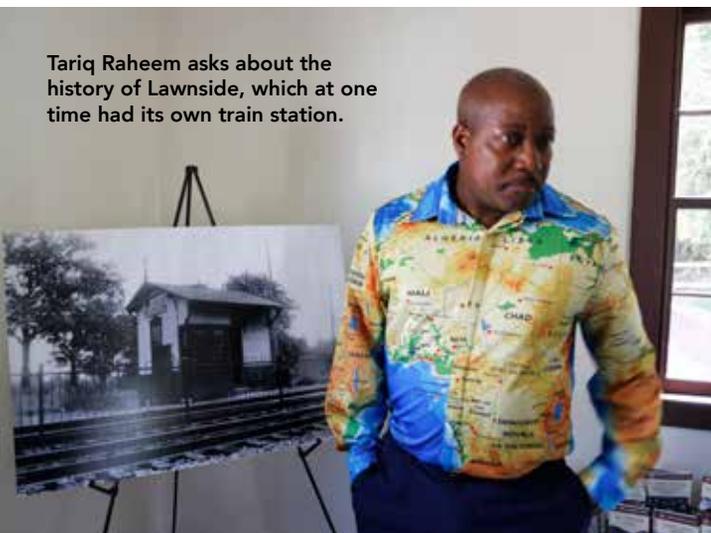
"This history has been my passion for decades in the classroom," says Muneerah Higgs, history educator and NJREA member. "We have a responsibility to ensure students and the community learn it, appreciate and share it."

Higgs brings her special knowledge to curriculum development and presentations on multiple topics. She is also a member of the UGRR Immersive Experience Writers Group, which is available for presentations.

Learn more from Higgs and other society members at the NJEA Convention Booth 1543 on the Exhibit Hall floor.

Arrange a school tour to the Mott House at [petermotthouse.org/visit](http://petermotthouse.org/visit).

Tariq Raheem asks about the history of Lawnside, which at one time had its own train station.





Muneerah Higgs plays a video on the history of the Peter Mott House, and the long process it took to save it and have it designated a historic site. Higgs produced and directed the film.

## Hipp, Pride and FAST grants



Do not allow cost concerns to prevent you from immersing yourself and your students in this history. Many sites related to the Underground Railroad and slavery in New Jersey are free or low-cost. Learning about these sites fits in well with the Amistad mandate and should be a priority in district-funded field trips. Accessing district budget funds enables you to plan trips this school year.

In addition, you can seek grant funding from various sources. The NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education provides \$500 to \$10,000 grants for educators, including both certificated staff and ESPs. Grant applications are due March 1, 2024, for the 2024-25 school year. Go to [njea.org/hipp](http://njea.org/hipp) for details and an application.

Grants to local associations for programs involving families and communities are available through the NJEA Families and Schools Work Together for Children (FAST) and the NJEA Pride in Public Education program. Visit [njea.org/fast](http://njea.org/fast) and [njea.org/pride](http://njea.org/pride).

Students need to be transported back in time to hear those stories of courage, perseverance, struggle and hope. Most importantly, when students investigate the vital role of Negro Spirituals in connection to the Underground Railroad, they will develop a profound sense of respect for our ancestors in their creative and unyielding pursuit for freedom.

### **Heritage Tourism: How to explore our state's legacy of enslavement and the Underground Railroad**

These immersive field trip experiences are a form of Heritage Tourism. Our fervent hope is that educators will embrace these opportunities to understand the history of New Jersey through a fact-based lens.

These visits have the potential to be invaluable tools for use within an equity-based curriculum. While we support each teacher's journey through the truths exposed, and there are countless ways to experience them, the work of Dr. Ghody Muhammad is a tool that can be used to organize the content for use in the classroom.



Lawnside is home to many historic sites, including Mount Pisgah African Methodist Episcopal Church, where this tribute to Sister Jarena Lee, the first licensed female preacher in the AME Church, is proudly displayed on the grounds.

The culturally and historically responsive education model for teaching and learning (CHRE), based squarely on the work of Dr. Muhammad, guides educators through rich and deep content with some key questions to keep in mind:

- Identity – teaching students to know themselves and others. Ask yourself, “How will this help students learn about themselves and others?”
- Skills – teaching students the proficiencies needed across content areas. Ask yourself, “How will this build student skills in a given content area?”
- Intellectualism – teaching students new knowledge. Ask yourself, “How will this build student intellectual capacity?”
- Criticality – teaching students to understand and disrupt oppression. Ask yourself “How will this engage student thinking about power, equity and the disruption of oppression?”
- Joy – teaching students about the beauty and truth in humanity. Ask yourself “How can beauty, wellness, wholeness, solutions to problems and happiness be connected to this instructional lesson?”

We would like to thank NJEA Executive Director Kevin Kelleher and Deputy Executive Director Denise Graff Policastro for their support. We look forward to finishing writing curricula to support educators to teach African American/Black History in a across the curriculum in New Jersey classrooms according to the Amistad mandate. 🇺🇸

# Exploring African American history in New Jersey through immersive field trips

Below is a recap of the two main sites explored in this article, as well as resources to find other locations throughout the state.

## Lawnside

Lawnside School  
[mhiggs33@comcast.net](mailto:mhiggs33@comcast.net)

Mount Peace Cemetary  
[mtpeacecemeteryassociation.org](http://mtpeacecemeteryassociation.org)

Mount Pisgah AME Church  
[mtpisgahlawnside.org](http://mtpisgahlawnside.org)

Peter Mott House  
[petermotthouse.org](http://petermotthouse.org)

## Middletown

Marlpit Hall  
[monmouthhistory.org/historic-houses](http://monmouthhistory.org/historic-houses)  
[monmouthhistory.org/audio-tour-marlpit-hall](http://monmouthhistory.org/audio-tour-marlpit-hall)

## Newark

Harriet Tubman Square  
[visitharriettubmansquare.com/for-students-educators](http://visitharriettubmansquare.com/for-students-educators)

Mapping Slavery in Newark  
 Highlights the streets and buildings connected to slavery in Newark.  
[bit.ly/slavery-map-newarknj](http://bit.ly/slavery-map-newarknj)

## New Jersey

New Jersey Historical Commission  
 African Americans in Colonial New Jersey  
<https://bit.ly/colonial-nj-aa-history>

New Jersey Underground Railroad Stops:  
 Black History in the State of New Jersey  
 by Maya Thomas and Shashuana Anderson  
[bit.ly/ur-stops-nj](http://bit.ly/ur-stops-nj)

## Paterson

National Park Service  
[nps.gov/pagr/index.htm](http://nps.gov/pagr/index.htm)

Slavery at the Rivers Edge by Jimmy Richardson  
[bit.ly/slavery-richardson](http://bit.ly/slavery-richardson).

## Princeton

Albert E. Hinds Memorial Walking Tour:  
 African American Life in Princeton  
[princetonhistory.org/tour](http://princetonhistory.org/tour)

# SICK LEAVE EXPANSION BILL SHOWS THAT ELECTIONS MATTER

*By Francine Pfeffer and Patrick Rumaker*

Lisa Rizziello's mother was in hospice, and Rizziello wanted to be with her in her final days, but she had already used her three contractually negotiated family illness days. Rizziello had 376 accumulated sick days, but, as with all school employees, she could use them only for herself as outlined in state law at the time. On the day her mother died, Rizziello could not be with her to hold her hand. She had to be at work.

This is the story the Assembly Labor Committee heard at the end of March as it considered A-5060, which ultimately expanded allowable uses of sick leave so that school employees can use sick time when their family members are ill.

The law governing school district employees had read, "Sick leave is hereby defined to mean the absence from his or her post of duty, of any person because of personal disability due to illness or injury." Put simply, a school employee could take a sick day for their own illness, but not for the illness or injury of anyone in their care. School employees who took a sick day because they simply needed to take their child to the doctor were risking discipline, loss of salary or dismissal.

A-5060, or the "expanded use of sick leave bill," was proposed to fix that. The bill was initially introduced by Senate Education Committee Chair Vin Gopal, who heard from a constituent about this limitation on sick days.

At the same time, Rizziello, a teacher in the West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District and a Mercer County representative on the NJEA Government Relations Committee, had been talking to Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson. The Assemblywoman, a public employee herself, couldn't believe that school employees didn't have the same right she did: the use of sick days to take care of family members who are ill.

Upon hearing Rizziello's story, Reynolds-Jackson wanted to help fix the problem. When Sen. Gopal's bill was introduced, she immediately sponsored it in the Assembly and asked to have it posted for a committee hearing.

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*Francine Pfeffer is an associate director in the NJEA Government Relations Division. Patrick Rumaker is the editor of the NJEA Review.*





Members of the Mercer County Education Association (MCEA) at a campaign event for candidates in Legislative District 14. From left: MCEA Immediate Past President Grace Rarich, LD 14 Assembly candidate Tennille McCoy and teacher Lisa Rizziello.

## Bill faces opposition, ultimately passes by large margins

While this legislation may seem like a “no-brainer,” it faced opposition. Opponents contended that sick days beyond those required by law for the illness of the employee should be the subject of negotiations at the local level. They also cited concerns about the cost of paying a substitute and worried that staff might take sick days for frivolous reasons.

These arguments were overridden by the fact that Rizziello’s district had already negotiated three family sick days. Rizziello had already used those days to be with her mother and needed to access her own accumulated sick days. Under the law at that time, she was unable to do so.

Although Rizziello herself could not come to the hearing—she was busy teaching—Hillsborough Education Association President Henry Goodhue and Burlington County Education Association President Anthony Rizzo testified at the Assembly Labor Committee hearing alongside NJEA staff, who presented Rizziello’s story and provided additional testimony.

The bill received bipartisan support in the committee room, with all Democrats voting for the bill and Republican Assemblywoman Claire Swift (R-Atlantic) also voting yes. The bill passed with broad bipartisan support in the

Assembly in May and in the Senate at the end of June. Gov. Phil Murphy quickly signed it into law.

## Strong relationships with legislators vital

This was not Rizziello’s first time asking her legislators to take action on an important issue. Having worked with many student teachers, she knew the harmful impact of edTPA on preservice educators. She asked her legislators to come hear the stories of this test, and they introduced a bill that ultimately removed the requirement to endure edTPA as a step toward certification.

Strong relationships were key to the success of these bills. As the chair of the Mercer County Legislative Action Team, Rizziello knew Assemblywoman Reynolds-Jackson well. The Mercer County Education Association (MCEA) had developed strong relationships with Reynolds-Jackson and Assemblyman Anthony Verrelli, who also represents Legislative District 15. MCEA was a visible presence in their election activities and continually reached out to the legislators to come to their functions.

Your voice matters. When you talk with a policymaker about an issue that matters, your advocacy—as Rizziello’s story demonstrates—has an impact. As an educator, you know the issues affecting you and your students firsthand, and legislators and policymakers view you as an expert.



**Top:** Members and staff going door to door to support Rep. Andy Kim in last year's congressional election. From left: NJEA staff member Marybeth Beichert, Jackson EA Association Rep Donna Schmidt and Jackson EA Secretary Elaine White.

**Bottom:** Monmouth County EA members prepare materials to campaign for Rep. Andy Kim. Seated from left: MCEA Secretary Diane Vistein and MCEA President Denise King. Standing from left: Matawan-Aberdeen EA Vice President Jackie Kruzik, MCEA Vice Presidents Erin Wheeler and Sarah Reichenbecher and Freehold Regional EA Vice President Jim Saint Angelo.

## Elections and endorsements matter

All the education expertise in the world and the compelling arguments you may bring to legislators are less likely to make an impact if you cannot get in the door to make them. This is especially true if your elected leaders' interests are opposed to yours.

It is vital to elect lawmakers whose interests and concerns align with your interests and concerns. The NJEA Political Action Operating Committee (NJEA PAC) prides itself on having a sound, fair, and democratic process leading up to the endorsement of a candidate. The purpose of the process is to identify the candidate most supportive of NJEA's legislative program. Endorsing and electing candidates who support NJEA's goals significantly increases the association's ability to pass favorable legislation and stop negative legislation.

PAC screening committees at the county and legislative levels consider the voting records of incumbents and the answers of all candidates around questions concerning pensions, health benefits, school funding, vouchers, collective bargaining, standardized testing, health and safety, higher education, staff shortages and other issues that matter to public school employees and their students.

NJEA's long-standing participation in the political process has been a key factor in keeping our public schools first in the nation. It's why the state has finally returned to making its full annual contributions to our pension funds. It's why our educational support professionals (ESPs)—custodians, bus drivers, secretaries, paraprofessionals, food service staff and all ESPs have just-cause job protections and strong limitations against privatization. It's why New Jersey's educators have among the highest average salaries and hourly wages in the nation.

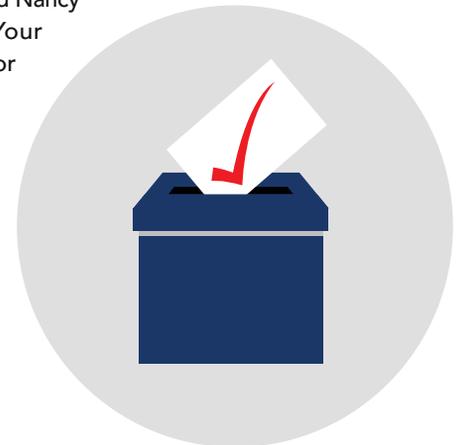
And it's why you don't have to make a choice between taking care of a sick loved one or losing a day's pay.

Your vote is your voice. Your voice is stronger when you join with your fellow NJEA members and vote to make sure that those candidates who value public education become the elected leaders who hold office to keep it strong. 🗳️

# NJEA PAC endorses 98 candidates for Nov. 7 election

NJEA's 125-member political action committee has voted to endorse 95 legislative candidates for election this Nov. 7. NJEA PAC voted on the recommendations of local interview teams from each legislative district (LD). There were no endorsements in LDs 23, 24, 26 and 29.

- **LD 1:** Erik Simonsen (R) for Assembly
- **LD 2:** Vincent J. Polistina (R) for Senate and Donald A. Guardian (R) for Assembly. Alphonso Harrell (D) and Claire Swift (R) are endorsed as Your Choice candidates.
- **LD 3:** John J. Burzichelli (D) for Senate and Heather Simmons (D) and Dave Bailey (D) for Assembly
- **LD 4:** Paul D. Moriarty (D) for Senate and Cody Miller (D) and Dan Hutchison (D) for Assembly
- **LD 5:** Nilsa I. Cruz-Perez (D) for Senate and William W. Spearman (D) and William F. Moen Jr. (D) for Assembly
- **LD 6:** James Beach (D) for Senate and Pamela R. Lampitt (D) and Louis D. Greenwald (D) for Assembly
- **LD 7:** Troy Singleton (D) for Senate and Herb Conaway Jr. (D) and Carol A. Murphy (D) for Assembly
- **LD 8:** Latham Tiver (R) for Senate and Anthony Angelozzi (D) and Brandon E. Umba (R) for Assembly
- **LD 9:** Brian E. Rumpf (R) for Assembly
- **LD 10:** Emma Mammano (D) for Assembly
- **LD 11:** Vin Gopal (D) for Senate and Margie Donlon (D) and Luanne Peterpaul (D) for Assembly.
- **LD 12:** Robert D. Clifton (R) and Alex Sauickie (R) for Assembly
- **LD 13:** Victoria A. Flynn (R) for Assembly and Paul Eschelbach (D) for Assembly
- **LD 14:** Linda R. Greenstein (D) for Senate and Wayne P. DeAngelo (D) and Tennille McCoy (D) for Assembly
- **LD 15:** Shirley K. Turner (D) for Senate and Verlina Reynolds-Jackson (D) and Anthony S. Verrelli (D) for Assembly
- **LD 16:** Andrew Zwicker (D) for Senate and Roy Freiman (D) and Michelle Drulis (D) for Assembly.
- **LD 17:** Bob Smith (D) for Senate and Joe Danielsen (D) for Assembly
- **LD 18:** Patrick J. Diegnan Jr. (D) for Senate and Robert J. Karabinchak (D) and Sterley S. Stanley (D) for Assembly
- **LD 19:** Joseph F. Vitale (D) for Senate and Craig J. Coughlin (D) and Yvonne Lopez (D) for Assembly
- **LD 20:** Joseph P. Cryan (D) for Senate and Annette Quijano (D) and Reginald W. Atkins (D) for Assembly
- **LD 21:** Jon M. Bramnick (R) for Senate and Michele Matsikoudis (R) for Assembly; Elizabeth Graner (D) and Nancy F. Munoz (R) are Your Choice candidates for Assembly
- **LD 22:** Nicholas P. Scutari (D) for Senate and Linda S. Carter (D) and James J. Kennedy (D) for Assembly



- **LD 25:** Anthony M. Bucco (R) for Senate and Aura K. Dunn (R) for Assembly
- **LD 27:** John F. McKeon (D) for Senate and Alixon Collazos-Gill (D) and Rosy Bagolie (D) for Assembly
- **LD 28:** Renee C. Burgess (D) for Senate and Cleopatra G. Tucker (D) and Garnet R. Hall (D) for Assembly
- **LD 30:** Pending
- **LD 31:** Angela V. McKnight (D) for Senate and Barbara McCann Stamato (D) and William B. Sampson IV (D) for Assembly
- **LD 32:** Raj Mukherji (D) for Senate and John Allen (D) and Jessica Ramirez (D) for Assembly.
- **LD 33:** Brian P. Stack (D) for Senate and Gabriel Rodriguez (D) and Julio Marengo (D) for Assembly.
- **LD 34:** Britnee N. Timberlake (D) for Senate and Carmen Morales (D) and Michael Venezia (D) for Assembly



## Important election dates

### Oct. 31

#### Deadline to apply for a mail-in ballot by mail for general election

For a vote-by-mail application, go to [vote.nj.gov](http://vote.nj.gov). Complete and mail the application as early as possible, ideally well before Nov. 1.

### Nov. 6 – by 3 p.m.

#### Deadline for in-person mail-in ballot applications for general election

Visit [vote.nj.gov](http://vote.nj.gov) for details on how to apply in person for a vote-by-mail ballot.

### Nov. 7

#### General election

To find your polling location check the sample ballot you received from your county board of elections or visit [vote.nj.gov](http://vote.nj.gov). This is also the deadline by which the post office must receive mail-in ballots for the general election. It is also the deadline for in-person submission of general election mail-in ballots to county boards of election.



Looking for free or low-cost college programs for your high school students?

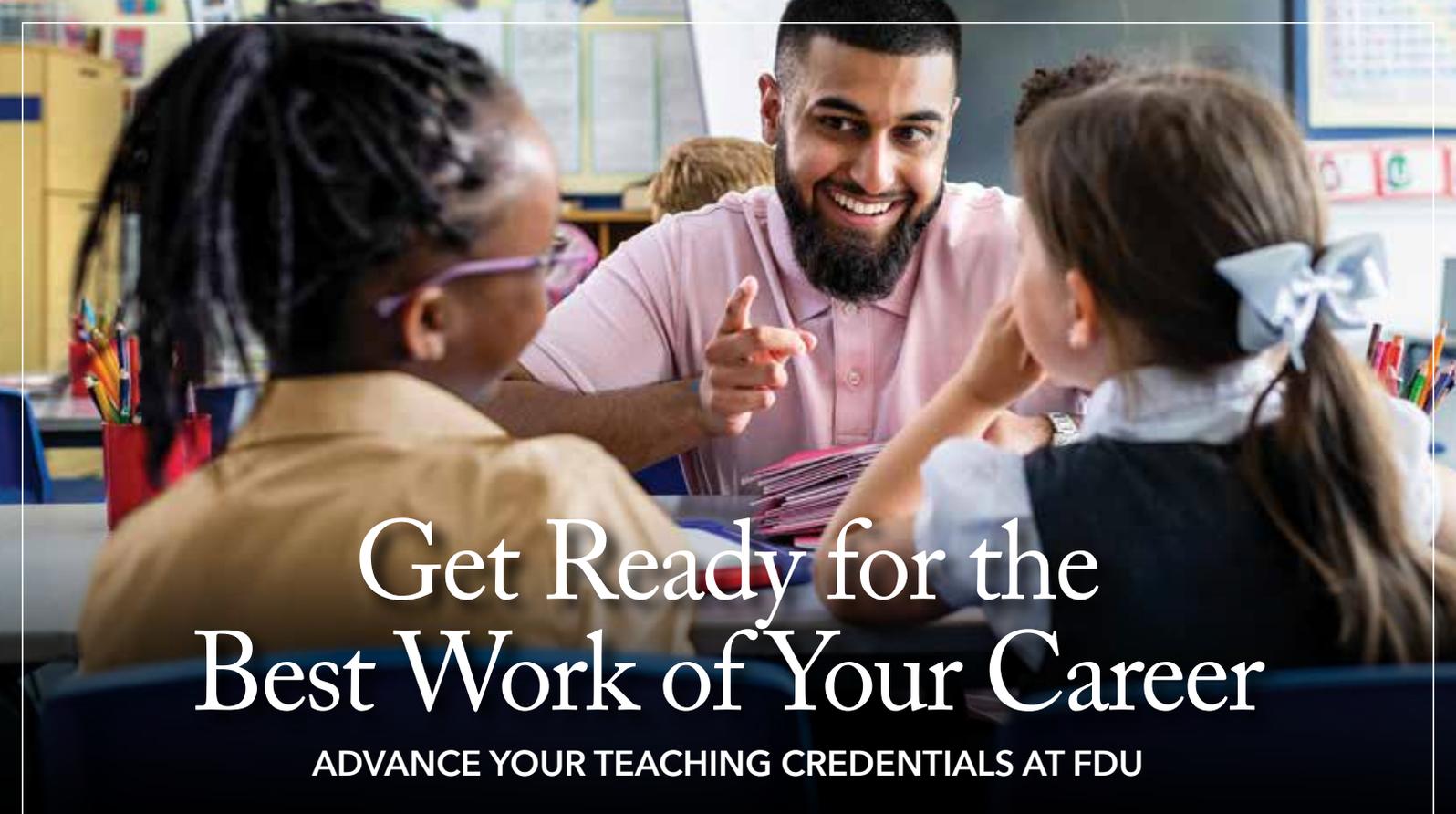
### William Paterson University Offers Programs Enrolling for Summer and Fall 2024

- **Aspiring Educators Summer Program**
- **Free STEM Summer Bridge academic enrichment experience for graduating high school seniors:**  
[wpunj.edu/cosh/ASPIRE-STEM-Program](http://wpunj.edu/cosh/ASPIRE-STEM-Program)
- **Dual Enrollment College Credit Programs:**  
[wpunj.edu/dualenrollment](http://wpunj.edu/dualenrollment)

For more information, contact Patrick Noonan  
[noonanp@wpunj.edu](mailto:noonanp@wpunj.edu) | [dualenrollment@wpunj.edu](mailto:dualenrollment@wpunj.edu)  
973.720.3080

WILLIAM PATERSON  
UNIVERSITY

- **LD 35:** Nellie Pou (D) for Senate and Benjie Wimberly (D) and Shavonda E. Sumter (D) for Assembly
- **LD 36:** Paul A. Sarlo (D) for Senate and Gary S. Schaer (D) and Clinton Calabrese (D) for Assembly
- **LD 37:** Gordon M. Johnson (D) for Senate and Ellen J. Park (D) and Shama A. Haider (D) for Assembly
- **LD 38:** Joseph A. Lagana (D) for Senate and P. Christopher Tully (D) and Lisa Swain (D) for Assembly.
- **LD 39:** Jodi Murphy (D) for Senate and John Vitale (D) and Damon Englese (D) for Assembly
- **LD 40:** Kristin M. Corrado (R) for Senate and Christopher P. DePhillips (R) and Al Barlas (R) for Assembly



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# Connecting educators with Holocaust education resources

*A conversation with Helen Kirschbaum*

*NJEA Review Associate Editor Kathryn Coulibaly met with Helen Kirschbaum, director of the Esther Raab Holocaust Museum & Goodwin Education Center at Cherry Hill's Jewish Community Relations Council to discuss all it has to offer to NJEA members and their students. Below is an edited transcript of what Kirschbaum shared.*

We've been sending Holocaust survivors to talk to students for more than 25 years. Our speakers have gone into classrooms, community organizations, schools and colleges. Some schools come to us because we have a small museum featuring artifacts from the Holocaust and highlighting the history of the period.

Unfortunately, as time has gone on, there are fewer and fewer survivors who are able to speak. We have started to rely on their children and grandchildren to share their family stories. We ask them to speak at the schools or at our center or, since COVID, on Zoom.

## **Not just a history lesson**

We encourage our speakers to share their family legacies. They talk about the importance of why we still need to be talking about what happened 70 to 80 years ago. We try to make sure people understand this is not just a history

lesson. There's so much to learn from what happened when hatred was allowed to be taken to unimaginable extremes.

Jeff Zeiger is one of many children of survivors who speak for us and carry on their family stories. Every one of them does it differently. Some, like Jeff, will speak without any aid of any kind. Others have developed ways to use parts of their parents' recorded testimony and will share segments of those testimonies and then fill in more of the story.

There's also a play that we've been sharing for at least 15 years that is the story of one of the survivors who settled in South Jersey. We have that play performed in our center or at schools and then survivors' children or grandchildren come to each performance and answer students' questions. The play is historically accurate, so it's another way of telling that survivor's story.

We work with the school to make it affordable. Our goal is to share the story.

It's so important to the survivors for students to hear them and understand what happened. They want students to realize that they have a responsibility to make sure that the world that they live in does not become like the world that Holocaust survivors came from.

## Maintaining programs and training educators

We ask for contributions to our education program in honor of the survivors. Those contributions allow us to maintain the museum, send out speakers and give tours to school groups.

We offer teacher training programs. We partner with the Anti-Defamation League and the Simon Wiesenthal Center. We don't want to recreate the wheel. We just want to connect schools with the right program.

We have an amazing team of volunteers, most of whom are retired teachers. That enables us to go into a school and do a teacher training program that meets the specific needs of the school. There are many teachers who are not comfortable dealing with the difficult subjects that arise when teaching the Holocaust. We want to help them and provide them with the resources and materials and let them ask questions in a comfortable, safe setting.

We also have donors who have given us funds specifically to take teachers to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C. We do that once a year. We have a bus filled with teachers and it's an amazing opportunity for the teachers to meet educators from other districts who are teaching the same things they are and walk through the museum with them.

In the past, we always had survivors go with us, so that was an opportunity to meet survivors and speak to them one on one.

We've had other donors who are working to send high school students to Washington, D.C. We've connected with schools in the area and sent students to the Holocaust Museum. We send one of our educators with them to answer questions as they walk through the museum.

When we go to D.C., we also take those students to the World War II memorial. For many years, we had concentration camp liberators who spoke for us. Unfortunately, they are no longer alive.

We also go to the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. memorial because hate against anyone is not acceptable and that's part of the lessons that we share with students. Hate in any form has to be eliminated from our communities.

We are one of 30 centers throughout New Jersey that are part of the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education. Each of those centers offer various programs and a unique focus. We all work in different areas.

For Holocaust Remembrance Day we provide programming that is open to the public. We also provide speakers for programs that other organizations may be holding. For example, one of our speakers went to Fort Dix and spoke to the service members there. We've also sent speakers to synagogues, schools and other venues in the area.



**Hate in any form has to be eliminated from our communities.**

## Incidents of intolerance as teachable moments

We also work with our local schools if they have incidents of anti-Semitism or hate of any kind. We can work with the individual student who is the offender or the entire grade level. We have developed programming that talks about the consequences of anti-Semitism or other hateful action.

Sometimes it's a parent who will call us and say their child had an issue at school. Then I will reach out to the principal. Other times, it's the principal, guidance counselor or anti-bullying coordinator who asks for assistance.

I think it's important for schools to use these incidents as teachable moments. Don't just say, "That's terrible; I can't believe it happened here," and move on. We need to take a minute and address what happened—not by focusing on the perpetrator, but as part of a conversation. You know if an incident happens in a school, all the kids have heard about it, whether the staff is talking about it or not.

There are so many lessons in those individual incidents. Do you stand by and let it happen or do you support your friend who is being attacked for their religion, skin color, hair color or some other characteristic? Are you grateful that it didn't happen to you, or are you strong enough to say, it's not OK to pick on that child, my friend?

We've had survivors go in and talk to kids who had drawn swastikas. Sometimes, they're just doing it for attention, but for a survivor, that swastika represents so much. We want students to understand their actions' impact on other people.

## Panel discussions and speakers

We have organized panel discussions in the community with religious leaders of different faiths and who spoke individually about how hate has impacted them. It's not only people who are Jewish who are impacted by hate; it's all people of all faiths and all colors. And students can learn from hearing these stories.

We've had politicians join us. I will always remember the day Rep. Andy Kim joined us from the Capitol on Zoom and he spoke to us about how hate impacted him as a child. He panned the camera up so we could see the dome of the Capitol as he spoke. It has nothing to do with politics; it has to do with people's feelings and behavior.

Truly, the people and schools we work with are always so appreciative of having the resources available to them. But there are so many schools who don't know these resources are available.

We work in Camden, Burlington and Gloucester counties. Occasionally, we will expand beyond that. We try not to impinge on each other's regions. Practically, it becomes really difficult to ask a survivor to get in the car and travel long distances.

The youngest survivors are in their late 80s. We have a survivor in our community who has celebrated his 104th birthday.

These memories that we are asking them to share bring back such terrible nightmares for them. It is extremely emotional for them. They say, I'm not retelling what happened; I'm reliving what happened. But they will do it as much as they can for today's students—our future leaders—to understand the consequences of hate and indifference.

I've been very fortunate to hear from more Holocaust survivors than I would have ever dreamed, and I've learned so much from them. Every story of survival and loss is totally different. The one thing they all have in common is their lives were changed forever because hate and indifference ruled the society they lived in.

I think we need to emphasize to our students that empathy is more important than apathy.

### **The Holocaust and genocide education mandate**

We have also started a program for elementary school students because Holocaust education is mandated K-12. For the younger grades, we have a collection of books that deal with kindness, accepting differences and standing up to bullies. They are age-appropriate for each grade level.

We send readers into schools, and they share these stories with students. Then they do a project or have a conversation or sing a song that ties together the book and the lessons that we want the students to learn about accepting people who may be different from them, in any way. Religion, hair color, country of origin, and other qualities are all differences that should bind us together, not tear us apart. 🕯️

## More to learn



### **Holocaust Commission Resource Centers**

The New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education has 30 Holocaust Resource Centers located throughout the state. These Resource Centers provide materials, professional development, and educational programs to students, schools and educators.

[nj.gov/education/holocaust/centers](http://nj.gov/education/holocaust/centers)

### **Jewish Community Relations Council of South Jersey's Raab/Goodwin Center**

[jcrsnj.org/goodwin](http://jcrsnj.org/goodwin)

### **The NJ Department of Education**

[nj.gov/education/holocaust/](http://nj.gov/education/holocaust/)

### **The NJ State Bar Foundation**

[njsbf.org/holocaust-education](http://njsbf.org/holocaust-education)

### **NJEA Convention**

*Integrating Holocaust and Anti-Semitism Education into Curricula*

Friday, Nov. 10

1-2:30 p.m.

Room 301

Presenters: Franklin Stebbins and

Allison D. Connolly

### **Film: The Hidden Child**

Friday, Nov. 10

11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Room 303

Guest speaker: Maud Dahme, Holocaust survivor and educator



# The difference one person can make

## First-person stories of the Holocaust teach lifelong lessons

By Kathryn Coulibaly

In a darkened auditorium at Egg Harbor Township's Fernwood Middle School, Jeff Zeiger stands in front of approximately 150 silent middle school students. He is there to tell them the story of how one man saved his family during the Holocaust.

Zeiger is the son of Jewish Holocaust survivor Shelley Zeiger who was six years old when the Nazis marched into Zborov, a little village of 10,000 people in what was then Poland. About half of Zborov's residents were Jewish.

For the next 45 minutes, Zeiger tells his family's miraculous story of resilience, survival and help from an unexpected source. He is following in a family tradition that originated with his father. After emigrating to the United States, settling first in Newark and later in Moorestown, Shelley would visit schools and tell his family's story.

"My father felt it was his mission," Zeiger says. "I think that over the years, my father spoke to tens of thousands of children. Now, I'm telling the story to children as well as adults."

Zeiger is part of a speaker series coordinated by the Esther Robb Holocaust Museum and Goodwin Education Center in Cherry Hill. He conducts 15 to 20 visits a year.

Following Zeiger's presentation, the students are invited to ask him questions. It is clear that the students are moved by the story, although it is still almost impossible to comprehend the magnitude of the loss. They ask practical questions about the family's survival and what it was like for them during the Holocaust. They have been listening closely and are eager to learn more. After the question-and-answer period, many students approach Zeiger for a hug or to shake his hand.

Zeiger's presentation is well-honed over the years he has been doing it, and he has three clear takeaways for the students.

"One, do not make fun of someone because they are different," Zeiger says. "Two, if you do good in your life, good will come back to you. And three, do not underestimate what one person can do. Because of one person's actions, 70 people are alive today, descended from the six people who were protected."



Jeff Zeiger, the son of a Holocaust survivor, speaks at Fernwood Middle School in Egg Harbor Township.

### Life-lessons for students

Zeiger connects his family's story with things students are facing today. While combating anti-Semitism will always be a central mission of his work and the work of the Esther Robb Holocaust Museum and Goodwin Education Center, he also uses his family's story to talk about bullying.

"When I'm speaking to an audience of students, I can look out and see which kids are being bullied and which are doing the bullying," Jeff says. "My family's story ties into what they're dealing with today."

Fernwood Middle School's teachers and staff appreciate the impact of Jeff's family's story on their students.

"Mr. Zeiger's presentation to the eighth-grade students at Fernwood was not only touching and very emotional, but it was inspiring to hear about his family's resolve and will to live," says Scott McAlister, a social studies teacher at the school. "Our students left the presentation with valuable life-lessons, learned from the strength and resilience of Mr. Zeiger's family. My hope is that the students recognize their own strengths and tenacity and use Mr. Zeiger's story as inspiration on their journey through life."

Zeiger is very proud that New Jersey was the first state in the United States to mandate Holocaust education. In fact, Zeiger's father served on the original commission. Zeiger encourages educators to reach out to local Holocaust museums and centers across the state to enhance how they teach the Holocaust.

Approximately 140,000 Holocaust survivors settled in the United States after World War II, many of them in the New York/New Jersey area. Their descendants have picked up the task of talking about their family's experiences.

"We need to continue to tell our stories and educate people," Zeiger says. 🇺🇸

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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).

# Old Bridge institutes ESP peer mentoring program

By Kathryn Coulibaly

Last summer, Old Bridge paraprofessional and 2022 NJEA Educational Support Professional (ESP) of the Year Nancy Cogland reached out to some of her new colleagues.

"We had eight new paraprofessionals join the district last September," Cogland says. "I wanted to welcome them and make that connection, but I was able to get in touch with only six of them. Four of the six weren't able to get on their district email. This is the only place where they can find the schedule for the first two days of school. Two of them thought they started when the students start. Who wants to start off a new job like that?"

Cogland knew she had to do something. For many years, she has been active in NJEA and NEA and she knew that other districts had implemented ESP peer mentoring programs.

"I attended a training provided by NEA on ESP mentoring, and I knew it would work in our district," Cogland says. "They work with you to develop a program that suits your district's size and needs. It is designed to grow and evolve as your program grows.

Cogland met with her local president, Andrew Lewis, and district representatives in September 2022 to explain the issues and how the peer mentoring program would help.

"We're having issues hiring staff," Cogland explains. "There's a high turnover rate, which is bad for the other staff in the building as well as the students. New hires aren't aware of the rules and they're getting in trouble for things that could be avoided."

She was invited to be the first ESP to serve on the district's Instructional Council where she gave a

Old Bridge's paraprofessional mentors with program coordinator Nancy Cogland. From left: Wendy Cardaci, Ascension Reyes, Nancy Cogland, Stephanie DeFeo, Donna Caputo-O'Neil, Janet Lazofsky and Marilyn Nolan.



presentation, followed by another meeting with the assistant superintendent.

"I felt totally prepared by my NEA training," Cogland says. "Every question they asked me, or problem they posed, I had an answer."

The assistant superintendent enthusiastically supported the idea, and thanks to Cogland's participation in the NEA training, the district was eligible for a grant from NEA to offset any costs associated with the initiation of the peer mentoring program.

Cogland and Lewis applied for—and received—the NEA grant in the spring of 2023.

### **A two-year program benefits ESPs and district**

Cogland has developed the program to benefit mentors and mentees. There will be six paraprofessional mentors plus Cogland, the program coordinator. There will be training for the mentors, so everyone is on the same page with what mentees need to know and when they need to know it.

Once a month, the mentor and mentee will meet. They will address one topic each month. Some topics will be broader, such as where paraprofessionals fit in on the special education team.

"It's important for paraprofessionals to understand how all the pieces work together for the student and who to go to when there are issues," Cogland says.

Mentors and mentees will meet more frequently in the first year when the new hires are likely to have more questions and concerns.

In the second year, the mentors move on to a new class of mentees and Cogland will work closely with the second-year mentees. In addition to monthly check ins, Cogland will meet with all the mentees on in-service days and go over different material. They will focus on questions related to their specific assignments and not as much on broader educational questions.

Cogland is excited to connect veteran paraprofessionals with the new hires. She is hopeful that it will reinvigorate her veteran colleagues and make them feel more valued and respected.

"I want the new paraprofessionals to learn from someone who does the job well," Cogland says. "I like that the new hire will have a solid employee who knows the ropes and how the pieces fit together and understands the challenges and rewards of the position. People aren't sticking around long enough to see that this is a very rewarding job. Part of why they're not staying is because they're not properly supported."

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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).*

Unhappy staff are also likely to take more time off, Cogland points out. By giving them the information and training they need, the peer mentoring program boosts self-confidence and has new employees immediately feeling like members of the team.

### **Mentoring and staff retention**

Both Cogland and Lewis see ESP mentoring as an important part of addressing high turnover, which negatively affects everyone.

"The problem with high turnover is that now the teacher is not getting support with the students and the students do not have a familiar, reliable person to count on," Cogland says. "It's lose-lose for everyone, from the employee all the way to the district. You're spending an awful lot of time and money to hire people for the same jobs over and over again. It makes more sense to take the time and train someone rather than to rehire."

"Having the mentoring program will allow for new hires to be part of the fabric of the district from day one, making it even more difficult for the district to privatize, something they've tried twice before," Lewis adds.

Cogland also recognizes the brain drain that happens when ESPs leave the district.

"The employee has spent hours in professional development workshops and PLC meetings and all that knowledge goes out the door with them," Cogland says.



"You're starting from scratch again. It's difficult to maintain a standard level of care for the students. I'm hoping this mentoring program sets that standard. Parents should feel confident that their child's paraprofessional meets that standard of excellence."

### NEA grant funds program startup

While the program is funded by NEA in its initial phase, Cogland believes the value will be evident and in the next round of negotiations, she hopes that the program will be funded by the district.

"We're going to evaluate the program after the first year," Cogland says. "The numbers won't lie. If it gives our current staff a reason to be rejuvenated and helps reduce staff turnover, I think that's worth exploring. But if it's an experiment that doesn't work, it doesn't cost the district anything."

The Old Bridge ESP peer mentoring program is funded by NEA through June 2024.

"I'm sure there will be bumps along the way, but anything we can do is better than nothing," Cogland says.

The local association's efforts to be considerate of ESPs and their needs, and the collaboration with the district will provide a strong foundation for the mentoring program and ultimately benefit everyone involved.

Mentoring is a tried-and-true strategy with proven results. According to the Task Force on Public School Staff Shortages in New Jersey, which looked at the high turnover rate among all New Jersey school employees, expanding mentorship and professional development for early career educators is a top priority.

### ESP work matters

Cogland's enthusiasm and respect for her paraprofessional colleagues is clear. She is constantly working to build her skills and takes advantage of every NJEA and NEA training available to help her advocate for her colleagues and her students.

She strongly encourages other ESP colleagues to learn more about the peer mentoring program and to bring it to their districts. She points to the success of other ESP peer mentoring programs in Princeton and Livingston.

"It's really a sign of respect for our staff and the work we do," Cogland says. "Our work matters and we are an important part of our students' lives. Helping us to feel more comfortable and knowledgeable just makes good sense!"

To learn more about NEA's ESP peer mentoring program, go to [bit.ly/esp-mentors](https://bit.ly/esp-mentors) or scan the QR code on this page. 📄



## Continue learning with NEA

NEA's ESP Quality (ESPQ) Department develops, implements and promotes policies and professional supports that enhance the effectiveness of educational support professionals in meeting the needs of every student. These association-convened and educator-led programs support ESPs throughout their careers to build a culture of professional excellence and student success in public education. ESPs can take classes online, at their own pace, and earn certificates. Learn more at [bit.ly/nea-espq](https://bit.ly/nea-espq) or scan this QR Code.



## ESP pay is essential to addressing turnover

As important as mentoring is, ESP salaries must increase if districts are serious about addressing high turnover.

According to National Education Association data, New Jersey ranks fourth in the nation in ESP salaries, with an average of \$40,250 for full-time educational support professionals. The national average is \$32,837.

As NEA reported in an April 2023 article, *Living Wage Still Eludes School Support Professionals*, "There are many factors driving staff shortages—workload, lack of support—but better pay is one of the biggest. Without improvement, more ESPs will likely choose to leave the profession earlier than they had planned."



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# Want to improve your school's air and involve students?

## Now's your chance!

By Dorothy Wigmore

A chance to learn. A chance to improve school air. Those are the goals of a grant-funded project involving Rutgers University and the Healthy Schools Now (HSN) campaign—so far. Now they're looking for schools, staff and students to join them.

"We want to increase the awareness of the importance of indoor air quality among kids and teachers," says Jose Guillermo Cedeno Laurent, an assistant professor in the university's Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute (EOHSI). He's also involved with its Center for Environmental Exposures and Disease (CEED).

Students are in classrooms for hours every day, with teachers and support professionals, says HSN organizer Nikki Baker. HSN is a broad coalition of 80-plus organizations—including NJEA—dedicated to ensuring all students and staff learn and work in healthy and safe conditions.

"It's important to get students involved in what indoor air quality means for them and their learning spaces," Baker says. "They're our future. We want them to have some type of ownership over things that are going on and an understanding about the processes."

The learning opportunity lines up with New Jersey's 2022 requirement that school curricula deal with climate change and its impact—which should include air quality. The topic is particularly timely in light of the many wildfires across North America last summer and their impact on both outdoor and indoor air quality.

### Where did the ideas come from?

Baker is on the Rutgers' CEED Community Advisory Board.

"The collaboration with CEED has been very cool," she says. After an environmental justice outing, she suggested school indoor air is a related topic.

"It's not something radically different to what others have been doing," Cedeno explains. "Include information in the STEM curriculum about how to measure, then how to process the data from sensors for current conditions in the schools. Then, to complete things, if we find a problem, how to give them a solution."



Community volunteers assemble a Corsi-Rosenthal box.

The conditions to be assessed include temperature, relative humidity, mold, particles in the air, lighting and maybe noise. Rutgers will provide the measuring devices, likely in a convenient compact container.

HSN and Rutgers hope to find 20 schools to participate. There's a presentation for those interested.

### Corsi-Rosenthal boxes are one solution

Solutions include do-it-yourself air cleaners—Corsi-Rosenthal (C-R) boxes. They remove everything from viruses (including SARS-CoV-2 behind still-present COVID-19) and pollen to mold, dust and other airborne particles. For two years, people around the world have built them for schools, offices, homes and other places.

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*Dorothy Wigmore is a long-time health and safety specialist and New Jersey Work Environment Council consultant. She has worked in Canada, the U.S. and Mozambique, focusing on prevention and worker participation to solve job-related hazards.*

“The idea is to get a sample of different schools across the state and get their students involved in part of the research and making the Corsi-Rosenthal boxes, Baker explains. “Have Rutgers—with teachers or after-school co-ordinators—teach them how to record their own data and analyze it and build the air cleaners with supplies from the university.”

Studies show the boxes clean the air at least as well, if not better, than more expensive commercial units. Made with a box fan and four furnace MERV-13 filters, it takes less than a half-hour to make them with duct tape and the fan box cardboard.

Still, they can be improved.

“What would happen if we include a layer of activated charcoal into these devices?” Cedeno asks. Others have done it, but there is little data about the effects. “I think there’s enough interest to do it as a scientific or citizen science project.”

“Noise is a big issue too,” he adds. “We have heard from school districts that put HEPA-grade filters in every single classroom. And they’re turned off because of the noise. Then there’s no benefit.”

To deal with that, some people are making the air cleaners with multiple computer fans instead of a box fan. But they are not capable of the box fans’ multiple



## References and resources

### Efficient and Healthy Schools Program

Webinar: Guidance to control airborne infection risks: what schools need to know  
[bit.ly/3Z43g0w](https://bit.ly/3Z43g0w)

### Healthy Schools Now

[bit.ly/3EcJBBS](https://bit.ly/3EcJBBS)

### New Jersey Department of Health

Indoor Air Quality Standard, related documents  
[bit.ly/47K9lmR](https://bit.ly/47K9lmR)

### New York Times

“Covid Closed the Nation’s Schools. Cleaner Air Can Keep Them Open.”  
[bit.ly/3P5VoHg](https://bit.ly/3P5VoHg)

### School Library Journal

“Corsi-Rosenthal Boxes Help Clear the Air at Schools Across the Country”  
[bit.ly/3sll9vl](https://bit.ly/3sll9vl)

### Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers

Webinar: Back to School Safety – Collaborating on Solutions for Cleaner School Air  
[bit.ly/44LEweC](https://bit.ly/44LEweC)



## A to-do list for local health and safety committees

- Send a note to Nikki Baker at [nbaker@njwec.org](mailto:nbaker@njwec.org) or Cedeno at [memo.cedeno@rutgers.edu](mailto:memo.cedeno@rutgers.edu) to learn about the project.
- Use what’s learned to advocate for your schools to join the project, linking it to local experiences, the IAQ standard and other protections that prevent COVID-19 outbreaks already starting to increase in schools and other settings.
- Support NJEA members participating in the project, including evaluating the effect of improved air quality on students and staff.
- Use the project to introduce students to health and safety issues.
- Incorporate the project results in other IAQ efforts.
- Report results to NJEA’s statewide health and safety committee.
- Consider how to use the results in bargaining.

speeds. Dealing with the noise and control issues is a little further down the road, although Cedeno knows a Princeton High School student group that is working on them.

### What can health and safety committees do?

Indoor air quality (IAQ) is a huge concern for schools, even with the state’s IAQ standard.

Many NJEA health and safety committees have used the standard to deal with mold or construction hazards. Among other things, it sets limits on carbon dioxide (a fresh air indicator), temperature and some hazardous airborne chemicals, and requires maintenance and other prevention activities, a plan and a designated person to deal with it all. It applies whether or not the building has a proper ventilation system. However, it only applies to staff, not students.

Healthy air involves more and affects everyone in the school. It offers a chance for committees and union locals to work with parent groups, students, academics and others concerned about school conditions. [🔗](#)



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**What great minds can do.**

# Let's talk about the NJEA Convention!

By Vicki Serreino



It's that time of the year when we are getting ready for the NJEA Convention in Atlantic City. Behind the scenes, we are working hard to bring you the best possible experience and are so excited to welcome you to Atlantic City on Nov. 9 and 10. From the keynotes to our special film festival event to the expanded Wellness Areas to NJEA Main Street to the fantastic exhibitors to goat yoga (yes, the baby

goats are coming back!) to the hundreds of professional and career development workshops, you are not going to want to miss one minute of Convention this year.

As we gear up for the 2023 NJEA Convention, anticipation electrifies the air as each passing day bringing us closer to a truly unforgettable experience. Our exceptional keynote speakers are at the foundation of this excitement. They promise to add an extraordinary dimension to the convention experience.

The four keynote speakers—Spike Lee, Ani DiFranco, Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg and Alisha De Lorenzo—will not just be individuals on a stage, but bridges to a world of insight, diversity and empowerment. Their presence aligns seamlessly with the convention's theme: Learning, Equity, Justice, offering perspectives that pierce through divisions, weaving connections through the threads of art, film, music, culture and community.

Now, picture this—a film festival right in the heart of the convention! Join us as we premiere Voices Unveiled—the 2023 NJEA Convention Film Festival. This thoughtfully

curated event aims to amplify diverse experiences as we inspire empathy, provoke insightful discussion and deepen collective understanding of our shared humanity. It's a film festival that isn't just entertainment, but dives deep into topics that matter in education and society. Voices Unveiled will provide educators with the opportunity to engage in thought-provoking discussions and talk-back opportunities for select films.

But wait, there's more! The convention has a heart that cares about educators as whole human beings. Let's face it, educators aren't robots—they're real people with real challenges. That's where the Wellness Areas come in—mindfulness exercises, meditation sessions and yoga sessions (with and without baby goats). Talking about mental health isn't just an extra. It is an essential ingredient in the recipe for thriving educators. It's more than getting your stretch on. It's about recognizing that a healthy body feeds a healthy mind.

Throughout the exhibit floor, look for celebrity appearances, 10,000+ book giveaway from BookSmiles, book signings and more. It's going to be a whirlwind of experiences that encapsulate the essence of the event.

The 2023 NJEA Convention promises to be a blockbuster movie with a dash of indie charm. With Spike Lee at the helm, the spotlight will be on the power of stories in education. It isn't just a convention; it's a convergence of ideas, a fusion of film and pedagogy that will leave everyone buzzing with inspiration. And those Wellness Areas? They are the nurturing embrace that says, "We care about you."

Here's to an event that won't just tick boxes, but will ignite fires—fires of learning, of growth, and of a passion for education that will burn brighter than ever! We can't wait to see you in Atlantic City this November. 🇺🇸

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*Vicki Serreino is an associate director in the Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division and is the NJEA Convention Coordinator.*

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# MEET THE LOCAL NJEA PRESERVICE CHAPTERS!

BY CATHERINE GONZALEZ,  
NJEA PRESERVICE COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR

Aspiring educators across New Jersey organize local NJEA Preservice chapters at college and universities to access their association benefits on their campuses, and we are ready for another exciting year! Get involved on your campus to strengthen your resume, broaden your professional network and take advantage of your membership on-site!

## Kean University

**Local chapter's name:** Kean University Student Education Association

**Last year's highlight:** During the fall semester, we hosted the Tomorrow's Teachers Conference and supported over 200 attendees, faculty presenters, student panelists and keynote speakers at the conference.

**This year's aspiration:** Increase general body membership and launch community outreach initiatives.

**Contact:** [oliveiha@kean.edu](mailto:oliveiha@kean.edu)

**Anything else you'd like to share?** We typically try to meet once a month during the evening via Zoom or in-person, when available.

## Rutgers University – New Brunswick

**Local chapter's name:** Rutgers University Future Teachers Association

**Last year's highlight:** We worked closely with Lincoln Elementary School in New Brunswick by reading to students during Read Across America Week, running a book drive and creating gift bags for staff during Teacher Appreciation Week!

**This year's aspiration:** We are looking forward to working more with NJEA and expanding our returning membership!

**Contact:** [ftacontact@gmail.com](mailto:ftacontact@gmail.com)

**Anything else you'd like to share?** We meet biweekly on Mondays. View more information here at [linktr.ee/futureteachersassociation](https://linktr.ee/futureteachersassociation).

## Seton Hall University

**Local chapter's name:** New Jersey Student Education Association

**Last year's highlight:** Making professor appreciation gifts during the fall semester!

**This year's aspiration:** Cultivate a greater community of individuals who are passionate about education and create opportunities for growth.

**Contact:** [njsea@shu.edu](mailto:njsea@shu.edu)

**Anything else you'd like to share?** We would love to expand our NJSEA integration beyond the campus through supporting and collaborating with teachers who are Seton Hall alumni!

## Stockton University

**Local chapter's name:** Stockton New Jersey Preservice Education Association

**This year's aspiration:** This year, we plan to grow our club and make education the top priority in our lives. As future teachers, we want to help improve our education community and encourage more students to get their teaching certification and join NJEA.

**Contact:** [tierneyv@go.stockton.edu](mailto:tierneyv@go.stockton.edu)

**Anything else you'd like to share?** We welcome our new members with open arms, open minds and full support to tackle any classes or tests!

## The College of New Jersey

**Local chapter's name:** Student New Jersey Education Association

**Last year's highlight:** Our chapter won an award at the 2023 National Education Association Aspiring Educators Conference for our Pack-A-Backpack event, where we packed school supplies into 35 backpacks alongside other on-campus education clubs and donated them to Ewing High School.

**This year's aspiration:** Hosting Pack-A-Backpack again this fall, making it an annual event.

**Contact:** [snjea@tcnj.edu](mailto:snjea@tcnj.edu)

**Anything else you'd like to share?** We meet every other Thursday afternoon. Email us for more information!

Don't see your campus listed above? Reach out to [preservice@njea.org](mailto:preservice@njea.org), and we will put you in contact with your college or university's local affiliated NJEA Preservice chapter or assist you in your leadership journey by helping you start a new one.



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# THIS IS YOUR MONTH TO MAKE QUEER HISTORY!

By Kate Okeson and Amy Moran, Ph. D.

This year, we challenge YOU to make queer history in ways you haven't before! Consider adding some of these affirmations of LGBTQIA+ culture to your educational practices:

- Signal that you're open to others' authentic gender expression by adding your personal gender pronouns (PGPs) to your work e-signature. When writing your name on a whiteboard, add your pronouns to help normalize it for everyone.
- Put away "boys and girls" and "guys" when addressing students, and opt for something gender inclusive like "scholars," "scientists," "authors," or "wonderful people."
- People at home may be of any gender identity. When generalizing, put away "mom and dad," and try "your grown-ups," "your adult family members," or simply "your folks."
- Who is the Gender & Sexuality Alliance adviser at your school or in your district? Connect with them to see how you can support their work and how they and the GSA participants can help you guide your practices in ways that are even more LGBTQIA+ inclusive than last year.
- Remember: students can use the bathrooms and locker rooms and play on sports teams that align with their gender identity.
- Set a goal: If you included LGBTQIA+ themed literature, word problems, project options, or historic figures once per marking period last year, try doubling it this year.

## Co-creating for change

Build sustainable changes through inclusive practices in partnership with colleagues. Many schools utilize professional learning communities (PLCs) to increase dialogue around educational programming, especially around deploying new lessons and materials.

Build your own team by working with a colleague or two who are willing to partner in the work. Two educators talking about a new lesson and sharing resources leads to conversations that transform your own thinking and practice even before you get to the lesson with students. For example: Lead a lesson that combines reporting (ELA,

journalism) on recent science or medical discoveries (sciences) and evaluate who is being represented or underrepresented.

## Who has your back?

Resources that back up the LGBTQIA+ affirming work you are doing can smooth over rough moments when working on inclusive lessons and providing wider representative experiences for students. You have New Jersey's long history and commitment to equity in schools. Our curriculum mandates are law, are some of the most comprehensive nationally and are reflected in our state's Student Learning Standards.

Decades of research back the outcomes-based approaches for LGBTQIA+ inclusion in school resources and curricula. Positive LGBTQIA+ visibility, through books in classroom and school libraries, lessons and materials that specifically name queer and transgender writers, characters, contributors, and topics create environments where students are seen—positively—and that impacts school belonging, attendance, discipline and GPA.

Intentional, diverse representation in school materials is in line with New Jersey's Social Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies. Research also backs these foci as improving understanding, acceptance and respect in the classroom.

Know your rights. If you feel that something is not right, that you are being harassed or that negative attention is being paid to you, your students, or your work, reach out to your local association rep or local association president to seek support.

Further, know how the law protects people in places of public accommodation (public schools are places of public accommodation) by reviewing the fact sheets we have shared from the New Jersey Division on Civil Rights.

YES, you can do this! There are educators all over NJ ready to support you with guidance and ideas. Ask us at [rainbowconnectionnjea@gmail.com](mailto:rainbowconnectionnjea@gmail.com).

Let's enter the 2023-24 school year centering equity and justice. Remember to start with yourself. 



For more, and to find the fact sheets referenced in this article, scan this QR code.

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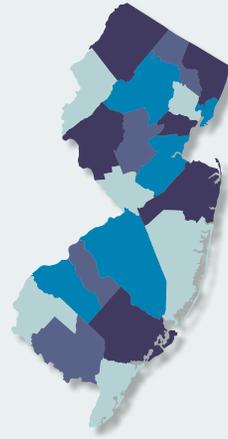
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# SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

Workshops and conferences

## HIGHLIGHTS

Gifted education, mock trial and more

### NEW JERSEY'S GIFTED TEACHERS SHAREFEST

The New Jersey Association for Gifted Children presents The New Jersey Gifted Teachers ShareFest on Tuesday, Oct. 10, 2023, from 9 a.m. to noon. ShareFest brings together educators from across the state to promote learning and sharing of innovative approaches to nurturing exceptional young minds. It aims to foster collaboration, idea exchange, and professional development among educators who cater to the needs of gifted students. Attendees can expect networking opportunities, discussions on best practices in gifted education, and cooperative work in cohorts throughout the session. The event is open to educators from elementary, middle and high school levels. You do not need to be a member of NJAGC to register for this event. Interested educators can register online at [njagc.org](http://njagc.org).

### LAW FAIR/LAW ADVENTURE FREE TEACHER WORKSHOP

Learn how the New Jersey State Bar Foundation's mock trial competitions can bring civics to life in your classroom. Join us for a free teacher in-person workshop at the New Jersey Law Center in New Brunswick. The Law Fair (for grades 3-6) and Law Adventure (for grades 7-8) workshop will be held Tuesday, Oct. 12 from 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. Breakfast and lunch included. Earn PD credits. Law Fair and Law Adventure help to fulfill civics education requirements, such as New Jersey Learning Standard 6.3.8 Civics PR.5 (engagement in simulated democratic processes which includes judicial proceedings). Visit [mocktrial.njsbf.org](http://mocktrial.njsbf.org) for more information about our Mock Trial Competitions and to register for workshops.

### HIGH SCHOOL MOCK TRIAL COMPETITION FREE TEACHER WORKSHOP

Registration for the New Jersey State Bar Foundation's free, annual Mock Trial workshop is now open. All mock trial teacher- and attorney-coaches are invited to register to prepare for the 2023-2024 Vincent J. Apruzzese High School Mock Trial Competition. The workshop will be held in person on Oct. 26 from 9 a.m. to 1:50 p.m. at the New Jersey Law Center. Breakfast included. Earn PD Credits. Visit [mocktrial.njsbf.org](http://mocktrial.njsbf.org) for more information about our Mock Trial Competitions and to register for workshops.

### MOCK ELECTION AND PD FROM THE N.J. CENTER FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

State The New Jersey Center for Civic Education is offering Free Professional Development Workshops for Teachers and Student Civic Events at Rutgers University in Piscataway.

Below is a listing of programs from October and November. Programs for the remainder of the year will appear in the November Review. For the entire year's listings, additional information, and to register, go to [civiced.rutgers.edu/events](http://civiced.rutgers.edu/events).

#### Student Mock Election

Oct. 23-Nov. 7, Online  
Visit [njmockelection.org](http://njmockelection.org).

#### NJ History and Government (for upper elementary grades)

**We the People**  
(for middle school grades)

Nov. 7  
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<b>Furniture-Mattresses</b>	<b>800-631-0286</b>	Real Estate-Buy/Sell	(see website)
Home Security Sys.	888 995-2661	Solar Electricity	800-558-1920
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# Do you have a financial plan? NJEA can help!



October is financial planning month. NJEA and NEA Member Benefits partners can help you develop a plan for a secure financial future for you and your family.

## NJEA INCOME PROTECTION PROGRAM

### *Disability and Critical Illness Insurance*

Provided by Prudential, this program is uniquely designed for educators and ensures you will still receive a paycheck after an injury or illness, which includes pregnancy and mental health. Call 800-727-3414 (Prompt #3) to speak to a representative from Educators Insurance Services or visit [educators-insurance.com](http://educators-insurance.com).

## NEA LIFE INSURANCE

You have free insurance included with your membership. Additional life insurance policies are also available to ensure that your loved ones are protected. Name your beneficiary on your free life insurance policy or learn about additional protections by contacting the NEA Member Service Center at 800-637-4636 or visit [neamb.com/start](http://neamb.com/start).



### What is income protection and why is it important?

Attend our free webinar on Nov. 1 at 4:30 p.m. Register at [njea.org/mbwebinars](http://njea.org/mbwebinars).

## NEA RETIREMENT PROGRAM

Make sure you're saving enough for retirement.

Find retirement planning resources and NEA Retirement Specialists to help you set yourself up for a secure retirement at [neamb.com/retirement-goals](http://neamb.com/retirement-goals).



**FACEBOOK:** Follow @[NJEAMemberBenefits](https://www.facebook.com/NJEAMemberBenefits) on Facebook for discounts and services that save you money.

### Holiday Shopping Hacks and Car-Buying Tips

Attend our free webinar on Nov. 15 at 4:30 p.m.

Register at [njea.org/mbwebinars](http://njea.org/mbwebinars).



For even more information, resources, and discounts: [memberbenefits.njea.org](http://memberbenefits.njea.org)

Questions? Email Beth Buonsante at [bbuonsante@njea.org](mailto:bbuonsante@njea.org).

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# Boardwalk Run & Fun Walk

FRIDAY, NOV. 10, 2023 | 9 A.M. | RUN AND WALK

Clip, complete, & mail to:

**NJEA Boardwalk Run**

NJEA c/o WSFS  
PO Box 13661  
Philadelphia PA 19101-3661

**Deadline for pre-entries Oct. 30**

Make checks payable to "NJEA"

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

(as of 11/9/2023)

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Local Association \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_ County \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Shirt size (Circle):    XXL   XL   L   M

This entry is for:

Please choose one:    NJEA Member    Non-member   |    Female    Male   |    Run    Walk

Pre-entry runners may pick up their numbers – and post-entry competitors may register for the race – at special Race Booth in the Convention Center on Thursday, Nov. 9 all day or at Registration Table at Boardwalk Convention Hall lobby at 8 a.m. on Friday, Nov. 10. Registration for the 5,000-meter Run closes at 8:30 a.m. on Friday Nov. 10. Shirts must be picked up prior to the race or after the race on Friday, Nov. 10.

In consideration for accepting my entry, I, for myself, my heirs, and administrators, waive and release forever any and all rights and claims for damages I may have against NJEA, its agents and employees, the City of Atlantic City, and any and all participating sponsors and supporters. I also release the above named for all claims of damages, demands, and actions in any actions in any manner due to any personal injuries, property damage, or death sustained as a result of my traveling to and from and my participation in said race. I attest and certify that I am physically fit and have sufficiently trained for the completion of this event. Further, I hereby grant full permission to any and all of the foregoing to use my likeness for any purpose whatsoever.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's signature (if under age 18) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

FOR NJEA USE ONLY     Cash     Check     Number

5,000-meter race (3.1 miles)

**Course:** Traffic-free scenic boardwalk in front of Atlantic City Convention Hall

First NJEA male and first NJEA female runner will receive awards.

Awards ceremony immediately following race at Boardwalk Hall.

Please pick up number on Thursday, if possible, at the Boardwalk Run Booth.

**Age group awards to top three in these categories (male and female):**

- Junior up to age 19
- Age 20-29
- Age 30-39
- Age 40-49
- Age 50-59
- Age 60-69
- Age 70-79
- Age 80+



#### REGISTRATION FEES

**Pre-register:**

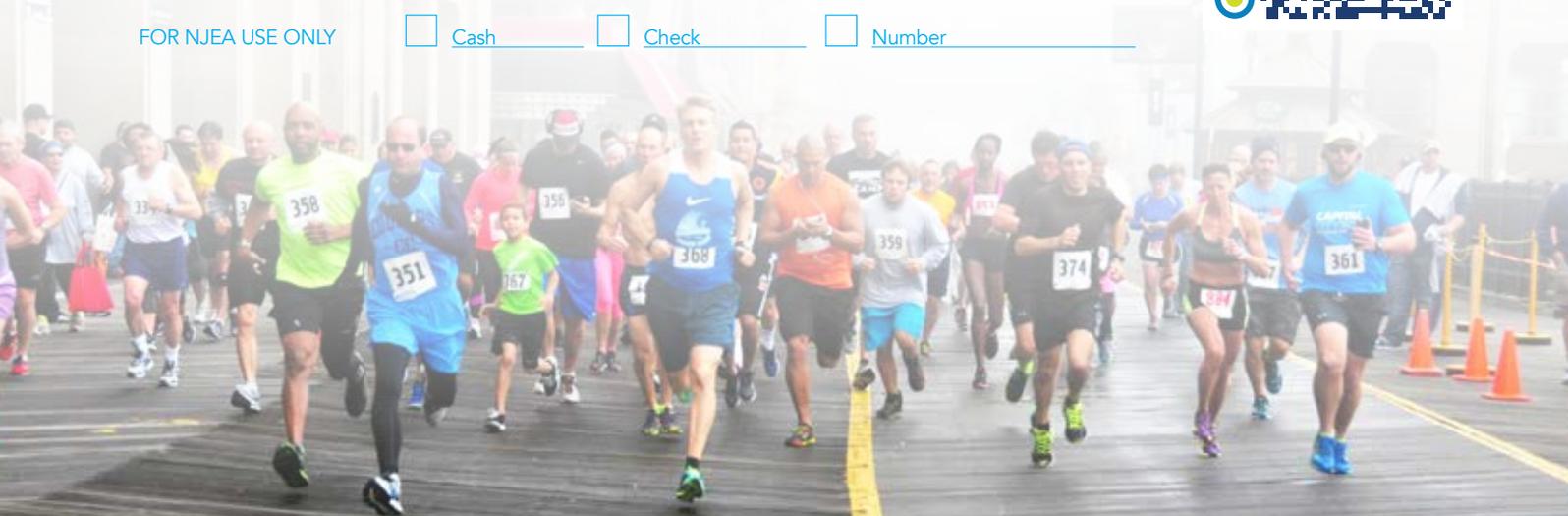
**\$25** includes running shirt

**\$15** No T-shirt

**Register at Convention:**

**\$30** includes running shirt

**Scan below**  
for online registration



# NJ REA | PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

## PENSION FUNDING AND THE COLA

Since the Fiscal Year 2024 state budget includes a third full payment to the pension system, many members are wondering if a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) will soon be reinstated.

While the Murphy administration has kept its promise to fully fund the pension, neither the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) nor the Teachers' Pension and Annuity Fund (TPAF) are projected to get to the target ratio necessary to reinstate the COLA soon.

Chapter 78 requires that the COLA for each of the state's pension systems is suspended until the funds reach a "targeted funded ratio." A pension fund's funded status refers to the ratio of assets to liabilities. The funded status of each pension fund is calculated separately and is reported in the fund's actuarial report. For the COLA to be reinstated in a pension fund, the funded status must reach 80%.

When the state made the first full payment to the pension system, Local PERS was funded at 67.6% and TPAF was funded at 41.3%. As of the most recent pension valuations for the 2022 fiscal year, Local PERS was funded at 67.9% and TPAF was funded at 42.1%. Neither fund was much closer to the 80% target. This is partly because the financial markets had a bad year in Fiscal Year 2022. But the larger factor is that the state dug a deep hole by not paying into the pension for two decades and then only partially meeting its full actuarially required contribution for some time after that.

The long-term damage caused by decades of underfunding the state pensions, and its impact on the COLA, illustrates the need for all future state leaders to fully fund the pension systems even after each of them reaches its 80% funded status.

## Around the counties

*For questions and/or concerns, or if your county is not listed, please check your county newsletter or reach out to your county REA for more information. For trip details, check your county newsletter.*

### BERGEN COUNTY REA

**Dec. 12:** Winter meeting/luncheon at Seasons Catering in Washington Township. Cost is \$50. To attend, call Randy Allshouse at 973-460-1262 by Dec. 2.

### CUMBERLAND COUNTY REA

**Dec. 6:** Holiday luncheon at NJ Motorsports Park in Millville. Cost is \$33. To attend, call Pamela Garwood at 856-392-6909 by Nov. 22.

### ESSEX COUNTY REA

**Oct. 18:** Fall meeting/luncheon at Hanover Manor in Hanover. Cost is \$38. To attend, call Andrea Boseman at 973-676-2368 by Oct. 4.

### GLOUCESTER COUNTY REA

**Dec. 5:** Holiday meeting/luncheon. Save the date and look for additional information in county newsletter. To attend, call Margery Walsh at 856-381-1123.

### HUNTERDON COUNTY REA

**Dec. 14:** meeting/ brunch at Mountain View Chalet in Asbury. Cost is \$35. To attend, call Joyce Kucyn at 908-479-6656 by Dec. 4.

### MIDDLESEX COUNTY REA

**Oct. 19:** Fall meeting/luncheon at The Grand Marquis on Old Bridge. Cost is \$43. To attend, contact Susan Jaysnovitch at 732-925-1606 or [andyjace@aol.com](mailto:andyjace@aol.com) by Oct. 13. Program will be presented by several senior citizen specialized agencies, including Associate Director for NJEA Research Michael Salerno who will give a pension and benefits update.

**Dec. 7:** Holiday meeting/luncheon at The Grand Marquis on Old Bridge. Cost is \$43. To attend, contact Susan Jaysnovitch at 732-925-1606 or [andyjace@aol.com](mailto:andyjace@aol.com) by Nov. 25. Program will include a performance by a local elementary school choral group.

**OCEAN COUNTY REA**

Oct. 12: Fall meeting/luncheon at Clarion Hotel in Toms River. Cost is \$28. To attend, call Barbara Miller at 732-854-2253 by Sept. 27.

Dec. 6: Holiday meeting/luncheon at Clarion Hotel in Toms River. Cost is \$28. To attend, call Barbara Miller at 732-854-2253 by Nov. 20.

**PASSAIC COUNTY REA**

Dec. 5: Holiday meeting/luncheon at The Brownstone in Paterson. Cost is \$35. To attend, call Kitty Sausa at 201-410-1325.

**SALEM COUNTY REA**

Oct. 16: Fall meeting/luncheon at St. John's Episcopal Church Parish Hall in Salem. Cost is \$17. To attend, call Rosemma Ward at 856-467-4795 by Oct. 9.

Dec. 4: Holiday meeting/luncheon at Woodstown Diner in Woodstown. Cost is \$17. To attend, call Rosemma Ward at 856-467-4795 by Nov. 27. Program to include a performance by the Woodstown High School Chamber Choir.

**UNION COUNTY REA**

Oct. 17: Fall meeting/luncheon at Costa Del Sol in Union Township. Cost is \$35. To register, go to the fall edition of Bytes-UCREA Newsletter. Questions? Call Pat Alt at 732-382-6261.

**WARREN COUNTY REA**

Dec. 6: Holiday meeting/luncheon at Hawk Pointe Golf Club in Washington. Registration required by Nov. 29. Luncheon is \$30. To register, go to [warrencountyrea.org/meetings](http://warrencountyrea.org/meetings).



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# NJEA Delegate Assembly

The NJEA Delegate Assembly met on Sept. 18, 2021, at the Doubletree Somerset Hotel and Conference Center, Somerset New Jersey at 9:30 a.m.

Roll was taken. There were 113 out of 127 delegates present. Alternates were seated as follows: Warren for Dziob (Bergen); Lamb for Casey (Camden); Meyers for Zahn (Camden); Weatherington for Greenfield (Essex), Kiefer for Gitto (Hunterdon); Carpenter for Duncan (Mercer); Dewitt for Watkins (Monmouth); Ressler for Finner (Morris), Donnerstag for Pizzuto (Ocean); Sims-Scott for Baker (Passaic); Graham for Kebrdle (Passaic); Wilson for Temprano (Passaic); Perez-Gani for Palin (Union).

Absent was representative Pildis (Camden), Cannella (Essex), Crawford (Hudson), Pastore, (Hudson), Reilly (Monmouth), Griffin (Ocean), Fresse (Passaic), Raye (Sussex), Sawey (Sussex), Smith (Sussex), Lawler (Union), Farhat, (Higher Ed), Shibli (Non-Classroom).

## President's report

NJEA President Sean M. Spiller announced that New Jersey has once again been ranked as having the number one ranked schools in the nation. This being the first in-person DA since the start of the pandemic, Spiller also recognized the work the association has been able to complete in virtual spaces. He indicated that further conversations about the utilization of virtual spaces will be had to ensure we are engaging as many members as possible.

Spiller highlighted the association's work the state regarding vaccinations and mandates in our schools. Spiller recognized multiple local and county associations for advocacy work around collective bargaining, defense of members' rights, community outreach, and labor/management collaboration. Spiller highlighted the work of the NJEA Pandemic Relief Fund and the association's various state partnerships.

## Vice president's report

Vice President Steve Beatty discussed concerns with the decreasing numbers of college students pursuing teacher certification as well as the growing shortage among educational support staff. Accordingly, he reported on the Educator Identification Recruitment Mentoring and Retention initiatives and the association's work with Preservice members. He described the Preservice Academy program. He reported conversations that are ongoing with other education stakeholder groups, the Principals and Supervisors, the Superintendents, School

Business Administrators, the PTO, who are excited to see how the pilot turns out.

Beatty reported on the ACES taskforce (Adverse Childhood Experiences) pilot program, conversations between NJEA and the Commissioner of Higher Education and successes of the 200,000 conversations initiative.

## Secretary-treasurer's report

Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson delivered the NJEA fiscal report.

## Nondelegate speakers

Cathy Jakositz (Union) spoke about a parent's right to choose in light of mandates around COVID and her concern that civil liberties are being stripped away. She asked that there be no mandates and for individuals to have a right to choose.

## Executive director's report

Executive Director Steve Swetsky spoke on the topic of the NJEA being a "justice centered union, connecting it to the 200,000 Conversations initiative, the Early Career Networks, the Member of Color network and Patriots Alliance. Swetsky spoke of the importance of reelecting Gov. Phil Murphy. He provided an update on the Labor Management Collaborative and the NEA grant associated with it.

## Reports of committees without recommendations

### *Elections Committee*

Elections Committee member Diane MacKay, Hudson, delivered the report. There were no questions.

## Reports of Committees with Recommendations

### *Urban Education Committee*

Urban Education Committee Chair Todd Pipkin, presented the report and moved its recommendation "that the NJEA Urban Educator Activist Award be established and awarded based on the following criteria, nomination, and selection process." The Delegate Assembly book for this D.A. meeting contains those processes.

Carolyn McKinney-Croix, Passaic, moved the report, and it was seconded by a member of the delegation. Motion passed.

### *Women in Education*

WIE Committee member Sarah Cardillo-Reichenbecher, Monmouth, presented the report. Barbara Rheault, Atlantic County, moved "that the NJEA Elizabeth A. Allen Women

in Education Award criteria, nomination and selection process be amended as follows: (Additions in bold face and underlined; deletions in brackets and struck out) Nominations with the required materials must be submitted by [~~Jan. 4~~] **Nov. 1** to the NJEA Women in Education Committee staff contact, [~~NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues,~~] **New Jersey Education Association**, 180 W. State St., P.O. Box 1211, Trenton, NJ 08607. The award(s) shall be presented at the NJEA [~~Teaching and Learning Symposium~~] **Equity Alliance Conference** or, in years when that conference is not held, at another appropriate NJEA conference. The [venue where the award will be presented will be published annually, along with the] request for award nominations, including purpose, criteria, and nomination process, **will be published** through appropriate Association communications media no later than [~~Nov. 1~~] **Oct. 1.**"

Seconded by a member of the delegation. Motion passed.

#### **New Business Items**

##### **NBI 1**

Bryan Reilly, NJEA Preservice president, moved NJEA establish a subcommittee task force on student college debt comprised of members whose purpose shall include but not be limited to: 1. Identifying ways to minimize or eliminate current or future student loan debt carried by New Jersey public school (preK-grade12) and higher education employees; 2. Addressing the cost of college tuition as it relates to the educator pipeline and identifying and recruiting educators, particularly educators of color. 3. Recommending new or updated policies and/or legislation, if required, to address this issue; 4. Obtaining input from other appropriate committees as needed. This task force shall report back to the Delegate Assembly no later than the March 2022 D.A. meeting.

Motion was duly seconded. Motion carried.

##### **NBI 2**

Daniel Epstein, Somerset, moved "that NJEA shall conduct a feasibility study for a sustainable disaster relief fund to provide swift financial aid for members who experience losses due to disasters."

Motion was duly seconded. Motion carried.

##### **NBI 3**

Lori Schorno, Morris, moved "that NJEA Leadership and NEA Directors lobby NEA to seek a different state

or hold the 2022 NEA RA virtually as a result of legislative actions taken by Texas that limit access to reproductive rights and restricts a woman's right to choose.

Motion was duly seconded. Motion carried.

##### **NBI 4**

Chrissy Kosar, Gloucester, moved "that NJEA will encourage locals to utilize FAST funds to bring members and families together to understand the importance of honesty in education and teaching the truth. NJEA will contact all local leaders as well as targeted member activists to make them aware of these funds and encourage their participation. Additionally, NJEA will provide informational resources about the Zinn Education #TeachTruth campaign and the NJ21United Honesty in Education Toolkit and resources to provide a launching point for this work."

Motion was duly seconded. NBI was referred to the Human and Civil Rights Committee.

##### **For the Good of the Order**

Stacey Salerno, Cape May, reminded everyone to register for the NJEA Convention.

Kerri Lee Farrell, Morris asked if the NBI's that were submitted early could be printed in advance or loaded to GoodReader.

Daniel Segal, Mercer, asked that we have gender neutral bathrooms at all NJEA events.

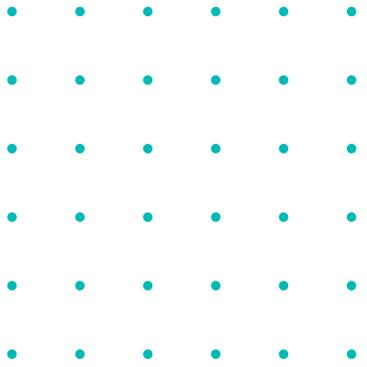
Melissa Tomlinson, Atlantic, informed the body that the toolkit can be found at [nj21united.org](http://nj21united.org).

Secondly, she reported at convention there is going to be an energizing young voter's program that is being presented at convention. She encouraged everyone to send one member.

##### **Motion to adjourn**

Barbara Rheault (Atlantic), moved to adjourn. The motion was duly seconded. The motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 12:38 p.m.

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# OCTOBER & beyond

In-person or virtual status of any meeting is subject to change.

**OCT 11**

**WEDNESDAY**

**Executive Committee**

**NOV 09-10**

**THURS & FRI**

**NJEA Convention**

**JAN 05**

**FRIDAY**

**Executive Committee**

**OCT 20-21**

**FRI & SAT**

**Jim George Collective Bargaining Summit**

**NOV 11**

**SATURDAY**

**Delegate Assembly**

**JAN 06**

**SATURDAY**

**Delegate Assembly**

**NOV 08-09**

**WED & THURS**

**NJREA Convention**

**DEC 06**

**WEDNESDAY**

**Executive Committee**

**JAN 12-13**

**FRI & SAT**

**Equity Alliance Conference**

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

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 Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months  
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PS Form 3526-EL July 2014 (Page 1 of 4) (See instructions page 4) PSN: 7530-03-000-9015 PRIVACY NOTICE: See our privacy policy on www.usps.com

13. Publication Title <b>NJEA REVIEW</b>		*4. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below <b>June 2023</b>	
15. Extent and Nature of Circulation <b>Eleven Times a Year</b>		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
a. Total Number of Copies (Net press run)		<b>185,535</b>	<b>182,038</b>
b. Legitimate Paid and/or Requested Distribution (By mail and outside the mail)		<b>182,806</b>	<b>181,806</b>
(1) Outside County Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions (based on PS Form 3541, include direct orders received from recipient, advertising, and Internet requests from recipient, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)			
(2) In-County Paid/Requested Mail Subscriptions (based on PS Form 3541, include direct orders received from recipient, advertising, and Internet requests from recipient, advertiser's proof copies, and exchange copies)			
(3) Sales Through Carriers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Paid or Requested Distribution Outside USPS®			
(4) Requested Copies Distributed by Other Mail Classes Through the USPS (e.g., First-Class Mail®)		<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
c. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 15b (1), (2), (3), and (4))		<b>182,810</b>	<b>181,810</b>
d. Non-requested Distribution (By mail and outside the mail)			
(1) Outside County Non-requested Copies (based on PS Form 3541, include 24000 copies, requires new 3-year old request unless by a premium bulk sale and requests include association requests, names obtained from business directories, lists, and other sources)			
(2) In-County Non-requested Copies (based on PS Form 3541, include similar copies, requires new 3-year old request unless by a premium bulk sale and requests include association requests, names obtained from business directories, lists, and other sources)		<b>2,725</b>	<b>228</b>
(3) Non-requested Copies (Delivered Through the USPS by Other Classes of Mail (e.g., First-Class Mail, registered copies mailed in excess of 100, mail insured or Standard Mail® or Package Services rates)			
(4) Non-requested Copies (Delivered Outside the Mail (include pickup stands, sale stands, subscriptions, and other sources))			
e. Total Non-requested Distribution (Sum of 15d (1), (2), (3), and (4))		<b>2,725</b>	<b>228</b>
f. Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15e)		<b>185,535</b>	<b>182,038</b>
g. Copies not Distributed (See instructions to Publishers III, page F3)			
h. Total (Sum of 15f and g)		<b>185,535</b>	<b>182,038</b>
i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c divided by 15f times 100)		<b>98.53%</b>	<b>99.87%</b>

\* If you are claiming electronic copies, go to the 15b on page 3. If you are not claiming electronic copies, skip to line 17 on page 3.

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15. Electronic Copy Circulation

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b. Total Requested and Paid (Line 15a) + Requested Paid Electronic Copies (Line 15a): **0**

c. Total Requested Copy Distribution (Line 15c) + Requested Paid Electronic Copies (Line 15a): **0**

d. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Both Paid & Electronic Copies) (15c divided by 15f times 100): **98.53%**

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17. Publication of Statement of Ownership for a Requester Publication is required and will be printed in the **October 2023** issue of this publication.

18. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: **Patrick Ruzmaker, Editor** Date: **9/21/2023**

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions (including fines and imprisonment) and/or civil sanctions (including civil penalties).

# UNDERSTANDING NJEA PAC'S ENDORSEMENT PROCESS



On Nov. 7—and sooner for those who choose early voting or vote by mail—New Jersey voters will elect 120 state legislators as well as hundreds of candidates for county and local office.

Endorsing and electing candidates who support NJEA's goals significantly increases the association's ability to pass favorable legislation and stop destructive legislation. Recently, that favorable legislation has included a new law that expands sick leave to include the use of sick days to care for children and other loved ones. It also includes successful legislation to ensure just cause protections for educational support professionals (ESPs) and relief from the high costs of health insurance. Our PAC endorsement process also helped elect a governor who is fully funding the state's pension systems after decades of underfunding.

The NJEA Political Action Committee (PAC) prides itself on having a clear, fair and democratic process leading up to the endorsement of a candidate. But how exactly does the PAC endorsement process work?

## **It begins with screening committees that evaluate candidates.**

PAC screening committees are established for each legislative district. Each committee includes members of the NJEA PAC Operating Committee from their respective counties and the NJREA legislative county chairperson. Screening committees also include NJEA Government Relations Committee and Congressional Contact Committee members from counties involved, the county president, and NJEA Executive Committee members from the counties involved.

Prior to meeting candidates, the committee reviews completed NJEA questionnaires submitted by the candidates. If a candidate is an incumbent, their voting record is examined.

Each candidate screening session lasts up to an hour, allowing time for candidates to make a presentation and answer questions. Questions are based upon issues relevant to public education and advocacy for the people who work in public schools. They may also cover issues and concerns specific to the membership of the counties within the legislative districts involved.

## **Next, the NJEA PAC Operating Committee considers the screening committees' recommendations.**

The screening committee recommends endorsements to the NJEA PAC Operating Committee.

To make that recommendation, the screening committee discusses the merits of each candidate. The committee may recommend the endorsement of one candidate in a race, recommend no endorsement, or recommend a "your choice" option, which indicates that both candidates are in agreement with NJEA's key goals and positions.

The 125-member NJEA PAC Operating Committee consists of NJEA's officers, the NJEA Executive Committee, the county association presidents, the NJEA Government Relations Committee, the Congressional Contact Committee, the presidents of NJREA and NJEA Preservice, the NJREA legislative chairperson, and two NJREA regional legislative chairs.

The NJEA PAC Operating Committee reviews the recommendations and votes to determine who will become NJEA PAC-endorsed candidates.

## **The outcome: Your interests as a public school employee are represented.**

In the judgement of your fellow NJEA members, who were representing your interests as a public school employee, the candidates they ultimately endorsed deserve the votes of NJEA members. That distinction—your interests as a public school employee—is important.

The members of the NJEA PAC Operating Committee, as well as the members of each county's PAC screening committees, are school nurses, librarians, bus drivers, custodians, classroom teachers, higher education faculty, school social workers, paraprofessionals, retirees—in short, they come from every NJEA membership category.

Those members represent a wide range of political interests, are members of different political parties, and even hold opposing viewpoints on some of the most controversial issues of our time. Despite that, the issues that unite them for an NJEA PAC endorsement are school funding, collective bargaining, racial and social justice, standardized testing, pensions, health benefits, the health and safety of students and staff, and the myriad other issues that matter to public school employees like you.

Pages 31 and 32 of this edition of the list the candidates who earned endorsement this year. 



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