

NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

# REVIEW

NOVEMBER  
2023

njea.org



an education and advocacy resource

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ASSOCIATION

*Military  
veterans in  
education*





# 2024 Winter Leadership Conference

## SOUTH

**JAN. 26-27, 2024**  
HARRAH'S – ATLANTIC CITY  
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: DEC. 8

## NORTH

**FEB. 23-24, 2024**  
SHERATON – PARSIPPANY  
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: JAN. 12

## CENTRAL

**MAR. 22-23, 2024**  
CROWNE PLAZA – PRINCETON  
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: FEB. 9

## WORKSHOPS:

1. Presidents' Roundtable
2. AR: Key to a Strong Organization
3. Legal Issues Affecting School Employees
4. Grieve, Don't Gripe: Contract Enforcement
5. Preparing for Negotiations: Collective Bargaining
6. Salary Guides: What All Members Should Know
7. Membership Chair Training
8. Professional Practice as an Organizing Tool
9. Organizing for Power **NEW**
10. Leadership Development 101: A Beginner's Guide for Association Leaders **NEW at WLC**
11. Civil Rights and Racial Justice: History and Current Issues in Education **NEW**
12. Bridging the Member Involvement Gap **NEW**
13. Politics is YOUR Superpower **NEW**
14. Nuts and Bolts for Local LAT Chairs **NEW**
15. Level-Up Your Local Through Collaborative Leadership **NEW**

➔ **[njea.org/WLC](https://njea.org/WLC)**

For more information and registration materials,  
see your local president or visit the website.





NJEA hosted a table to greet Team NJEA members at the Komen More than Pink Walk at Great Adventure. From left: NJEA staff members Verlencia Waring, Tamanyka Booker, Sway Gilbert, Angel Boose, Jeanette Rodriguez, Sandi Martin and LaQuia Norment.



On Oct. 8, NJREA celebrated the leadership of former NJREA President Judy Perkins (l), seen here with her sister, Nancy Kasper, a teacher and member of the Spring Lake Education Association.



In August, the Union Township Education Association (UTEA) sponsored a community block party at Rabkin Park. From left: UTEA VP Rich D'Avanzo, Union Twp. Asst. Bus. Admin. Bill Reyes, UTEA President Ann Margaret Shannon, parent Marina Reilly (UTEA Community Schools Committee member), and UTEA Executive-at-Large for Elementary Kristin Nunes. Read more at [njea.org/utea-block](http://njea.org/utea-block).

# FEATURES



## 20 | MILITARY VETERANS IN EDUCATION

Many NJEA members have served, or are serving, in the U.S. armed forces. Many of these members are part of the NJEA Patriots Alliance. This article puts the spotlight on four NJEA members who are veterans and one who continues to serve.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



## 24 | THE FIGHT AGAINST ADDICTION

The fight against opioid and alcohol addiction has brought Bordentown Regional High School students and first responders together to collaborate on a comprehensive grant project called Bridging the Gap. The addiction and recovery grant provides Narcan training for first responders in Burlington County. To put a human face on addiction, videos featuring interviews conducted by BRHS students have become part of the training.

BY SHARON MILANO



## 28 | STILL WILD AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

After a three-year hiatus caused by the pandemic, Wild about Cumberland! returned in spring 2023, bigger than before. Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries (CU Maurice River), in conjunction with the Bayshore Center at Bivalve, collaborate in this hands-on learning opportunity, which is offered free of charge to Cumberland County students and schools.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



## 30 | AI IN THE CLASSROOM?

Both teachers and students recognize the power and challenges presented by artificial intelligence platforms such as ChatGPT. At River Dell High School, three students surveyed their schoolmates to see what they already knew about ChatGPT, if and how they used it, and the concerns they had.

DR. GLEN COLEMAN, NAOMI ROTH, ISABELLA ITURRATE AND TESSA KLEIN



## 34 | JOIN YOUR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

NJEA is affiliated with many professional and career associations. Find out how you can become involved with the ones most suited to your work.



# COLUMNS

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 7***Honoring our veterans***THE ADVOCATE 9***Resources for your local association***THE BULLETIN BOARD 10***Cool stuff to check out***EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT****PROFESSIONALS 12***A passion for activism***LAW AND YOU 15***Bus drivers and Clearinghouse***THE NJEA REPORT 16***Education in the news***HEALTH AND SAFETY 42***Slips, trips and falls***RETIRED MEMBERS 44***News and events***NJEA PRESERVICE 47***Literary characters and students***RAINBOW CONNECTION 49***LBGTQIA+ matters in our schools***SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY 50***Workshops and conferences***MEMBER BENEFITS 53***Get your money's worth***STAFF NEWS 55***Hires and promotions***COMING UP 57***What's next at NJEA***FINAL EXAM 58***Educators involved in politics?*

## THE NUMBER 218



**The number of workshops and special sessions available over the course of the two-day NJEA Convention**

The NJEA Convention is the largest professional development gathering of its kind in the world. The 218 workshops and special sessions do not even include the opportunities to interact with publishers, colleges and universities, and vendors in the Exhibit Hall, as well other professional and career development opportunities.

**Sources:** NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division.

## GOOD NEWS

### First in the nation—again

US News and World Report ranks New Jersey's PreK-12 public schools number one in the nation.

**Source:** US News and World Report, 2023.  
[bit.ly/usnews-njschools](https://bit.ly/usnews-njschools)



Sandi Wilcox, a paraprofessional in Burlington County and the 2023 NJEA ESP of the Year, is a Marine veteran. In this month's Review, we tell the story of four NJEA members who are veterans and one who continues to serve.

**PHOTO BY**  
Kathryn Coulibaly

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NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

# REVIEW

180 W. State St., P.O. Box 1211, Trenton, NJ 08607-1211 • 609-599-4561 • [NJEA.org](http://NJEA.org)

**President: Sean M. Spiller | Vice President: Steve Beatty | Secretary-Treasurer: Petal Robertson**

**Executive Director: Kevin Kelleher | Deputy Executive Director: Denise Graff Policastro**

## 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 \$32. General professional (outside N.J. public education employment): \$250. Subscribing \$250. Only those in education positions in N.J. public schools and colleges are eligible for active membership. Payment of annual dues entitles a member to receive the *Review* for one year, from January through December. Dues include \$5 for the *NJEA Review*. \*Low-earner threshold 2023-24 is \$22,500.





# PRESIDENT'S *Message*

## Honoring our veterans, and advocating for their rights

As we enter the month of November, we make it a priority to honor the veterans who have served our country and fought to preserve our democracy.

According to the Military State Policy Source, there are more than 10,102 active-duty service members and 19,567 National Guard and reserve members. More than 360,000 veterans call the Garden State home.

Across the state and throughout the year, NJEA members organize programs and activities to honor our veterans and support active and reserve military, their spouses and children. But in November, we draw special attention to the contributions of our veterans.

In this issue, you will read about five NJEA members who have served—or are serving—in our military.

As we honor Veterans Day, we also take our responsibility to our electoral process and the future of our democracy very seriously. It is fitting that Election Day and Veterans Day both fall in November.

NJEA's political engagement has undoubtedly benefited military veterans. Thanks to NJEA's vigorous advocacy, certificated New Jersey public school employees who have served in the military receive four years of service credit. This helps boost their pensions and seniority. While this credit currently only exists for certificated staff, NJEA continues to advocate for educational support professionals to receive the same benefits at the bargaining table and in the Legislature.

Because these benefits were fought for—and won—decades ago, and many of the people who lobbied their legislators for them have retired or passed on, people tend to forget that no one gave these benefits to us as NJEA members or military veterans. We have had to advocate for every benefit. That's why, as this month's Final Exam column on Page 58 explains, unions like NJEA must be involved in politics. The power of union members united amplifies the voices of millions of working people over the billions of dollars in the hands of a few powerful billionaires.

As Sandi Wilcox, the 2023 Burlington County Educational Support Professional of the Year, and a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, explains, there is a strong connection between the military and education when it comes to the importance of political involvement.

"One thing my union involvement has influenced is my understanding about the impact that politics has on all of our lives," Wilcox says. "It's so important that we are all knowledgeable about the politicians we elect and that we choose people who align with our values and who support public education. Politics can affect your job, no matter what the job is."

This November, as you vote and volunteer on political campaigns, attend the NJEA Convention to network and learn, and as you organize activities to honor the service of our veterans, I hope you will reflect on the intersection of all of these priorities. It often feels like we are juggling so many different responsibilities as educators and union members, but the truth is, all of these things are deeply interconnected and vital to building the kinds of communities and the kind of state that we all want to see.

In Unity,



## SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

@SpillerforNJEA: NJEA's Members of Color (MOC) Network is going all in on this November's election. If you are an NJEA member, can I count on you to sign up for one of these events or find another way to support our NJEA endorsed, pro-education candidates? The power is in our hands.

On Oct. 4, NJEA President Sean M. Spiller encouraged members to register and participate in one of several phone banking events organized by NJEA's MOC Network to support the NJEA PAC endorsed pro-education candidates. He listed specific details for each in-person and virtual phone banking event with registration information.

## STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: A fantastic day to celebrate and honor the 2023-24 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year, Joseph Nappi! Officially conferring the honor today at the NJ State BOE and with that the "trappings of office" and the charge to use the position to further the cause. I know Joe won't let us down! Great to see so many other STOfs from years past as we welcome another member to the group and pledge our full support in the work that lies ahead!

On Oct. 4, NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty shared photos from the official conferring of 2023-24 State Teacher of the Year (STOY) Joseph Nappi. He also thanked the program sponsors as well as the BOE President Goldenberg, acting Commissioner Dr. Allen-McMillan, DOE Program Specialist Nancy Besant and those who joined him on the selection panel. A feature on Nappi will appear in the December NJEA Review.

## PETAL ROBERTSON

Facebook

@PetalforNJEA: I got to join the Milken Family Foundation and the NJDOE as they surprised Cinnaminson High School teacher Riley Gartland, for her excellence in teaching. Ms. Gartland received \$25k, a free trip to LA to walk the Milken red carpet event, and all of the love from her students and colleagues. Thank you for all you do, Ms. Gartland. :)

On Oct. 11, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson shared a video of Gartland being declared a recipient of the Milken Educator Awards, the nation's preeminent teacher recognition program. The surprise announcement occurred during an assembly, where Gartland was celebrated by her students and colleagues.

OFFICERS ONLINE



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



**njea** | Teacher Leader Academy

## NJEXCEL New Jersey EXpedited Certification for Educational Leadership

Register for an  
Info Session at  
[www.njexcel.org](https://www.njexcel.org)

Teacher Leader Certification is available through NJEXCEL or a 10-month NJTLC program. For details, go to [www.njtcl.org](https://www.njtcl.org).

**(609) 860-1200**  
[www.njexcel.org](https://www.njexcel.org)



**NJPSAFEA**  
NJEXCEL

### Get Started. Get Skilled. Get Certified.

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

Is your master's degree in a field other than educational administration?

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

Here's the good news: You don't have to!

In as little as 12-18 months, you can earn your certification through NJEXCEL, the Foundation for Educational Administration's school leadership certification program.



# The ADVOCATE

## RESOURCES FOR YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATION

### NJEA Convention program updates

The information below reflects changes to the NJEA Convention Program guide after it went to press.

#### Canceled

**Engage Your Brain** (Thursday, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.)

**Grades 3-5 Computer Science NJSL Standards – Work Smarter!** (Thursday, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.)

**Help! My Kids Can't Sit Still** (Friday, 11 a.m.-2 p.m.)

**Tips for Teaching the K-2 NJSL Computer Science Standards** (Friday, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.)

#### Schedule corrections

The correct information is below.

#### Health and Wellness Area

Konscious Educators: An Interactive Experience of Embodiment, Transformation and Awakening  
Thursday and Friday: 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 1-2:30 p.m.  
(Convention Program lists only one day.)

Making Mental Health Matter  
Friday: 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and 1-2:30 p.m.  
(Convention Program lists incorrect ending time for afternoon session.)

#### Room and time change

**Mindfulness for Educators** (changing from Friday afternoon to Friday morning.)  
Time changed to Friday, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and moved to Room 403.

#### Information correction

The workshops **Create with Adobe Express** (Friday, 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.) and **EduProtocols: Work Smarter Not Harder** (Friday, 1-2:30 p.m.) are not sponsored by the New Jersey Science Teachers Association, as listed in the Convention Program. All other information about these workshops, which are scheduled for Room 307, is correct.

#### Get the most up-to-date information on the Convention app

The latest updates can be found on the NJEA Convention app. Use the QR codes below to download the app.



apple



google

### Membership Chairs: Use the Potential Member Reporting Form

The Workplace Democracy Enhancement Act (WDEA), which became state law on May 18, 2018, requires boards of education to send local associations information about their respective members and potential members.

Specifically, it requires public employers to provide—within 10 calendar days of hiring—the organization the following information about a new employee:

- Name
- Job title
- Worksite location
- Home address
- Work telephone number
- Date of hire
- Work email address
- Any personal email address and home and personal cellular telephone numbers on file with the public employer.

Additionally, this information should be supplied to the association for all negotiation unit members every 120 days. Preferably September, January and June. Once processed by the NJEA Membership Division, local presidents and membership chairs will be able to reconcile their lists using the WDEA Recon Tool found in their Web Apps.

In between WDEA lists, NJEA requests that each month you have new employees submit a Potential Member Reporting Form, with the appropriate information. This form will be used to help keep your membership and potential membership records up to date. This form can be found on [njea.org](http://njea.org). On a laptop or desktop computer, hover over to your name in the upper-right-hand corner of the homepage. Click on "Documents," then "Forms," and look for "Potential Member Report."

### EPA Rebates for electric school buses

New rebates for electric school buses from Biden's bipartisan infrastructure law are open. \$500 million is available for schools, states and districts for new clean energy buses. Make sure your district applies by Jan. 31, 2024. For more information, and to apply, scan this QR code.



# COOL STUFF



## DISTRACTED DRIVING LESSON PLANS FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Distracted driving results in teens suffering three times as many crashes and fatalities as any other group. That is why EndDD.org, a nonprofit, developed 45-minute elementary lesson plans. Students learn to recognize when their drivers are distracted and to effectively voice concerns by using “I” statements. We can create a generation that will drive without distraction. The lesson plans are free and easy to give. They were developed by teachers, psychologists, SEL experts and safety advocates. EndDD is also looking for a retired teacher to assist on this Honda Foundation funded grant.

For more information email Joel Feldman, Esq., MS at [info@EndDD.org](mailto:info@EndDD.org) who created [EndDD.org](http://EndDD.org) after his daughter Casey was killed by a distracted driver while walking to her summer job at the Ocean City boardwalk.



## FRITO-LAY COMMUNITY BUILDERS SCHOLARSHIP

The Frito-Lay Community Builders Scholarship will award four students \$25,000 each to help further their higher-education goals. The scholarship is an opportunity to honor students from all backgrounds who give back to their communities and to provide additional financial assistance to alleviate the burden of higher education costs.

The submission deadline is Nov. 20. To enter, or learn more, visit [learnmore.scholarsapply.org/frito-lay](http://learnmore.scholarsapply.org/frito-lay).



## AMERICAN REVOLUTION CONTESTS, SCHOLARSHIPS, GRANTS AND TEACHING RESOURCES

The New Jersey Society, Sons of the American Revolution offers youth education contests, and programs, and grants for grades 3 to 12. These include an elementary school poster contest, a middle school brochure contest, a high school essay contest, a high school oration contest, Eagle Scouts and Junior ROTC programs, and the Reverend John Witherspoon American History Teacher of the Year Grant.

Awards range from \$25 for the elementary poster contest to \$600 for the high school contests. State winners will be submitted for entry into the national competition and additional scholarship prizes. National awards have scholarships of up to \$5,000 for the high school levels.

For more information about the New Jersey Society, Sons of the American Revolution Council of Youth Programs, along with other teaching resources about the American Revolution, visit [njssar.org/edu](http://njssar.org/edu).



## SILENT VOICES: CHILDREN OF THE INDUSTRIAL AGE EXHIBIT

The American Labor Museum/Botto House National Landmark exhibit, Silent Voices: Children of the Industrial Age, by Mary Ann McKay, is on view through Dec. 30. The works focus on the plight and hardships of the children of the glass industry with a specific focus on Southern New Jersey and the coal mines in and around the Pennsylvania mountains and coal fields. The Botto House National Landmark, headquarters of the American Labor Museum, is located at 83 Norwood Street in Haledon, N.J. Visitors are welcome Wednesday through Saturday from 1-4 p.m. and at other times by appointment. For more information call 973-595-7953 and visit [american-labor-museum.org](http://american-labor-museum.org).



# TEACHING TIP: PAIR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WITH PREKINDERGARTENERS FOR LITERACY AND ART ACTIVITIES

Wallkill Valley Regional High School's National English Honor Society and graphic art students create books for preschoolers

Led by English teacher and faculty adviser Jennifer Grabowski, the Randy Pausch chapter of the National English Honor Society (NEHS) at Wallkill Valley Regional High School implemented a children's book project for the district's preschool students. NEHS members created a story about the preschool students taking a field trip to the zoo with their teacher, Anmarie DeGiovanni.

The high school student's mission was to write the book, have the visual arts students illustrate it, and have it bound and published by the school for presentation to the preschoolers as a graduation gift for June 2023.

"When the NEHS came up with the idea to write a book for the children in our child development class, I couldn't wait to get started!" says senior Nicole DeFinis. "Being in charge of this project reminded me of how much the National English Honor Society makes a positive difference in our school."

DeFinis explained that each NEHS member was assigned a child and provided with their favorite color and animal. After the high school students wrote the stories, the draft was sent to Chris Stefanski's art class to be illustrated. Stefanski is the vice president of the Wallkill Valley Education Association (WVEA). With the help of math and engineering teacher Pete Schornstaedt, the binding was complete. Schornstaedt is the WVEA secretary.

Each preschooler received their own signed copy after the NEHS students came in and personally read the book about them.

"It was a fun and exciting experience," DeFinis says. "I loved seeing everyone on the NEHS book committee working together to create such a special memory for the kids. The children can now look back on this book that was made just for them for the rest of their lives."

Grabowski said that she is honored to work with such a great group of dedicated, self-motivated, hard-working students, and is happy to assist them in their efforts to develop a growing community of individuals passionate about English studies.

"Every day my students remind me of the importance of giving back to the community," Grabowski says. "It is so



Wallkill Valley Regional High School students present to district preschoolers the books they wrote about them.

wonderful to see our youth embrace each service project as their way of sharing their gifts with those in need. They are truly an inspiration to the Wallkill Valley community, and I couldn't ask for more."

The NEHS chapter at Wallkill Valley typically has service projects going on multiple fronts. Members have tutored students struggling with their English classes, organized holiday writing contests for students, and have written letters to veterans for a Veterans Day dinner at Sussex County Community College and to teachers during Teacher Appreciation Week.

In addition, the NEHS students held a book sale in the school's cafeteria as a fundraising endeavor and organized a station at the table to write letters to the children at St. Jude's Hospital for the holiday season. The NEHS members also collected school supplies for backpacks that were later filled and given to students in need at Family Promise of Sussex County this past September.

"Their service to the organization has not only helped them develop strong leadership skills but has enabled them to strive for academic excellence and given them an opportunity to utilize their literary expertise for the benefit of others—an accomplishment that would make any teacher proud!" Grabowski concluded.

# A lifelong passion for activism

Meet Antoinett Hall, 2023 Essex County  
Educational Support Professional of the Year



When Antoinett Hall was 12 years old, she began her career as an activist.

"I used to come home after school, and I couldn't find anything to do," Hall remembers. "There weren't any activities for people my age, so I went to the pastor at the church down the

street from our house and asked him if I could have a Friday night youth club. He gave me a notepad and pen and said that if I could get everyone in the neighborhood to sign, I could have the club."

Hall went door to door in her neighborhood and got the necessary signatures, to the pastor's amazement.

"Most of the people in the youth club were older than I was," Hall says. "We visited elderly people, nursing homes, children in foster care and children with special needs who needed homes. One boy in particular touched my heart and I asked to work with him. Working with him taught me about children with special needs and made me want to be in schools more."

Hall pursued her education, earning two bachelor's degrees, in science and psychology, from Bloomfield College. She also trained as a nurse at Kaiser College and Essex County College. After her five sons, Daniel, Je'veon, Sayeed, Jahiem and Marley, started school, Hall began to volunteer in their classes.

## A career in Orange

Hall volunteered so much time in the schools that the principal said, "You're here every day. Are you sure you don't want to work here?"

Hall agreed and felt most at home working with students with special needs. As a one-on-one aide, currently at Park Avenue Elementary School, she develops close relationships with the children she works with, and their families. At the same time, Hall's incredible energy led her to become more involved in her union.

"I started working in the schools, and I loved it," Hall says. "Being part of NJEA and the Orange Education Association (OEA) was the icing on the cake. It's a vast operation and there are so many different areas. I went from being a member to being the Pride and FAST chair. When I write these grants and get opportunities for our students and their families, I take great pride in the fact that we are getting people into the schools who have never participated before."

Among the many activities Hall has organized are a Black Lives Matter project that brought together NJEA President Sean M. Spiller, the mayor of Orange and other officials. She has a close partnership with the police chief of Orange and works to develop programs to break down the barrier between law enforcement and students.

In 2022, Hall created a community event that brought the Harlem Wizards to Orange for a basketball game that got city officials and the school district involved.

During the pandemic, Hall was tireless in her efforts to support her community and first responders. Thanks to a grant she wrote, funded by NJEA, the OEA provided 750 meals for St. Barnabas Hospital staff. She replicated the program at East Orange Hospital. She also led efforts to provide food to the fire department, police department, nursing homes and others. Because of her collaboration



with the hospitals, she was able to coordinate learning opportunities for students who are interested in pursuing a career in medicine.

Hall also is the Democratic Committee Chair. She is a member of the City of Orange Budget Committee and the Zoning Board of Adjustments. She previously served on the Orange Rent Leveling Committee.

### An award-winning leader

Hall has received many accolades and honors, including being named one of the Top 100 Women of Power and Progress by TAPinto East Orange/Orange. She also received the Mayor's Women of Excellence Award and a proclamation from the Essex County Board of County Commissioners.

Being honored as the 2023 Essex County Educational Support Professional of the Year is a distinction that Hall greatly appreciates.

"Being named the Essex County Educational Support Professional of the Year is an honor that I do not take lightly," Hall says. "I feel my hard work has paid off and that I'm taking my involvement to another level. I'm so proud to be among all the previous honorees. It lets me know that all my work, and all the things that I've done have not gone unnoticed." 🏠

## NJREA Members Enjoy Discounted Online Classes Through Vitality Society



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For questions email [help@vitality-society.com](mailto:help@vitality-society.com).

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# Bus drivers' rights in the new Clearinghouse system

By Kaitlyn Dunphy, Esq.

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA), part of the federal Department of Transportation (DOT), has converted to a nationwide electronic process of recording drug and alcohol violations for individuals holding commercial driver's licenses (CDLs), through a system called Clearinghouse. The Clearinghouse system started capturing information on Jan. 6, 2020. On Jan. 6, 2023, employers were required to begin checking CDL histories using this system.

Employers are required to conduct an annual query of school bus drivers' CDL licenses. The limited query allows an employer to determine if an individual driver's Clearinghouse record has any information about resolved or unresolved drug and alcohol program violations but does not release any specific violation information contained in the driver's Clearinghouse record. Employers must receive consent from the drivers to run these limited queries. If consent is refused, the employer cannot allow drivers to perform safety-sensitive functions, including driving. A sample consent form can be found at [bit.ly/fmcsa-sample-consent](https://bit.ly/fmcsa-sample-consent).

Once the limited query is run, if there are any results, the employer then needs to obtain electronic consent from the driver to run a full query. The full query will allow the employer to review the detailed information about any violations noted in the Clearinghouse record. Federal regulations state that employers cannot allow drivers to perform any safety-sensitive functions, such as driving, unless they conduct a full query within 24 hours of the

limited query showing that information exists regarding that individual.

Drivers can register for a Clearinghouse account. Once they do, drivers can access their electronic records at no cost. If incorrect information appears in the system regarding their licenses, the FMCSA has procedures in place for drivers to submit additional information and request that the incorrect records be corrected or removed. Only authorized users are able to access Clearinghouse records; they are not available to the public. Drivers can access only their own records, and drivers' records will only be shared with their current or prospective employers (or their third-party administrators), after the driver has given written consent.

Only results of DOT drug or alcohol tests or refusals may be reported to the Clearinghouse; non-DOT tests should not be reported to Clearinghouse. Employers who knowingly submit false information to the Clearinghouse could be subject to criminal and/or civil penalties.

Clearinghouse will notify drivers any time information about the driver is added, revised or removed. When a driver registers for an account, they will be able to indicate their preferred contact method—postal mail or email. If the driver has not yet registered, these notifications will be sent by mail using the address associated with the driver's CDL.

The FMCSA has a helpful FAQ about the new Clearinghouse system, which can be viewed at [clearinghouse.fmcsa.dot.gov/FAQ](https://clearinghouse.fmcsa.dot.gov/FAQ). It gives additional information on drivers' rights, such as how drivers can sign up for access to Clearinghouse, how they can obtain a copy of their records, and the procedures for correcting incorrect information in their records. 📄

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# NJEA Report

## Robbinsville EA joins community to secure school funding

By Ani McHugh, NJEA Communications Consultant

Robbinsville Education Association President Jennie Paulino has an established track record of joining forces with the Robbinsville community to advocate for students.

In 2022, when the district sought to privatize its instructional aides—a move Paulino describes as a “powder-keg event” that mobilized community stakeholders—REA members stood with parents and residents to oppose the plan, which would have directly and negatively impacted Robbinsville’s students. They attended board of education meetings, spoke on behalf of the district’s instructional aides and the services they provide, and listed the ways in which privatization hurts districts and the children they serve. Under pressure, the board and superintendent abandoned their attempt to outsource.

When the board of education repeatedly failed to spend to cap, and instead cut dozens of teaching, secretarial and support positions, REA leadership voiced their opposition to the district’s fiscal mismanagement and worked with grassroots community organizers to do the same.

And when association members worked under an expired contract for over a year and scores of staff members resigned to take positions in other districts, REA held community meetings to make sure the community was aware of the staffing crisis and the need for a fair contract. Paulino and her members stood outside of school buildings every other Friday with signs—a routine that eventually came to be known as “Beep Beep Fridays,” where parents would beep at their favorite teachers.

Members distributed pom-poms funded by the NJEA Pride in Public Education program at football games in order to further engage with the community. And they made certain that all community stakeholders understood that staff working conditions were student learning conditions—and that a fair contract was necessary in order for educators to properly serve Robbinsville’s children.

Under the direction of co-negotiations chairs Fran Mazzone and Debi Bella, a bargaining agreement that recognized REA members’ hard work and efforts in and out of the classroom was reached.

So in the spring of 2023, when the Robbinsville community learned that the state’s proposed funding levels for the district would remain flat in 2024, REA members knew they needed to advocate for their students yet again—and that they’d need to enlist the help of state legislators in order to have funding levels increased.

### The push for additional state funding

With the support of parent-led grassroots groups in the community, Paulino reached out to state Sen. Linda Greenstein, Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo, and Assemblyman Dan Benson to request a meeting. At the meeting, they discussed issues that were directly affecting students and staff in the district with an eye toward developing a plan to improve the educational experience for all of the children in the district.

It was at this meeting that the idea for a letter-writing initiative was born, along with the idea that additional funding for the Robbinsville Public School District might be able to be secured through a budget resolution.

### REA members—and the community—got to work

REA members and Robbinsville residents wrote letters to Gov. Phil Murphy describing the impact that staffing shortages and financial deficits had on students, staff and programming, and they expressed the need for increased funding to improve students’ academic, social and athletic experiences in the district. They also asked the governor to allow the district to access additional funding from its expired banked cap, noting that without access to these funds, the district would face even more cuts to staffing and programs.

In all, nearly 2,300 letters were delivered to the governor’s office in May. On July 1, Sen. Greenstein called REA leadership with good news that both the Assembly and Senate had approved the budget resolution and that Robbinsville Public Schools would receive an additional \$1 million in funding that would be used for restoration of staff, instructional resources, and computer infrastructure.

Securing school district funding through a budget resolution is unconventional and unprecedented. Paulino recognizes that this victory would not have been possible if not for the established pattern of collaboration between REA members and grassroots community organizations. However, she also acknowledges that there is still more work to do.

While the budget resolution delivers immediate help to the struggling district, the one-time payment does not ensure adequate funding in the future, nor does it guarantee that any staffing positions added with this money will be able to be funded in the future. As such, and in an attempt to put the district on a path of fiscal sustainability, officials have proposed a referendum question on November's ballot.

### **The lasting benefits of community partnerships**

Asked what she has learned from working with the Robbinsville community over the past few years, Paulino noted her gratitude for the partnership she and her members have formed with Robbinsville's stakeholders and the unwavering commitment her colleagues have made to the students and families in the district.

Paulino also noted the importance of building and establishing a strong local association before adversity

### **Paulino believes that local leaders must engage with their members before they can successfully engage with the community.**

occurs. Under the direction of then-president Debi Bella, the association held one-on-one conversations with members in order to understand their needs and concerns and to convey the importance of unity within the association. Paulino believes that local leaders must engage with their members before they can successfully engage with the community, REA's victories in advocating for their students over the past few years are evidence of as much.

Ultimately, Robbinsville Education Association members—under Jennie Paulino's leadership—remain pillars of the community and will continue to be staunch advocates for the children they serve in the Robbinsville Schools. REA is proof that when educators join together with parents and other district stakeholders, they can bring about positive changes that benefit their students and the community as a whole.

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# Implementing inclusive curricula

## How can K-5 teachers integrate the Amistad, Holocaust and Diversity/Inclusion mandates in daily instruction?

The Atlantic County Council of Education Associations (ACCEA), in partnership with local nonprofit AC Ed Equity, sponsored a four-day workshop for K-fifth grade teachers and support staff in mid-August at the ACCEA Office in Egg Harbor City. The aim was to model the implementation of the Amistad, Holocaust, and diversity and inclusion mandates even when teaching with prepackaged curricular resources.

The workshop series was facilitated by Pleasantville school teacher Tamar LaSure-Owens. She modeled infusing diverse perspectives and representation within the content of existing curricula using social justice nonfiction and realistic fiction read-alouds. The strategies included books written by and about BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) individuals and English language arts anthologies. Throughout her modeling, LaSure-Owens demonstrated how to set up a brave space as a classroom rule and the importance of displaying the Amistad, Holocaust, diversity and inclusion mandates next to the “WALT” (i.e., We Are Learning To...) and student objectives.

LaSure-Owens also created a visual display of culturally responsive center activities, and exemplars of student work for attendees to examine.

“You wrapped the resources around us,” one attendee noted.

Student work included graphic organizers, concept webs, analogies, cloze sentences, compare and contrast writings, narrative writings, teacher-created assessments, technology integration and vocabulary word lists—such as defining a plantation not as a farm but as a forced labor camp. Another example of how to diversify curriculum was the infusion of history about people of color into math and science by incorporating Mathematician Mondays and Whiz Kid Wednesdays.

### Opportunities to collaborate

Most importantly, the four-day workshop schedule strategically provided teachers and support staff opportunities to collaborate, to learn and unlearn, to be vulnerable, to be uncomfortable, and to actively participate as a professional learning community. Through the lens of integrity and intentionality, each session provided examples of Dr. Ghoddy Muhammad’s five pursuits of culturally and historically responsive teaching: identity, skills, intellectualism, criticality and joy.

**“The brave space you created allowed us to NOT know—when as teachers we’re often expected to KNOW everything—and then to learn.”**

The workshops also addressed a number of issues that can make quality professional development a challenge. Nonprofit organization AC Ed Equity, led by Atlantic City teacher Dr. Christine Ruth, provided each participant with a \$200 stipend along with 17 professional development hours, 15-20 new, diverse books for use in their instruction, including *Born on the Water* and *Amistad: The Story of a Slave Ship*, and compensated the presenter fairly for her extensive expertise.

ACCEA, through 2nd Vice President Melissa Tomlinson, provided use of the space, breakfast and lunch each day, and the critical support that teachers need to teach hard history in today’s times. NJEA Director of Professional Development and Instructional Issues Dr. Christine Miles provided posters, bookmarks, copies of mandates, and books.

We hope this model can inspire other teachers to collaborate with their local and county associations and nonprofit organizations, as we know best what we need to learn and grow, and the real educational experts are teaching among us.



Many materials were available for workshop attendees to examine for classroom schoolwide use.

# Future Educators Academy seeks to broaden educator diversity

Center for Future Educators introduces high schoolers to the profession

*By: Bianca Nicolescu, NJEA Preservice secretary*

As one of the most diverse states in the nation, New Jersey needs a teaching workforce that mirrors its rich diversity. While enrollment data from the New Jersey Department of Education shows that just over 60% of our students identify as persons of color, less than 20% of the state's teachers are persons of color. Our students' multidimensional identities require us to respond to their need to feel represented in their learning spaces.

The Center for Future Educators (CFE), housed at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ) and supported by NJEA, is a pioneer in making this vision a reality. CFE has shown true dedication to expanding and diversifying New Jersey's future teacher pipeline.

Navigating the educational landscape can be challenging, especially for students who might be the first in their families to attend college or enter the teaching profession. That's why one of the primary goals of the CFE is to encourage students from varied backgrounds to consider a career in education and to mentor those who have already chosen this path.

## The Future Educators Academy

CFE offers the Future Educators Academy (FEA), a weeklong residential summer program at TCNJ for high school juniors and seniors. During the FEA, high schoolers participate in individual and group learning experiences that are guided by seasoned educators. They take field trips to local institutions and gain practical experience.

For the past two summers, I have had the privilege to be a camp counselor at the FEA, where I worked alongside 25 inspiring and bright young minds. I loved witnessing their advocacy for social justice initiatives in school settings and helping them build their own vision for the future of education.

Students explored topics such as the importance of LGBTQIA+ representative curricula, the implementation of social and emotional learning, and the recognition of multilingual students' unique capabilities as linguistic capital in the classroom. Open discussions around these topics allowed campers to learn more about each other's diverse journeys and experiences as multilingual and multicultural students. It was not long before they formed tight-knit bonds with one another and lifted each other up.

## CFE offers the Future Educators Academy, a week-long residential summer program at TCNJ for high school juniors and seniors.

My favorite part of the week was helping the campers plan STEM lessons they would implement with elementary school students who were just learning English. Many of these elementary students had recently arrived in the U.S. from war-torn countries. I was delighted to help my group collaborate to create an inclusive and thoughtful presentation.

We crafted an ice-breaker activity that would allow their students to introduce themselves in the languages they spoke, and even included Ukrainian and Spanish subtitles throughout the presentation. During their lesson planning process, I encouraged them to reflect on their work—challenging them to think deeper—and I enjoyed seeing their creativity flourish with their passion for teaching. They set their hearts on creating an impactful lesson for their elementary school students, and without a doubt, I can say that they went above and beyond their goal.

The FEA program is an excellent opportunity for our future educators to grow an activist mindset early on and become a part of a tight-knit community. I am grateful to be able to work with CFE and share my love for education with high school students, and I would strongly urge all teachers to encourage high school students to apply for this program.

## Applications for FEA open in early 2024

To be considered for FEA, students must be rising juniors or seniors, and submit two recommendation letters, a resume, and their brief response to an essay prompt. Applications will open at the beginning of 2024, but until then feel free to check out the CFE's Instagram page @cfetcnj and contact [cfe@tcnj.edu](mailto:cfe@tcnj.edu) for more information.



# A LIFE OF SERVICE MILITARY VETERANS ★ IN EDUCATION ★

*By Kathryn Coulibaly*

Growing up in western New York, Sandi Wilcox knew many Marines, including her father. After graduating from high school, Wilcox decided to enlist.

"It seemed like the right fit," Wilcox remembers.

Wilcox served four years in active service and did another two years in the reserves. While she ultimately decided to leave to spend more time with her growing family, "My only regret was getting out of the military."

Wilcox's service took her to California, Nevada and two tours on the USS Enterprise, the world's first nuclear aircraft carrier. Wilcox's job in the Marine Corps was aviation ordnance, or loading bombs on airplanes. When she left the military, she realized, "That wasn't a job I could necessarily pursue in the outside world."

Instead, Wilcox worked in offices as a secretary or administrative assistant, until her son's medical emergency changed everything.

"My son had a brain hemorrhage," Wilcox says. "When he came out of surgery and recovered, he had special needs."

Wilcox decided to pursue a career in special education, joining the staff at Burlington County Special Services as a teacher assistant. She believes her military service has had a powerful influence on her career in education, which has been one of excellence—she is the 2023 Burlington

County Educational Support Professional of the Year.

"As a union member and as a Marine you advocate for each other, you stick up for each other and you help each other out," says Wilcox. "In both professions, we hold ourselves to very high standards. I believe that we have all made a commitment to doing a job well and being a team player. I'm always looking around to see where I can help and who I can help. No one gets left behind. Whether it's staff or students, no one gets left behind."

## **A sense of adventure**

Tamar LaSure-Owens also was influenced by her father, a Vietnam veteran, in her decision to enlist in the Army National Guard while she was in college.

"I was always interested in the military, and I am a very adventurous person," LaSure-Owens says. "I wanted independence and control at a young age. My father talked about some of the issues he faced during his military service. He certainly faced discrimination, but he also talked about how it gave him an opportunity to travel and support his family."

LaSure-Owens was born in Washington, and her brother was born in France. Her older siblings spoke French while the family was stationed overseas.

"It was an experience for all of them," she says. "Growing up with that direction and tradition was powerful."

LaSure-Owens was part of many firsts while serving in the military. She served in a male-dominated unit and was one of only three women who graduated from officer

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Army National Guard veteran and Pleasantville teacher Tamar LaSure-Owens presents a workshop at the NJEA Equity Alliance Conference in January 2022.



training in 2000. A year later, the terrorist attacks on 9/11 changed almost everything. For the first time, National Guard members were deployed first, and LaSure-Owens was ready.

"Like every soldier, I wanted to lay down my life for my country," LaSure-Owens says.

She served at Oyster Creek Power Plant as the first female officer on patrol.

After 10 years in the military, LaSure-Owens shifted her focus to education. Since 2007, she has taught in Pleasantville, and is currently a third-grade teacher.

"Loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity and personal courage—that is what you lead with in the Army, and that's what you bring with you as an educator."

### Exploring the world – and bringing it to the classroom

Ismael Aponte was six months away from graduating from high school when he signed the paperwork to join the Army.

After graduating from basic training at Fort Dix, Aponte deployed to South Korea where he worked as a ground surveillance radar operator.

"Our job was to monitor the border using radar systems," Aponte says. "People might not realize it, but there is still technically a war going on between North and South Korea."

From there, Aponte served on bases in Texas and Arizona. After four years of active service, Aponte transitioned to the reserves. He worked in law enforcement at the federal level but resigned to pursue a dream he had long held.

"I always wanted to complete my college degree," Aponte says. "In 2007, I graduated from East Stroudsburg University with bachelor's degrees in science and in secondary education, with a concentration in Spanish. I fell into education by chance."

Aponte was working as a part-time Spanish teacher and substitute teaching in Pennsylvania when he learned of the Spanish teacher position in Little Ferry. On the drive home from the interview, he learned he'd gotten the job. He's been teaching elementary and middle school Spanish in the district for the past eight years.

For Aponte, his military service informs his role as an educator.

"Being an educator and having served in the military requires certain things from the individual," Aponte



## NJEA Patriots Alliance

In 2017, NJEA created the Patriots Alliance, a coalition of NJEA members who served in the Armed Forces and are now working in public education. The Patriots Alliance currently numbers more than 250 members. It helps to inform veterans of their rights and benefits under the law and advocate for their interests. In addition, members of the Patriots Alliance are available to speak at schools and provide valuable insight into careers in the military. Learn more at [njea.org/patriots](https://njea.org/patriots).



Atlantic City teacher Alphonso Harrell, second from left, with fellow Marines and then U.S. Secretary of State James Baker.



Edison teacher Todd Pagel, as he is promoted to the rank of lieutenant in the U.S. Coast Guard.



Little Ferry Spanish teacher Ismael Aponte in his official Army portrait.



Burlington County Special Services paraprofessional Sandi Wilcox in her official portrait as a Marine.



Pleasantville teacher Tamar LaSure-Owens serving in Europe with a fellow soldier.



says. "It takes a sense of pride, a sense of honor, a commitment to duty and an understanding that you are a role model every minute of the day."

### Juggling teaching and serving

Todd Pagel always knew he wanted to teach and coach. He grew up in the Montgomery/Princeton area, and his mother taught in Edison for 35 years.

He also knew that he wanted to serve in the military but needed the timing to be right.

Pagel began teaching history at Bernardsville High School, but in 2009, he was laid off during a reduction in staff. That's when he and his wife decided the time was right for him to join the military.

Pagel enlisted with the Coast Guard reserves. He also accepted a position at Edison High School. As a reservist, he balances his career in education with his military service, but that has grown to be a greater challenge as his unit has been called up more frequently.

"It's a unique challenge doing both," Pagel says. "My students and I have a lot of conversations about it at the beginning of the year. They need to be more responsible to uphold the high expectations I have for them, because I'm going to be away at some point during the year."

As challenging as it is, Pagel sees benefits for himself and his students.

"It's amazing that I'm able to serve in the military and teach," Pagel says. "Both of my jobs have such a great impact on people—not everyone has a career where they feel that. Everything I do is making a difference and making the world a better place, whether I'm teaching 120 kids history or I'm saving lives in the Coast Guard."

### Kindergarten Marine

In the June 2023 edition of the *NJEA Review*, Atlantic City kindergarten teacher Alphonso Harrell shared his experiences as a Marine who is now in education.

"One of the things that benefited me in the Marine Corps was the emphasis on leadership," Harrell said. "In my classroom, we are building leaders. I'm there to nurture and guide them, but the emphasis is on learning what you need to do and doing it."

Harrell, who is currently running for the New Jersey General Assembly in the Second Legislative District, is not only creating leaders in his classroom, but he is also modeling leadership for his students through his involvement in the Atlantic City Education Association, numerous NJEA committees and the NJEA Members of Color Network.



"I think the military benefited me because it allowed me to travel to various countries and learn about other cultures," he said. "Being an educator, you have to accept everyone for who they are and where they come from. Particularly in New Jersey's public schools, we are educating a cross-section of the world. Once you've been exposed to the way that other people live, work, speak and survive, you really just see people as human beings. Whatever differences there might be are inconsequential. 🇺🇸"



## NJEA advocates for veterans

Over the years, NJEA's political engagement has benefited military veterans. Thanks to NJEA's vigorous advocacy, New Jersey public school employees who have served in the military receive four years of service credit. This helps boost their pensions and seniority. While this credit currently only exists for certificated staff, NJEA continues to advocate for educational support professionals to receive the same benefits.



# Bridging the gap

# The fight against **ADDICTION**

*By Sharon Milano*

The fight against opioid and alcohol addiction has brought Bordentown Regional High School (BRHS) students and first responders together to collaborate on a comprehensive grant project called Bridging the Gap. The addiction and recovery grant provides Narcan training for first responders in Burlington County. To put a human face on addiction, videos featuring interviews conducted by BRHS students have become part of the training.

The project started with Nell Geiger, a student assistance counselor (SAC) and adviser to the BRHS Peer to Peer club, and Brandy Mullin, project director of the First Responders Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Grants for Burlington County. They teamed up to create a video to raise awareness about the vast extent to which addiction affects members of a community. The video would also highlight the need to educate first responders in ways to provide support for individuals who have substance use disorder.

"The grant came about because the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) saw the need to link first responders with individuals who have a

substance use disorder," Mullin explains. "This is especially true after they receive opioid reversal medication, such as Narcan, when somebody is experiencing an overdose." SAMHSA is a federal agency within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. According to its website, SAMHSA envisions that people with, affected by, or at risk for mental health and substance use conditions receive care, achieve well-being, and thrive.

In other words, the project bridges the gap between those struggling with addiction and those trained to save them from an overdose. It also recognizes the impact addiction has on loved ones and the need for continuing support for all affected.

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*Sharon Milano is a fellow in the NEA Organizing Fellowship Academy. While in that role she is on leave from her positions as an NJEA Communications Consultant and as an eighth-grade social studies teacher at Franklin Avenue Middle School in Franklin Lakes. She can be reached at [smilano@njea.org](mailto:smilano@njea.org).*



BRHS Peer to Peer Club members, BRHS and Burlington County staff, and first responders teamed up to create training videos to help first responders and others who have been touched by addiction.

**We don't think  
of people with  
substance use  
disorder as who  
they really are:  
somebody's mother,  
brother, father,  
sister, uncle.**



NJEA staff member Chris Curto films a student during a video proclaiming that despite the challenges of substance use disorder, there is hope.

### **Addiction does not discriminate**

Mullin's passion for this project is driven by her firsthand experience with addiction and recovery. Since 2017, she has been a peer recovery specialist. She and her fellow peer recovery specialists have been successful in their own recovery and want others to experience the freedom from active addiction.

"Opioid addiction does not discriminate and has greatly impacted communities, families and first responders," Mullins explains.

According to Mullin, the primary goal of the project is to humanize individuals who do have addiction because they are often thought of as just "that addict."

"We don't think of people with substance use disorder as who they really are: somebody's mother, brother, father, sister, uncle," Mullins says. "It also helps the first responders see why it is important to help these individuals, because not only are they serving their community, but they're serving the children of their community too."

Mullin only recently began working in Burlington County and wanted to work with BRHS, she asked a colleague for the name of someone who was passionate about helping others with substance use disorder. This is how she met Nell Geiger, who eagerly lent her support.

"In order to decrease the impact, we need to work together and bridge the gaps," Mullin says. "Only when we can equally share the weight can we start to heal as a community."

### **Peer to Peer Club provides safe space**

The BRHS Peer to Peer Club began about 10 years ago and currently meets once a week during lunch and study hall.

"As a psych counselor, I get to advise teens who come and talk about real teen topics in a safe place," Geiger

says. "It's confidential. For anything kids want to talk about, they can connect with each other about mental health issues, substance use, substance use in the family, stress and anxiety."

Geiger adds that club members take what they learn and the coping tools they've established to younger grades. Geiger noted with sadness that many students are impacted by addiction.

"This year we've been teaching the fifth graders about a lot of different coping techniques," Geiger says.

Geiger notes that she can relate to the students because she grew up with addiction in her own family.

"My mom was addicted to alcohol when I was growing up," Geiger says. "It's difficult to learn and to function when you have somebody at home who's dying from an illness like alcoholism. I never had a person to talk to, so my role as a psychologist is near and dear to me. I can be here for kids, whether it be in a club, in a group or individual setting."

Geiger says that she was glad to participate in the Bridging the Gap grant project because bringing the community into the schools is part of her job.

"I have a lot of connections with the county," Geiger notes. "Burlington County Director of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Alfreda Francis thought it would be a great idea to have a student's perspective on the film."

Geiger reached out to students and invited them to get involved.

### **Messages of hope promoted in Bridging the Gap videos**

Geiger described the importance of the students' role as interviewers of people who are affected by addiction, including first responders.

"Some of our kids themselves have witnessed overdoses," Geiger says. "Many of them have lost loved





BRHS Peer to Peer Club members with student assistance counselor Nell Geiger (back center) and Brandy Mullin (second from left), project director of the First Responders Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery grants for Burlington County.

ones because of the opioid epidemic. Being able to interview the first responders who reverse an opioid overdose is like magic, and it gives that person another chance at life."

Geiger says that it's just vital for these responders to continue to receive addiction training.

"It is important to allow the kids to give their voice to this topic and to know that no matter what, no matter who's affected by addiction, whether it be in their family or a friend, that there is hope, there is recovery, and they're not alone," Geiger says. "It's so important that we continue to talk about the subject to reduce stigma so that they can seek and find help."

During the opening minutes of the video series, students share affirmations as they let viewers know that they love, or have been affected by, someone with an addiction. Their message: "There is hope."

Throughout the video's interview process, it became increasingly clear that nobody, including first responders, are exempt from addiction.

Detective Wayne Woolverton from the Burlington County Sheriff's Office discussed his 20-year addiction

to drugs and alcohol starting at age 13. It left him feeling "depressed, hopeless, and helpless."

Woolverton considers himself to be fortunate, explaining that during times when he felt most desperate and unsure of a way out, "someone reached out to me and told me that it was going to be OK."

"I've been clean for almost eight years, and I'm grateful every single day that I wake up," Woolverton says. "I have my own home, my own car. I'm financially stable. I'm looked at as a good son, a good brother, a good uncle. At work, I've been promoted to detective. But the greatest thing recovery has done for me is that it's given me meaning and purpose. And being able to help another human being out is the greatest gift of all. I've been able to do that because of recovery."

In another interview, retired Willingboro Township police officer and current EMT instructor Jason Woodruff stressed the importance of peer-to-peer support for first responders. Woodruff described how having a background as a first responder is crucial for making personal connections when supporting other first responders with addiction.

"I think when you have that shared background, it makes





that connection a lot more personal," Woodruff says. "It helps the client deal with the trauma or the substance abuse or whatever other personal issues they're having at that time."

Woolverton and Woodruff's sentiments were echoed by Burlington Police Chief John Fine, who explained that the role of policing is not only about law enforcement when dealing with individuals with substance use disorder. It's also about rehabilitation and recovery for those affected.

"We see a lot of families that need help, and we're trying to get them to rehabilitation to get the family unit back together," says Fine. "We offer opportunities to make sure that we're allowing families to heal and also supporting families that are going through this with their kids."

Fine adds that training for law enforcement is necessary to make sure that police are helping the community they serve. According to Fine, both violent and petty crimes are often linked to drug use.

"If you're able to help families come back together and are helping young people, you're actually preventing crime," Fine concludes.

## Appreciative of widespread support

Both Mullin and Geiger expressed their appreciation for the widespread support they have received for the Bridging the Gap project.

"I'm really excited that Burlington County cares so much about their community members to take a chance on doing a video like this," Mullin says. "It recognizes that the support is needed both for first responders and individuals who have a substance use problem."

Geiger notes the importance of backing from the school district.

"We're very fortunate here at Bordentown Regional High School," Geiger says. "Our superintendent, Dr. Adkins, our principal, Rob Walder, and our board of education have all been incredibly supportive of our endeavors."

Geiger believes it is of paramount importance for every school across New Jersey to have a student assistance counselor who can provide a place where students can seek support for mental health issues and have an assurance of confidentiality. The "Bridging the Gap" project poignantly demonstrates the urgent need for these counselors. 📺



## Watch the videos

NJEA Communications staff member Chris Curto worked with students and staff at Bordentown Regional High School to produce five videos as part of the Bridging the Gap project.

One video features testimonials from first responders and BRHS students and staff proclaiming that recovery is possible and that "there is hope." These testimonials are followed by student-led interviews with EMT instructor Jason Woodruff, Senior Peer to Peer Club Coordinator Ashley Broecker, Burlington City Police Chief John Fine, and Burlington County Sheriff's Office Detective Wayne Wolverton.

You'll find the videos at [njea.org/Bridging-the-Gap](https://njea.org/Bridging-the-Gap).

# Still wild after all these years

*By Kathryn Coulibaly*

After a three-year hiatus caused by the pandemic, Wild about Cumberland! returned in spring 2023, bigger than before. Citizens United to Protect the Maurice River and Its Tributaries (CU Maurice River), in conjunction with the Bayshore Center at Bivalve, collaborate in this hands-on learning opportunity, which is offered free of charge to Cumberland County students and schools.

Over the course of the three days, more than 600 fourth grade students from 11 elementary schools in Bridgeton, Vineland, Millville, Newport, Port Elizabeth and Port Norris engage in activities designed to teach them about their region's environment, history and the wildlife that makes the Delaware Bay area their home.

## **A day at the Bayshore Center**

As they pull into the Bayshore Center at Bivalve, school buses full of excited and noisy fourth graders crunch over a driveway of broken white oyster shells. The oyster shells are a reminder of the importance of oysters to the regional economy, which at one time produced 55-60 million oysters annually, shipped across the country on 80 train cars a day.

The Bayshore Center is also home to New Jersey's official tall ship, the historic schooner A.J. Meerwald. As students exit the buses, they are guided to various stations on the grounds where they will cycle through the many exhibits and activities that have been prepared for them to teach them about the Delaware Bay ecosystem and watershed, the types of animals that call the area home, and the history of oystering and fishing in the region.

A visit with a rescued owl and hawk is one of the highlights of the day and is coordinated by the Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge in Medford. As 100 hushed fourth graders look on intently, they learn about the animals' stories—how they came to be residents at the refuge, what their habits and favorite meals are, and much more.

Students learn about how oysters were harvested, the impact of littering and dumping on the area watershed, and "build a bird," putting together hand-carved models of regional shore birds, created for them by a local carver.

## **Inspiring the next generation of Maurice River stewards**

The hands-on, immersive activities give Cumberland County students a different look at their home and, hopefully, a sense of responsibility toward preserving it.

"We're hoping to inspire the next generation of stewards," says Karla Rossini, executive director of the CU Maurice River.

Rossini and the CU Maurice River team hope to inspire a love of nature and a passion for conservation in the students who participate in their Wild About Cumberland! program.

"The CU Maurice River covers one hundred percent of the cost," Rossini says. "Schools do not pay for these

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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).*



field trips. Post-pandemic, the busing and insurance costs have doubled, challenging our ability to continue the program, but CU Maurice River works hard to raise more money to cover these costs. We are grateful to the National Park Service Wild and Scenic Program as well as the many corporate sponsors that fund this program including PSE&G, ChemGlass, Century Savings Bank and OceanFirst Bank."

In addition to the exhibits and activities at the Bayshore Center, a team of more than 30 volunteers leads the fourth graders on nature walks at the PSE&G wetland restoration site on Berrytown Road in Port Norris. Many volunteers are current or retired teachers and/or naturalists. Additionally, volunteers from Woodford Cedar Run Wildlife Refuge, AmeriCorps Watershed Ambassadors, the Lenni Lenape tribe and others lead workshops.

"We want to take the classroom experience outdoors," says Anthony Klock, an NJREA member and former teacher from Kresson Elementary School in Voorhees. Klock also serves as a CU Maurice River trustee and volunteer naturalist. "Too many of our students are spending more time on tablets than in nature. There are a lot of reasons for this, but studies show the value of spending time in nature and its impact on one's emotional well-being. Too often it is not something that is part of their daily habits, so we need to find ways to make them more comfortable exploring and experiencing the natural world."

It's no secret that the hope of all the volunteers with the program is to cultivate a new generation of nature lovers. The Wild about Cumberland! program can help meet that goal. 🌿



Above: Students enjoy some play time on mountains of oyster shells after participating in the Bayshore Center's workshops.

At left: The Bayshore Center offers three-hour education sails on the AJ Meerwald to help students learn about the history and ecology of the Delaware Bay while sailing on New Jersey's official tall ship.



## A.J. Meerwald sails students into history

Gently rocking at the dock at the Bayshore Center at Bivalve rests the A.J. Meerwald, a Delaware Bay oyster schooner that originally launched in 1928. While at one time more than 500 schooners sailed the bay to catch oysters, the Meerwald is the last of its kind. Instead of catching oysters or serving as a wartime fireboat, the Meerwald's mission now is education.

Officially listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Meerwald offers public sails, charters, family and youth camps as well as adult and youth education sails throughout the Delaware River and Bay area, and along the Atlantic coast. Learn more at [bayshorecenter.org](http://bayshorecenter.org) and follow the AJ Meerwald on Facebook and Instagram.



## Support the conservation mission

Engage with the Delaware Bay community, help to preserve history and support conservation efforts by volunteering with the Bayshore Center. Visit [bayshorecenter.org](http://bayshorecenter.org) to learn more about their fundraising and community events and how to donate and volunteer. You'll also find free resources for educators at [cumauriceriver.org](http://cumauriceriver.org) under the Educators tab.



# AI in the classroom?

## Students' perspectives

*Dr. Glen Coleman, Naomi Roth, Isabella Iturrate and Tessa Klein*

### How we got here

*By Dr. Glen Coleman*

In the beginning of the school year, some students and I met informally to discuss current events and brainstorm possible courses of action in response to those events. These informal meetings eventually led to the creation of the Human Rights Club at River Dell High School. Isabella Iturrate, Naomi Roth and Tessa Klein comprise its leadership. I am the club's advisor.

In November of 2022, when OpenAI rolled out ChatGPT, the club decided to focus on artificial intelligence (AI) as a human rights issue. What resulted were deep conversations on how AI could change the world—conversations I treasure because of the urgency and wonder we felt. It was like we had stepped into a new epoch.

As a first step to understanding all River Dell students' views on ChatGPT, Isabella, Naomi and Tessa committed themselves to creating and distributing a survey. It was a big lift for everyone. The leadership had to pitch the idea to the principal. Then they had to create a survey, which required them to research the issues, brainstorm questions and make revisions. And following the distribution and collection of the survey, they had to analyze the results.

Students filled out the survey between April 17 and 21, 2023. It consisted of 16 questions. Of 998 students, 512 responded. Here are some highlights:

- 72% of students knew what ChatGPT was; 28% did not.
- 57% report that they believe ChatGPT will have a positive impact on society; 43% believe it will be harmful.
- Regarding how ChatGPT has been used or discussed in the classroom, students reported that cheating was teachers' main focus when talking about it. Often, there was no discussion at all.
- Related to cheating, 346 students reported that they did not cheat nor had they been accused of cheating with ChatGPT. Fifteen cheated but were not accused of using it. Three were accused of using ChatGPT but did not; three were accused of using it and did.



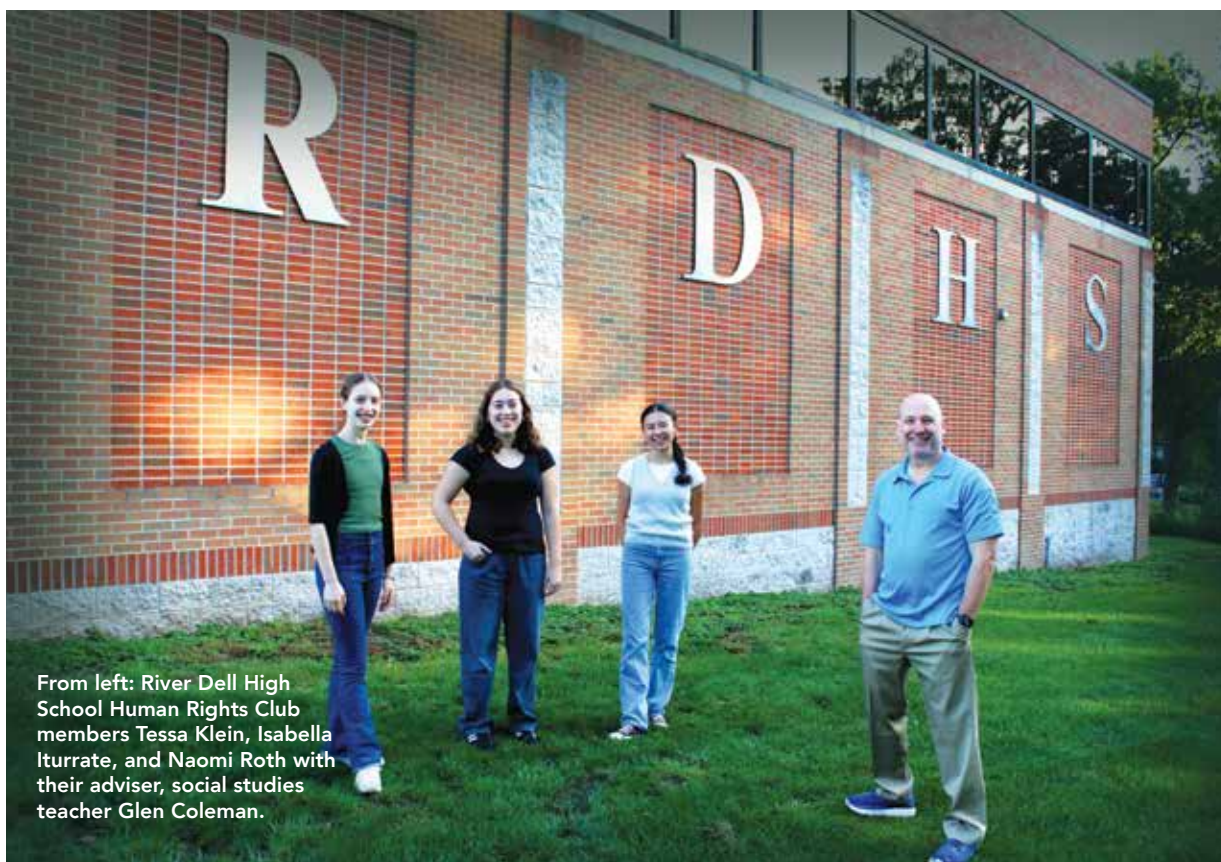
Finally, in response to how students would like schools to address ChatGPT, there were two prevailing answers:

1. Implement better guidelines, suggestions and protocols on how to use ChatGPT.
2. Teach students how to use ChatGPT to advance academic skills.

A note of context: Isabella's, Naomi's and Tessa's analyses are not deep statistical studies of students' views. Some survey questions were flawed but, upon reflection, provided us with important insights. The survey also gave Isabella, Naomi and Tessa, the opportunity to articulate what they learned from their independent research on ChatGPT, which I think deepens the conversation of what ChatGPT means for students.

When they reported their findings to the principal, he was so impressed he had them present their findings to the entire teaching staff. On June 14, Isabella, Naomi and Tessa made that presentation, and it was powerful. They spoke compellingly on a profound topic for approximately 10 minutes without using notes. After the presentation I received numerous emails from my colleagues.

One teacher wrote, "These girls did an amazing job and I think their message should be shared beyond our



From left: River Dell High School Human Rights Club members Tessa Klein, Isabella Iturrate, and Naomi Roth with their adviser, social studies teacher Glen Coleman.

community.” Another said, “That presentation was top-notch!”

Our school principal, Brian Pepe, announced his intention to start an AI lab where both students and teachers can learn about AI. It was at that point I suggested that we write an article for the *NJEA Review* to broaden the conversation about what students think about ChatGPT.

Naomi introduces the overall findings of the survey and its connection to ChatGPT and AI. Isabella discusses why teachers and school districts need to talk about ChatGPT and the AI revolution. Tessa suggests institutional or attitudinal changes that schools can adopt to better assimilate the technology and perhaps allow for improved instruction.

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*Dr. Glen Coleman has been teaching social studies for the past 26 years. His doctoral dissertation focused on student-centered learning. In 2019, Glen was named an HP Teaching Fellow for innovative instruction. His work has been praised as innovative by two former New Jersey commissioners of education. He can be reached at [glen.coleman@riverdell.org](mailto:glen.coleman@riverdell.org).*

*Naomi Roth and Isabella Iturrate are seniors at River Dell High School. Tessa Klein is a sophomore.*

## What is ChatGPT? What do students know about it?

By Naomi Roth

Our goal for the schoolwide survey was to assess students’ experiences, opinions and behaviors in relation to ChatGPT. We began the survey by asking students a seemingly simple question: Do you know what ChatGPT is?

Outwardly, the concept of ChatGPT is simple: It’s a large language model capable of modeling human conversation based on data sets from the internet. Basically, it’s a very powerful chatbot.

What complicates this loose definition—and what 28% of students who responded “no” may have been troubled by—is the fact that we cannot explain exactly how it works.

When prompted with a request, ChatGPT synthesizes internal data sets to craft an output, but what scientists have termed “black boxes” make outputs far more difficult to understand. Black boxes, or the inner workings of AI systems, are incomprehensible. In other words, we don’t know what exactly AI platforms, such as ChatGPT, are trained on or why they make certain choices.

For example, “The AI Revolution,” an episode of “60 Minutes,” showed a Google AI program that translated Bengali texts without having been programmed to do so.



(Watch at [bit.ly/3PFJV1g](https://bit.ly/3PFJV1g).) In other words, Google's AI, Bard, had programmed itself to "understand" Bengali on its own. These kinds of mind-bending occurrences teach us we are at the point of a new technological revolution and cannot afford to remain ignorant of it.

Of the 72% of students who claimed to know what ChatGPT is, what percentage of them saw it as more than a cheating tool? The majority of respondents indicated that their teachers discussed it in the context of cheating or not at all. The cheating conversation is crucial, but it needs to be expanded.

ChatGPT is more than just a threat to our intelligence or the savior of innovation. A two-sided debate is not the answer. We need to see ChatGPT as a revolutionary technology: a device that can produce deepfake videos involving politicians but can also solve some of science's most vexing problems—seemingly within minutes.

Accepting this middle ground is hard to do. In our survey, we failed to recognize this. We were caught in the binary and asked students whether they thought ChatGPT would have a helpful or harmful impact on society. Students were split: 57% claimed it would be helpful, while 43% claimed it would be harmful.

Serving as a path to their futures, schools and teachers must help students navigate their doubts, fears and hopes. We must learn to embrace the uncertainty and use it to fuel curiosity and exploration, not indifference.

### **Why do we need to know about ChatGPT? A reflection on its impact on work, democracy, and relationships**

*By Isabella Iturrate*

ChatGPT is going to change the way we work, consume and process media, love one another, and put simply, how we live our lives. We can't tiptoe around the inevitable. ChatGPT needs to be talked about—now.

Our work lives will change. All the work we do or plan to do, will most likely be impacted by ChatGPT/AI if it

**Our hope is that teachers and students together can create a set of principles and values that can guide our use of AI.**

hasn't been already. Unlike human intelligence, artificial intelligence doesn't need a sick day or lunch break, health insurance or sleep.

As AIs get smarter, will they be able to perform any kind of task without any human weakness? The "60 Minutes" episode Naomi mentioned above discusses an artificial intelligence program called AlphaZero. It mastered the game of chess in a single morning—it taught "itself"—and was able to discover moves that humans had yet to consider despite the fact that humans have been playing modern chess for over 500 years. As these kinds of programs continue to advance and spread beyond the game of chess, students like me can't help but worry that AI will beat us in our own fields.

Our democracy will change. The rapid spread of false self-generating media has already had significant implications for our society. "An AI Spoof Rattles the Market," a May 22, 2023, *New York Times* article, explains that the stock market suddenly dropped because an AI falsely claimed the Pentagon had been attacked and showed an image of the building with smoke billowing from it.

Even though experts quickly dismissed the picture, the image spread on social media, causing a panic. The market tumbled for an hour. This is just one small example of ChatGPT's unexpected impact. So being taught media literacy, how to approach information as a skeptic, and how to properly handle ChatGPT is especially crucial for the next generation.



Most importantly, the way we establish relationships will change drastically. There is a new podcast called “Bot Love,” which discusses the experiences of people who form romantic relationships with AI. Starting a relationship with an AI is frighteningly simple. An AI can give individuals the attention they crave by responding to data sets from the internet to generate the questions that will engage users.

Branching out can be really difficult for teenagers—I speak from personal experience. After being quarantined during the COVID-19 pandemic, it can be really scary for teens to get out of their comfort zones to make friends. It would be so easy to talk to an AI and bond with it instead of putting yourself out there and risking rejection. Teenagers need to be prepared for the implications that ChatGPT and AI can have on relationships.

ChatGPT will affect our economy, our democracy and our lives, and it is something that needs to be talked about. How exactly should a school go about addressing ChatGPT?

## What can we do?

By Tessa Klein

When we surveyed students back in April, we asked them which actions our school should take in order to address the challenges AI presents. We were surprised to find that not only did many students have strong opinions, but they also wanted our school to have a stronger grasp of AI. The top two actions that students wanted the school to take were:

- Offer more instruction on using AI.
- Develop more guidelines around it.

Related to instruction, we think it is important for schools to consider using AI to create a competitive advantage in the job market.

On the one hand, teaching students about AI gives them the resources they need to be successful in their careers. Careers such as computer programming, teaching, law and medicine will all require some knowledge of AI systems. On the other hand, there is a concern that the evolution of AI will eliminate many jobs as we know them today.

By helping students build their knowledge of AI, teachers will ensure that students will be more prepared for the jobs of the future. Additionally, by creating classes and integrating AI into courses, students will also learn to better control and ethically manage AI systems, ultimately using AI to develop an economy and a society that benefits everyone.

Related to guidelines for use, we believe that schools need to allow students to explore this new technology in a safe and protected environment. With feedback from the survey and students’ interests in mind, we think it would be a good first step to create an experimental AI-

## Can we move beyond the good/bad binary when we think of ChatGPT?

media-literacy lab. This would give students and teachers the opportunity to learn alongside one another while discovering the ins and outs of the AI revolution.

In a computer lab, students and teachers would be able to experiment with chatbots like ChatGPT, have a deeper understanding of the algorithms AI relies on, explore the effects AI will have on the job market, and follow the debates around the changes AI will bring to our society and our future. Our hope is that teachers and students together can create a set of principles and values that can guide our use of AI.

Ultimately, as AI becomes increasingly integrated into our society, teachers and students should have the right to explore AI in a safe environment that aims to enrich and expand students’ horizons.

## A joint statement

We believe the arrival of ChatGPT signals a profound transformation in our world. We want to know what we can do with it to make our lives and the world better. Can we make something with this technology that we’re proud of, whether it’s a student’s project, a teacher’s lesson plan or a school’s operation?

Can we move beyond the good/bad binary when we think of ChatGPT?

Can we use ChatGPT to help students become more competitive in the marketplace?

Can we leverage AI to deepen the bonds of friendship, family and community? If not, how can we create better relationships with technology to promote stronger bonds with humans?

Having deep conversations about AI has the potential to open peoples’ minds. The technological revolution is upon us. We have the opportunity. It’s up to us.

Finally, we want a course of action that’s sustainable. We don’t know what that looks like. The change is so new. At times it overwhelms. Consider these words as an invitation to start the conversation. ChatGPT and AI technology are here to stay. Let’s figure out how to use them to enrich our schools and our lives. 🌱

# JOIN YOUR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

## Connect with others in your job description

NJEA is associated with many professional organizations representing educators and educational support professionals, including all content and curricular areas and other job titles. You will find these organizations and how to join them in this section of the Review.

In your school building or perhaps even your school district, you may be the only one tasked with a special area of expertise. If others don't understand what you do, it is wonderful to share strategies and meet educators from other districts who are doing the same job. Joining one or more of these groups may provide you special opportunities through a newsletter, website or social media groups. You may also find discounts for workshops, conferences and webinars. You'll discover recognition opportunities and sharing sessions.

Find your professional organizations here.

## Corrections?

While every effort has been made to produce an accurate listing, we recognize that some descriptions or contact information may have changed. In those instances, please contact Sara Ream, NJEA Communications Division, at [sream@njea.org](mailto:sream@njea.org) so that the information may be updated.

**Find your professional organizations here.**

## ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

### N. J. ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION ASSN. (NJAEA)

[njaea.org](http://njaea.org)

NJAEA supports educational options for students whose needs are not met in traditional school settings. Membership is open to educators working in alternative education or interested in the development of alternative education options. NJAEA disseminates information relating to research, produces a publication, promotes programs in alternative education and holds a spring conference.

Dues: \$120

Contact: Dr. Adrienne Harrison-Surgeon, president, [president@njaea.org](mailto:president@njaea.org).

## ART

### ART EDUCATORS OF N.J. (AENJ)

[aenj.org](http://aenj.org)

AENJ is the state's professional association for visual arts educators teaching in public, private, parochial and charter schools, colleges/universities, museums and art centers. AENJ provides professional development and advocates for visual arts educators. This includes an annual conference, lectures and workshops, publications, member and student exhibition opportunities, and scholarships and grants to arts educators and their students.

Dues: \$50; \$20 for retired, first-year professional and student members

Contact: Contact: Teresa A. De Sapio Diaz; [membership@aenj.org](mailto:membership@aenj.org).

## BUSINESS/TECHNOLOGY

### N.J. BUSINESS/TECHNOLOGY EDUCATION ASSN. (NJBTEA)

[njbtea.org](http://njbtea.org)

NJBTEA advocates for business/technology education and provides opportunities for professional growth leading to quality business/technology education programs including, but not limited to, a fall convention, conferences, workshops, tours and seminars, newsletters, and award programs for students and professionals.

Dues: \$40 for professionals and associate members; \$20 for retired professional or associate members; \$10 for undergraduate students enrolled in a business/technology education program

Contact: Robert Carson; [njbtea@comcast.net](mailto:njbtea@comcast.net).

## CERTIFIED ATHLETIC TRAINERS

### ATHLETIC TRAINERS' SOCIETY OF N.J. (ATSNJ)

[njbtea.org](http://njbtea.org)

The ATSNJ is dedicated to the representation and advancement of certified athletic trainers working throughout the state. Athletic trainers are licensed health care professionals who are involved in the prevention, recognition, and treatment of injuries and illnesses that occur as a result of physical activity and athletic competition.

Dues: \$65/yr, (professional) and \$25/yr (students)

Contact: Amanda Kelly, [secretary@atsnj.org](mailto:secretary@atsnj.org) for further information.

## CLASSICAL STUDIES

### N.J. CLASSICAL ASSOCIATION (NJCA)

*njclassics.org*

NJCA is an organization for educators working to advance the cause of classical studies, Latin and Greek languages and study of Greco-Roman mythology. Members are teachers from elementary through college in public, private and parochial schools. Member benefits include fall and spring meetings, scholarship offerings, materials, resources, mentoring and placement service.

Dues: \$20; \$10 for retired and student members

Contact: Melissa Trenton, secretary, *trentonfacit@gmail.com*.

## COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

### N.J. COOPERATIVE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (NJCEA)

*njcea.info*

NJCEA provides programs and services to cooperative education and work-based learning (WBL) coordinators. NJCEA is at the forefront of WBL issues, working with state's Department of Education and Department of Labor and Workforce Development, New Jersey Safe Schools, and OSHA. NJCEA provides scholarship programs for WBL students and three membership meetings annually, offering professional development.

Dues: \$40

Contact: John Hillard, president, *jvhillard74@yahoo.com* or 856-220-8457; Rob Carson, vice president for program, *rcarson@bnjcea.org* or 609-387-1713 or 856-220-9157.

### N.J. COOPERATIVE EDUCATION COORDINATORS ASSN. (NJCECA)

*njceca.org*

NJCECA membership provides guidance, resources and outreach for teachers to enhance their work-study and transition programs and collaborate in program planning. Meetings are held at sponsor sites. Presentations by guest speakers provide two hours of professional development. The meetings are fun and informative offering an environment of camaraderie and professionalism.

Dues: \$50-member \$30-retired member

Contact: Evelyn Samtak, president, *esamtak@pcti.tec.nj.us* or 973-389-4279 or *njcecaorg@gmail.com*.

## ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

### N.J. TEACHERS OF ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES/N.J. BILINGUAL EDUCATORS (NJTESOL/NJBE)

*njtesol-njbe.org*

NJTESOL/NJBE is a professional organization of ESL and bilingual education teachers. It sponsors conferences, hosts online discussion of hot topics in ESL/bilingual education, and is involved in advocacy/political action and collaborative activities with other professional organizations.

Dues: Regular \$35/year; \$59/two years

Contact: Michelle Land, president; Mary Mansfield, *rep-at-large@njtesol-njbe.org*.

## FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCE

### EDUCATORS OF FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES-N.J. (EFACS-NJ)

*njcea.info*

EFACS-NJ is dedicated to networking with K-12 family and consumer science teachers and keeping them apprised of philosophies and technologies related to career and technical education, career readiness practices, and STEAM curricula. The organization supports Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) and provides professional development workshops for FCS teachers.

Dues: \$25

Contact: Stacey Dworzanski, *njfccla@gmail.com* or 732-512-7690 or 732-452-2862 (school); Carolyn Reynolds, 609-477-0801.

## GIFTED CHILDREN

### N.J. ASSN. FOR GIFTED CHILDREN (NJAGC)

*njagc.org*

NJAGC members are passionate advocates promoting programs, networks, and legislative actions to meet the needs of gifted students statewide. NJAGC serves needs of all educators, school counselors, and administrators, and provides regional events, an annual conference, and live/recorded webinars. NJAGC offers a quarterly e-newsletter, *Promise*, and a website with outstanding resources.

Dues: \$50 for teachers; \$25 for full-time college students; \$35 for retirees

Contact: Contact: Diana Wisniewski, co-vice president of membership, *wisniewskid@njagc.org* or *membership@njagc.org*.



## HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

### THE COUNCIL OF HOLOCAUST EDUCATORS (CHE)

CHE is a professional development organization for educators who teach about the Holocaust, genocide and human rights. CHE works with the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education to provide professional development opportunities designed by teachers for teachers.

Dues: Free

Contact: Colleen Tambuscio; [ctambuscio@aol.com](mailto:ctambuscio@aol.com) or 609-292-9274.

## KINDERGARTEN

### N.J. ASSN. OF KINDERGARTEN EDUCATORS (NJAKE)

[njake.net](http://njake.net)

NJAKE is an organization of kindergarten and early childhood educators. It promotes strategies to strengthen communication with the public regarding the intellectual, emotional, physical and social values achieved through developmentally appropriate kindergarten programs. Membership provides opportunities for networking on issues and questions pertaining to early childhood education through newsletters and workshops.

Dues: \$25 for unified county/state memberships; \$10 for retired and student members

Contact: Veronica Murillo, president, [newjerseyake@gmail.com](mailto:newjerseyake@gmail.com).

## LANGUAGE ARTS

### N.J. COUNCIL OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH (NJCTE)

[njcte.org](http://njcte.org)

NJCTE welcomes educators at every level committed to applying the power of language and literacy to pursue justice and equity. The organization hosts fall and spring conferences, webinars and a high school writing contest; publishes a blog, monthly newsletter and the *New Jersey English Journal*; and offers early-career mentoring. NJCTE sponsors X chats and virtual and in-person networking meetings.

Dues: \$25 for in-service, \$15 for retirees, \$5 for preservice.

Contact: Valerie Mattessich, president, [njctepresident@gmail.com](mailto:njctepresident@gmail.com), Denise Weintraut, [njctemembership@gmail.com](mailto:njctemembership@gmail.com).

### N.J. LITERACY ASSOC (NJLA)

[njliteracy.org](http://njliteracy.org)

NJLA is a professional network of educators and individuals (prekindergarten to adult levels) interested in advancing literacy, promoting effective practices and encouraging appropriate assessment through advocacy, collaboration and professional development. NJLA provides annual conferences, workshops and opportunities for communication among educators who share common interests in literacy education.

Dues: Free

Contact: Dr. Rachel C. Lella, president, [rdlella929@gmail.com](mailto:rdlella929@gmail.com) or [njla@njliteracy.org](mailto:njla@njliteracy.org).

## LIBRARY/MEDIA

### N.J. ASSN OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS (NJASL)

[njasl.org](http://njasl.org)

NJASL is a professional organization of school librarians teaching in public, private and parochial schools, prekindergarten to college level. It advocates high standards for librarianship and library programs to ensure that students and staff become effective users of information with equitable access to resources. NJASL provides professional development through workshops and conferences.

Dues: \$80

Contact: Beth Raff, [president@njasl.org](mailto:president@njasl.org); Angela Coxen; [njea@njasl.org](mailto:njea@njasl.org).

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



## MATHEMATICS

### ASSN. OF MATHEMATICS TEACHERS OF N.J. (AMTNJ)

[amtnj.org](http://amtnj.org)

AMTNJ hosts seasonal conferences, New Cubed Conference, webinars, and additional professional development opportunities, such as full-day workshops at Rutgers University, customized staff development and summer institutes. AMTNJ offers college scholarships, middle school and high school contests, and publications to inspire educators. Check AMTNJ out on X (@amtnj) or [amtnj.org](http://amtnj.org).

Dues: \$30/year for professionals (\$50/two years); \$15/year for retirees and preservice teachers

Contact: [info@amtnj.org](mailto:info@amtnj.org). John Kerrigan, president, [kerriganj@middletownk12.org](mailto:kerriganj@middletownk12.org); Cheryl Fricchione, [CoachCheryl@mathcoachingthatcounts.com](mailto:CoachCheryl@mathcoachingthatcounts.com).

## MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION

### N.J. ASSN. FOR MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION (NJAMLE)

[njamle.org](http://njamle.org)

NJAMLE serves as a voice for middle level educators, students, parents and other stakeholders committed to excellence in middle level education. NJAMLE provides leadership, professional learning and advocacy in support of its belief that all young adolescents must be academically challenged in an educational environment that meets their cognitive, social, emotional and physical needs.

Dues: \$25 for individuals, \$15 for students, \$125 for institutional or school

Contact: Brianne Adams, [badams@njamle.org](mailto:badams@njamle.org). Follow NJAMLE on Twitter at @njamle, and like NJAMLE at [facebook.com/njamle](https://facebook.com/njamle).

## MUSIC

### N.J. MUSIC EDUCATORS ASSN. (NJMEA)

[njmea.org](http://njmea.org)

The mission of the NJMEA is the advancement of music instruction in educational institutions at all levels and to provide in-service and enrichment opportunities for practicing, retired and prospective music educators. NJMEA sponsors a variety of professional development opportunities and advocacy efforts that focus on emerging trends and issues in music education.

Dues: \$133 for active, \$61 for retired, \$35 for collegiate, \$65 for introductory active (first time students who were collegiate members).

Contact: Contact: William McDevitt, executive director, [wmcdevittnjmea@gmail.com](mailto:wmcdevittnjmea@gmail.com) or 856-433-8512.

## NURSES

### N.J. STATE SCHOOL NURSES ASSOCIATION (NJSSNA)

[njssna.org](http://njssna.org)

NJSSNA is the professional organization for New Jersey's school nurses, including certified school nurses, university faculty, and nurses in early childhood and private schools. Join NJSSNA to advance school nursing practice and become part of our community.

Dues: For a dues schedule go to [nasn.org](http://nasn.org); membership in NJSSNA is included.

Contact: Rose Catton, [executivedirector@njssna.org](mailto:executivedirector@njssna.org) or Eileen Gavin, president, [president@njssna.org](mailto:president@njssna.org).

## OFFICE PROFESSIONALS

### N.J. ASSN. OF EDUCATIONAL OFFICE PROFESSIONALS (NJAEOP)

[njaeop.net](http://njaeop.net)

NJAEOP is New Jersey's only professional organization for educational office professionals. It provides professional development and promotes the expertise and contributions of educational office professionals. Membership is open to clerks, business office personnel, central office personnel, secretaries, administrative assistants, executive assistants and others who work in public and private schools as well as colleges.

Dues: \$20. For more information, visit [njaeop.net](http://njaeop.net).

Contact: Melissa Cruz, president, [mcruz@westorangeschools.org](mailto:mcruz@westorangeschools.org); Donna Cushlanis, vice president, [cushlanisd@gtps.nj.us](mailto:cushlanisd@gtps.nj.us).

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION/HEALTH

### NJAPERD - THE N.J. ASSOCIATION FOR HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION AND DANCE

[njahperd.org](http://njahperd.org)

NJAPERD is dedicated to advancing quality health education, physical education, recreation, dance education, and athletics through professional development, programming, advocacy and collegial exchange. It promotes responsibility and development of healthy active lifestyles for New Jersey's students, educators, and community members.

Dues: \$65/year for professionals (\$120/two years, \$175/three years); \$20 retired; \$10 future professional

Contact: Carol Ciotto, executive director, [executive\\_director@shapenj.org](mailto:executive_director@shapenj.org); 203-679-1568.

## PRESERVICE EDUCATORS

### N.J. PRESERVICE EDUCATORS (NJEA)

[njea.org/preservice](http://njea.org/preservice)

NJEA is organized on the college level and provides services to ensure preservice members are well prepared and ready to enter the teaching profession. In addition, NJEA Preservice holds an annual conference and has a strong presence at the NJEA Convention, including workshops and other programs.

Dues: \$32 (NEA and NJEA)

Contact: Email NJEA Preservice at [preservice@njea.org](mailto:preservice@njea.org).

## PSYCHOLOGISTS

### N.J. ASSN. OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS (NJASP)

[njasp.org](http://njasp.org)

NJASP is dedicated to serving and advocating for the mental health and educational growth and development of all children, the maintenance of high standards for school psychologists and the advancement of the profession. NJASP offers two professional development conferences (winter and spring), regional workshops, a quarterly newsletter, and updates on political and current trends.

Dues: \$75; \$25 for student affiliate members; \$45 for retirees. See website for more membership categories.

Contact: [njasp.membership@gmail.com](mailto:njasp.membership@gmail.com)

## RETIRED EDUCATORS

### N.J. RETIREES' EDUCATION ASSN. (NJREA)

[njea.org/njrea](http://njea.org/njrea)

NJREA, the state's retiree organization, promotes the professional, economic and social well-being of retired educators and support professionals under a unified dues agreement with NJEA, NEA-Retired, and our 21 County Retired Education Associations. Members receive information on pension and health benefits at state, county meetings, and through our quarterly newsletter.

Dues: Dues vary by county. Lifetime and preretirement memberships are available.

Contact: Joan Wright, president at [jwright@njea.org](mailto:jwright@njea.org), or NJEA at 609-310-4546, option nine.

## SCHOOL COUNSELING

### NEW JERSEY SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSN (NJSCA)

[njzca.org](http://njzca.org)

NJSCA works to advance the school counseling profession to maximize the personal, social, academic and college career readiness of all K-12 students. NJSCA provides newsletters, annual PD conferences, student and counselor recognition and advocacy for school counselors.

Dues: \$40; \$30 students; \$15 retirees

Contact: Jim Lukach, Executive director [jimlukach@msn.com](mailto:jimlukach@msn.com) or 732-846-6468 or [njsca.org@gmail.com](mailto:njsca.org@gmail.com).

## SCIENCE

### N.J. SCIENCE TEACHERS ASSN. (NJSTA)

[njsta.org](http://njsta.org)

NJSTA strives to support all teachers of science with professional development and PLC opportunities supporting high-quality instruction in varied and diverse settings. Help NJSTA promote public interest in science and science education for all. Join for virtual or in-person programs. Learn more at [njsta.org](http://njsta.org).

Dues: \$25; \$10 full-time students/preservice educators

Contact: Lynn Prosen, president, [njstapresident@gmail.com](mailto:njstapresident@gmail.com).

## SOCIAL STUDIES

### N.J. COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES (NJCSS)

[njcss.org](http://njcss.org)

NJCSS includes social studies teachers, supervisors and university faculty. It advocates for the teaching and improvement of social studies instruction, the development and implementation of meaningful social studies curricula and instruction and professional development. We are located at Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A-350 on the Livingston Campus of Rutgers University.

Dues: \$25 for teachers; \$15 for preservice teachers; \$40 for joint membership with the N.J. Social Studies Supervisors Association.

Contact: Hank Bitten, executive director, [hbitten@optonline.net](mailto:hbitten@optonline.net); Michael Kenduck, president, [michael.kenduck@wvrsd.org](mailto:michael.kenduck@wvrsd.org).



## SOCIAL WORKERS

### N.J. ASSN. OF SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS (NJASSW)

[njassw.org](http://njassw.org)

NJASSW, an organization of certified social workers from the public and private sector, provides opportunities for professional growth of its members and actively supports higher standards for school social work practice. We facilitate social/emotional and educational growth, eliminating barriers to learning, and linking school, family and community.

Dues: \$50 for regular membership, \$25 for retiree and student membership.

Contact: [natlcsw@hotmail.com](mailto:natlcsw@hotmail.com) or [junesocialworker3@verizon.net](mailto:junesocialworker3@verizon.net).

## SPECIAL EDUCATION

### N.J. ASSOCIATION OF LEARNING CONSULTANTS (NJALC)

[newjerseyalc.org](http://newjerseyalc.org)

NJALC provides professional development and advocates for working conditions of learning consultants in public, private, parochial schools, and in private practice. NJALC provides two conferences, regional workshops, newsletters, Main Idea book summaries, grants and an LDTC registry. NJALC, in affiliation with NJEA, advocates for special education issues in Trenton.

Dues: \$75; \$40 for retirees and students.

Contact: Heather Clowers, president, [president@newjerseyalc.org](mailto:president@newjerseyalc.org).

### N.J. COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN (NJCEC)

[njcec.org](http://njcec.org)

NJCEC is the state division of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). NJCEC advocates and guides in federal legislation, professional standards, effective practices, resources and professional development for school personnel and families. NJCEC/CEC has 17 divisions, journals/newsletters, conferences at the local, state, and national levels and student scholarships for seniors with exceptionalities.

Dues: Premier membership \$205; Full \$115; Basic \$65 a year through International CEC.

Contact: Julie Norflus-Good, president, [jandcgood@msn.com](mailto:jandcgood@msn.com).

## SPEECH AND THEATER

### SPEECH AND THEATRE ASSN. OF N.J. (STANJ)

[stanj.org](http://stanj.org)

STANJ is the state's voice of advocacy and action for placing full time theater educators into all K-12 school districts. Members attend regular professional development workshops, conferences and presentations across the state. STANJ sponsors the New Jersey Governor's Awards Competition in Theatre Arts for secondary school students.

Dues: \$65 regular, \$45 student and retiree

Contact: David Marconi, president, [stanjboard@gmail.com](mailto:stanjboard@gmail.com); Julianna Krawiecki, president-elect, [stanjboard@gmail.com](mailto:stanjboard@gmail.com); Dan Paolucci, vice president, [dcpaolucci@gmail.com](mailto:dcpaolucci@gmail.com).

## STUDENT ASSISTANCE

### ASSN. OF STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROFESSIONALS OF N.J. (ASAP-NJ)

[asapnj.org](http://asapnj.org)

ASAP-NJ's focus includes advocating and developing programs that meet the needs of youth with at-risk behaviors through education, prevention, intervention and referral services. Substance abuse, mental health and other related topics are all a part of its student assistance programming. ASAP-NJ offers monthly meetings, professional development and an annual state conference are all a part of ASAP-NJ Membership.

Dues: \$50

Contact: President Pamela L. Felder, [asapnjboard@gmail.com](mailto:asapnjboard@gmail.com).

## TECHNICAL EDUCATION

### CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION ASSN. OF N.J. (CTEANJ)

[acteonline.org](http://acteonline.org)

CTEANJ provides educational leadership in developing a competitive global workforce in career and technical education (CTE); advocating for national, state and local policies that benefit CTE. CTEANJ provides a scholarship program and professional development through programs, workshops, conferences, and services. Through unification with the Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE), members receive additional benefits nationally.

Dues: \$100 (CTEANJ membership is united with ACTE); Retired: \$41 (also unified membership)

Contact: John V. Hillard Jr., president, [jvhillard74@yahoo.com](mailto:jvhillard74@yahoo.com) or 856-220-8457; Rob Carson, vice president for program, [rcarson@burltwpsch.org](mailto:rcarson@burltwpsch.org) or 609-387-1713 or 856-220-9157.



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## N.J. TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING EDUCATORS ASSN. (NJTEEA)

[njteea.org](http://njteea.org)

NJTEEA is a professional organization for K-12 design, technology, engineering and other STEM educators that promotes the goals and objectives of technology education and technological literacy. NJTEEA provides various high-impact, hands-on professional development opportunities at model schools as well as during supportive industry visits. NJTEEA also provides monthly updates, awards, a jobs board and an annual conference.

Dues: \$50; \$15 undergraduate/retired, \$750 district, \$500 lifetime

Contact: Frank Caccavale, executive director, [njteea@njteea.org](mailto:njteea@njteea.org).

## WORLD LANGUAGES

### FELLOWSHIP OF LANGUAGE EDUCATORS OF N.J. (FLENJ)

[flenj.org](http://flenj.org)

FLENJ represents world language teachers (kindergarten through college). FLENJ offers professional development workshops as well as an annual conference with developments in methodology, materials and technology. It also offers minigrants for teachers, an education abroad program scholarship, teacher/student awards as well as senior scholarships.

Dues: \$40/year (\$70/two years, \$90/three years) regular; \$20 student; \$5 retired

Contact: [membership@flenj.org](mailto:membership@flenj.org) or FLENJ, PO Box 385, Fanwood, NJ 07023

### N.J. CHAPTERS OF THE AMERICAN ASSN. OF TEACHERS OF SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE (NJAATSP)

[njaatsp.org](http://njaatsp.org)

NJAATSP promotes the teaching of Spanish and Portuguese languages, culture and literature at all educational levels. It offers workshops and seminars, coordinates the National Spanish Examination and honor societies for middle and high school students and holds an annual Spanish essay contest for high school seniors. Many student and teacher scholarships are available. Members receive *Hispania*, the official journal of AATSP, four times a year.

Dues: \$65 for both national and state memberships; \$25 for students

Contact: Sybil Sanchez, president; [sybsanjac@gmail.com](mailto:sybsanjac@gmail.com) or [aatsp.nj@gmail.com](mailto:aatsp.nj@gmail.com).

### N.J. CHINESE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (NJCTA)

[usnjcta.org](http://usnjcta.org)

NJCTA promotes the study, teaching and research of the Chinese language and culture on all educational levels. It provides a platform for Chinese instructors to share and exchange instructional experience, ideas, and information. NJCTA serves as a source for professional development and lifelong teaching and advocate the harmonious coexistence of diverse cultures in the community.

Dues: \$20/year for individuals; Group memberships: \$100 for five-10 members; \$10/person for 10+ members

Contact: Visit [usnjcta.org](http://usnjcta.org) or email [usnjcta@gmail.com](mailto:usnjcta@gmail.com).



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# Slips, trips, and fall hazards

*By Dr. Derek Shendell, Dr. Koshy Koshy and Justin Panzarella*

There are over 13 million school employees in the United States with nearly 230,000 here in New Jersey. They make up the many education professionals, all of whom may be exposed to occupational hazards at schools. From the 2009-10 through 2013-14 school years, a study found slips, trips and falls to be the leading cause of employee work-related injuries in K-12 schools as documented by worker compensation claims.

## Slips, trips, and falls

The latest U. S. Bureau of Labor and Statistics report shows that, from 2020 to 2021, the number of work-related injuries caused by slips, trips and falls increased by 40% in U.S. public elementary and secondary schools. There were 165,700 work-related injuries in 2021 and 218,900 injuries in 2019, prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

These nonfatal injuries may lead to lost time and possibly multiple days away from work. They can also lead to a disability. Injuries can include, but are not limited

to, dislocations, fractures, sprains, strains, contusions, concussions, tears to lower extremities, and even paralysis.

## School parking lots

The federal Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) regulates walking-working surfaces under 1910.22 general requirements. In New Jersey, public sector workers also have Public Employees Safety and Health (PEOSH).

Under its general requirements, OSHA tells the employer that walking-working surfaces should be maintained free of hazards such as sharp or protruding objects, loose boards, corrosion, leaks, spills, snow, and ice. This section includes parking lots as a “walking-working” surface. [See 1910.22(a)(3)]. Therefore, it is required that these areas are inspected, maintained and repaired.

School parking lots can have hazards that include uneven sidewalk slabs, cracks in pavement, potholes, broken surfaces, loose and irregular surfaces, and puddles.



Weather conditions such as rain, fog, mist and snow can contribute to slips, trips and falls. Poor lighting at night can make these surfaces harder to see, increasing the chances of a work-related injury. School parking lots should provide ample lighting and light fixtures should be replaced as needed.

### Best practices

Employers are required to address hazards in the workplace and local associations can play a role in making sure employers do so. Safety measures can minimize work-related slips, trips and falls injuries in classrooms, hallways, maintenance rooms, parking lots, kitchens and other parts of the campus.

As schools evolve, new hazards present themselves. Many schools, for example, have transitioned from writing on whiteboards and chalkboards to electronic devices. As a result, cords from these devices may create a tripping hazard. Proper cord management such as providing additional outlets, hooks, cable path tape, desk outlets and cord covers are all practices that may reduce work-related injuries. Walking pathways should be kept clear of items such as backpacks, books, hoses, tools and other objects.

Slippery floors can be a result of recently waxed or polished floors, spills, loose floormats and transitioning from carpeted to vinyl floors. Spills should be cleaned immediately. Floors that are wet, polished or waxed should be demarcated with a proper caution sign. Custodians should have ample warning signs to post in case of spills. Loose floormats should also be checked periodically to ensure they are in the correct location.

Falls can occur from the same level or an elevated level. Causes of falls from the same level may include loose carpeting, clutter, cords, missing floor tiles and poor lighting. A fall from an elevated level may result from ladders, stairs and unsecure floor openings. All employees should be properly trained in ladder safety and fall protection.

Employees should be trained not to use a chair or desk as a ladder. Ladder use policy needs to include best practice for placement and inspection before each use to ensure safety. Damaged equipment should be labeled not to use. Stairs should have non-slip stair treads

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*Dr. Derek Shendell is a professor and Dr. Koshy Koshy is an associate professor at the Rutgers School of Public Health where Justin Panzarella is a registered environmental health specialist and working toward his master's degree in public health, majoring in occupational safety. They worked in coordination with the New Jersey Work Environment Council to produce this article.*



## References and resources

### U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

*The Economics Daily*

*"A look at work injuries and illnesses in elementary and secondary schools."*  
[bit.ly/48Dfhyf](https://bit.ly/48Dfhyf)

### California Department of Industrial Relations

*School Action for Safety and Health (SASH) Program*  
[dir.ca.gov/chswc/sash](https://dir.ca.gov/chswc/sash)

### Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation

*Safety Talk: Parking Lot Safety*  
[bit.ly/46fr3x8](https://bit.ly/46fr3x8)

### Occupational Safety and Health Administration

*General requirements*  
[bit.ly/48DenBL](https://bit.ly/48DenBL)

and guardrails. Floor openings above level should also be provided with guardrails.

Work-related falls in school kitchens may result from spilled water, oil, food, grease or any other fluid. The kitchen area should be supplied with floor mats to prevent slips, trips and falls. Food service and/or custodial staff should be trained to clean the floors as often as necessary and floor drains should be cleaned periodically to prevent clogage. First-aid kits should be supplied and accessible in all designated workstations.

### What local associations can do

All employees should report any identified hazard to their employers immediately to prevent future work-related injuries. If the reported unsafe working condition is ignored, reach out to your union representative.

In some cases, work-related injuries may be under-reported as employees may fear retaliation. If this is the case, report the hazards to your union representative or health and safety committee member.

The local association should create, expand, and/or enhance their health and safety committee to oversee safety and health issues including avoidable slips, trips and falls. 🏠

# NJREA

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## NJREA SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE

Do you know a high school senior with high academic accomplishments, active participation in school activities and a dedication to community service? NJREA wants to help them continue their education!

Through its annual scholarships, NJREA aims to continue its long-standing tradition to assist well-rounded, high-achieving students embark on successful college careers.

All four-year and two-year scholarships are offered to graduating high school seniors, and each is renewable for one consecutive year based on the recipient's continued enrollment as a full-time student and cumulative grade point average at the end of each academic year. Each four-year scholarship has a total value of \$3,000, or \$1,500 per year, and each two-year scholarship has a value of \$2,000, or \$1,000 per year.

### Requirements of each scholarship

Students may apply for only one scholarship, regardless of type. To be eligible, a student must fulfill the requirements listed here.

#### *Elizabeth A. Allen/Isabelle M. Hickman (IMH) four-year scholarships*

- Will graduate from a New Jersey public high school, including vocational-technical and charter schools.
- Have been accepted to a four-year college or university.
- Have a cumulative grade point average of 3.75 or higher.

#### *Fred Aug Memorial Scholarship*

- Will graduate from a public high school in New Jersey, including vocational-technical and charter schools.
- Have been accepted by a community college.
- Have a cumulative grade point average of 2.75 or higher.

#### *Walter P. Krichling Jr. Trade, Vocational or Career and Technical Education Program two-year scholarship*

- Will graduate from a New Jersey public high school, including vocational-technical and charter schools.
- Have been accepted to a trade school/vocational program to earn certification in a vocational field of work.
- Have a cumulative grade point average of 2.3 or higher.

### Application requirements

To be considered for any of the four scholarships, the applicant must submit four copies of the following:

- The completed 2024 scholarship application form.
- Applicant's high school transcript.
- A brief essay, illuminating goals and interests for college and beyond.
- A list of extracurricular activities, athletics, honors, community services and employment.
- Two letters of recommendation, one of which is from a teacher at the high school.

To be considered, all applicants must use the 2024 NJREA scholarship form available at [njea.org/njrea-scholarships](http://njea.org/njrea-scholarships). Applications from previous years will not be accepted.

All information must be postmarked on or before Feb. 28, 2024. Late applications will not be accepted.

Contact Cathy Raffaele at 609-599-4594, ext. 2300 with questions.

## NJREA scholarships honor legacy of Cathy Gossé



Fiercely loyal, wickedly funny, meticulous in her appearance, and a great cook who loved her family are above all else are the qualities that NJREA member Miriam Reichenbach attributes to Cathy Gossé, the late chair of the NJREA Scholarship Committee.

Gossé began her career as a special education teacher at various grade levels in Pennsauken, ultimately becoming a school counselor at Pennsauken High School. Her 37-year career in Pennsauken including serving as president of the Pennsauken Education Association and many other leadership roles.

Retiring in 2012, Gossé went on to become deeply involved in NJREA, where she chaired the NJREA Scholarship Committee—one of many ways she volunteered on behalf of her retired colleagues.

Sadly, Gossé passed away in June 2022 at 66 years old. As scholarships are awarded, the NJREA Scholarship Committee, now chaired by Mercer County REA member Cindy Braddock, honors the memory of Catherine Gossé.



# 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.

## CAPE MAY COUNTY REA

**Nov. 16:** Luncheon/meeting at Flander's Hotel. To attend, call Chic Brandt at 609-774-3452.

## 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.

## 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.

## HUDSON COUNTY REA

**Dec. 6:** Holiday luncheon/meeting at San Carlo Caterers. To attend, call Donna Middlebrooks at 973-610-7129.

## 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

**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.

## MONMOUTH COUNTY REA

**Dec. 12:** Holiday luncheon/meeting at the Molly Pitcher Inn. Cost is \$45. To attend, call Debbie Adamchak at 848-459-2672 by Dec. 1.

## MORRIS COUNTY REA

**Dec. 13:** Winter meeting/luncheon at Birchwood Manor in Whippany. Cost is \$35 for members and \$53 for guests. To attend, call John Beekman at 973-514-1080 by Dec. 1.

## OCEAN COUNTY REA

**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

**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.

## SOMERSET COUNTY REA

**Dec. 6:** Holiday luncheon/meeting at the Somerville Elks Club. To attend, call Kathy Kapp at 908-722-7715.

## SUSSEX COUNTY REA

**Dec. 5:** Holiday luncheon/meeting at Farmstead Country Club. Cost is \$34. To attend, call Elaine Freda at 973-219-3029.

## 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).

## Free Praxis Prep Course - New Member Benefit for Preservice Members

The NJEA Preservice Program and the New Jersey Center for Teaching and Learning (NJCTL) have partnered to provide NJEA Preservice Members free access to NJCTL's Core Praxis 1 Mathematics Test Prep course. This course, normally \$300, is FREE to preservice members as a benefit of membership in the Association.



To use this benefit, NJEA Preservice members can request access to this course by completing the form found at this QR code.



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# HOW LITERARY CHARACTERS CAN HELP STUDENTS DISCOVER THEIR INDIVIDUALITY

## A PITCH FOR A NEW ELECTIVE CLASS

BY CATHERINE GONZALEZ, NJEA PRESERVICE COMMUNICATIONS CHAIR  
AND THE COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY'S LOCAL CHAPTER'S POINTS CHAIR

From a young age, I've loved reading novels, being most drawn to ones with compelling characters. It's always thrilled me to learn minute details about their lives and personal characteristics. The more I felt involved in their day-to-day worlds, the better.

This enthusiasm for literary characters transferred from the page to the world around me. Like literary characters, people all have so many special attributes and interests that make them who they are.

Despite my wonder at how unique each person was, I often felt dejected about how much I fell short compared to my classmates, whether it be through my general academic slowness or social awkwardness. This feeling was especially prominent in middle school and my earlier high school years, when I believed that what really made me unique was my deficiency at everything.

Near the beginning of the COVID-19 shut-down, I felt compelled to dive deep into something that I'd heard about a couple of times at school: the Myers-Briggs test.

I loved learning about what my combination of psychological preferences revealed about my strengths and weaknesses, as well as guessing those of my family and friends. Since I had no access to the inner worlds of the people I was guessing about, however, I had limited scope for achieving the latter accurately.

Thus, again comes in my dear friends from the pages of fiction. I became obsessed with poring over what I knew about my favorite characters, searching through their texts to determine what their Myers-Briggs types were, and browsing through analyses from readers online to compare my perspectives with theirs.

This led to my adopting this same process with other personality-based categorizing systems that I'd learned about, such as the Enneagram, Four Temperaments Theory, and Multiple Intelligences Theory. I now have a running chart that I return to with new characters and new thoughts for characters I've already analyzed.

Seeing that this process helped me better understand my own strengths and weaknesses, I believe that an elective class that offers the opportunity to discover this

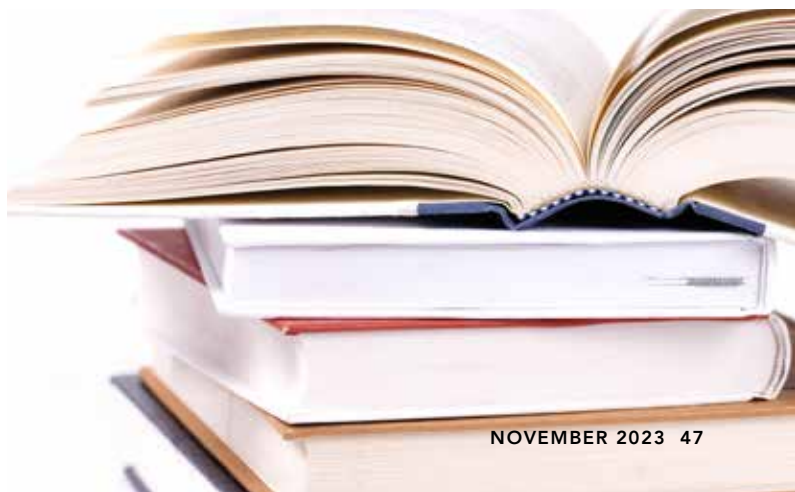
process will do the same thing for middle school and high school students.

In this class, students would read a few books throughout the semester. Paired with each book would be one of the personality-based categorizing systems, so students would only need to focus on learning about one system at a time and applying it in one place at a time. They would then do research and write about the traits they exhibit from certain personality clusters. The students would include evidence from their own lives. Afterward, they would do the same thing using textual evidence about a character from the accompanying book.

At the end of the semester, the students would select a character from one of the books they've studied throughout the semester and apply all of the systems to that one character. By wrapping up the semester like this, students would be able to explicitly see how many different personal preferences and skills make up one person.

This class would be useful to students for a number of reasons: it would prompt improvement in literary analysis, encourage a love of reading, teach them more about themselves, and help them appreciate their differences and the differences of others.

Middle school and high school can be tough: there is often pressure to act as others do or be a "picture-perfect" student. If students are able to see the ways that they are special, then they're liable to become happier and thus more successful at everything they do.







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# BCEA VISIBILITY WORKSHOP SUPPORTS

## LGBTQIA+ INCLUSIVE EDUCATORS

By Amy Moran, Ph.D. and Kate Okeson

Amy joined Bergen County Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) Consortium co-founder Will Andresen to present “Visibility: Seeing and Supporting LGBTQIA+ Community Members in Schools” at the Bergen County Education Association’s first Social Justice Celebration of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

We started with a purpose: to provide LGBTQIA+ students affirming education while teaching cisgender straight students to coexist with queer/questioning peers, enabling all students to learn with greater safety and ease. Urgently relevant, 71% of LGBTQ students reported that their mental health is being impacted somewhat-to-very negatively because of recent debates about state laws restricting their rights. Worse, 41% of LGBTQ young people seriously considered suicide in the past year, with transgender, nonbinary, and youth of color reporting even higher numbers.

### NJDOE mandates and standards

We explored the NJDOE mandates and standards that direct and endorse this work. These include:

- **2017** – Social and Emotional Learning Competencies
- **2019** – LGBT curriculum mandate for middle and high school students to receive instruction on contributions of LGBT people and people with disabilities.
- **2020** – Comprehensive Physical and Health Education Standards, including developmentally appropriate social and sexual health instruction across all grades.
- **2021** – Mandate for instruction on diversity and inclusion for grades K-12 to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, tolerance and belonging in connection with gender and sexual orientation and others, with attention to unconscious bias and creating welcoming environments.

These regulations and legislation confirm our right and requirement to include LGBT-affirming instructional content.

### Teaching and learning strategies

We focused on personal gender pronouns (PGPs) and grouping by attributes like birth month rather than sex. We explored instructional strategies by grade level and content area, and practical strategies for addressing antagonistic student behaviors.

We recommended collaboration with colleagues in collecting relevant resources, developing interdisciplinary

projects, and more. We discussed strategies for authentic schoolwide engagement that include safer space signals and symbols and the value of having morning announcements be LGBTQIA+ inclusive.

Avoiding tokenism is especially important. Doing one lesson or mentioning one queer-affirming thing communicates falsely to students that queer people aren’t worth integrating much into learning or life. Rather, work to integrate LGBTQIA+ content into the areas you already teach. It’s relevant—and it’s required.

### Union supports

NJEA worked with Attorney General Matthew Platkin resulting in an anti-bias statement, NJEA’s tracking of anti-LGBTQIA+ actions reported to the NJEA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee and UniServ field representatives, and the potential to collaborate with county administration unions to prioritize supporting teachers in this work.

### Interaction with school administration

We can’t tell administrators how to respond, but we let them know that we need their support around anti-LGBTQIA+ attacks by outside antagonists, adult cyberbullying, and gray areas concerning harassment, intimidation and bullying. We can and must support each other as we continue to do right by LGBTQIA+ students.

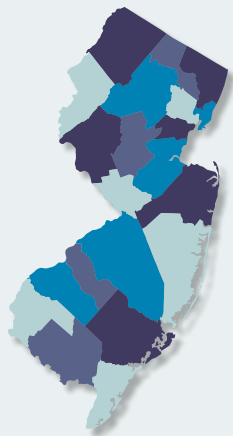
### Action items

We brainstormed action items we’ll take up back at school. An accountability partner can help increase your integration of LGBTQIA+ affirming content. Did you do one thing last year? Great! Now try one per marking period! Or one per month! Or reach out to your school GSA and ask the advisor for student-endorsed content recommendations and resources!

Share what you’re working on at [rainbowconnectionnjea@gmail.com](mailto:rainbowconnectionnjea@gmail.com)! 📧



Scan the QR code to see the resources we used at the BCEA visibility workshop as well as LGBTQIA+ resources for Indigenous People’s Month.



# SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

Workshops and conferences

## HIGHLIGHTS

Writing and art

## SHOWCASE

Showcase experiences have been endorsed by NJEA's Professional Development Institute and are also posted on [njea.org](http://njea.org). Those seeking endorsement of a professional development experience that they will provide should call NJEA's Professional Development Division at 609-599-4561.

## WINTER POETRY & PROSE GETAWAY

The Winter Poetry & Prose Getaway is a three-day conference where educators hone their creative writing skills and expand their teaching strategies. The conference was founded by NJEA member Peter E. Murphy on the belief that when writers leave behind the distractions of their busy lives to gather in an encouraging community, they can make important breakthroughs.

Each of the more than 10 workshops focuses on writing for a specific purpose, just as the New Jersey Student Learning Standards promote different types of writing for different purposes and audiences. Beginner and experienced writers may choose from workshops in fiction, memoir, nonfiction, poetry, playwriting, songwriting and more. Participants will receive craft discussion, writing prompts, writing time, feedback, motivation and inspiration.

**Schedule:** For a detailed schedule, visit [wintergetaway.com/schedule](http://wintergetaway.com/schedule).

**When:** Jan. 12-15

**Where:** Seaview Hotel, 401 S. New York Road, Galloway, N.J.

**Registration fee:** Sliding scale, from \$535-\$735. South Jersey teachers may be eligible to have their districts pay their tuition when they register with ETTC hours. This opportunity is open to educators whose school districts are members of the Southern Regional Institute (SRI & ETTC). More than 20 scholarships will be awarded to first-time participants.

**Registration information:** Visit [wintergetaway.com](http://wintergetaway.com), email [info@wintergetaway.com](mailto:info@wintergetaway.com) or call 609-626-3594.

## More to learn

### PD FOR TEACHERS, AND STUDENT CIVIC EVENTS, FROM THE N.J. CENTER FOR CIVIC EDUCATION

The New Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers University is offering a series of free, one-day workshops for New Jersey teachers during the 2023-24 academic year. All the workshops will be held at Rutgers University in Piscataway.

The workshops will begin at 8:30 a.m. and conclude by 3 p.m. Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided. Teachers will receive five hours of professional development credit. Note that the programs on Jan. 24 and June 5 are student-centered events, not professional development workshops.

**Register** at [civiced.rutgers.edu/events](http://civiced.rutgers.edu/events).

**Nov. 7:** NJ History and Government (for upper elementary grades)

**Nov. 7:** We the People (for middle school grades)

**Dec. 8:** Engaging Middle School Students in Civics

**Jan. 24:** We the People High School Student Competition

**March 5:** Project Citizen (grades 3-12)

**March 19:** Infusing Civics, Economics and New Jersey history into High School U.S. History

**April 3:** Teaching Controversial issues and Media Literacy (K-12)

**April 16:** Civics for grades K-5

**May 9:** Engaging Students in Middle School Civics

**June 5:** Project Citizen Showcase (for middle and high school classes)

Email Bob O'Dell at [ro205@scarletmail.rutgers.edu](mailto:ro205@scarletmail.rutgers.edu) or Arlene Gardner at [arlenega@sas.rutgers.edu](mailto:arlenega@sas.rutgers.edu) with any questions.

## PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FROM ARTSEDNJ

### Culturally Responsive Arts Education Workout

The Culturally Responsive Arts Education (CRAE) Workout is an eight-week curated asynchronous and synchronous experience. It focuses on developing the capacity of educators and administrators to think about how culturally relevant and responsive approaches can shift curricula, instructional content and teaching practices to more effectively represent and validate all students' cultures and lived experiences. This free program begins Jan. 15 and concludes March 8. For more information and to register, visit [artsednj.org/CRAEworkout](http://artsednj.org/CRAEworkout).



### Arts Ed NJ On-Demand course – Empowering Artists: Designing Student-Centered Learning Driven by the 2020 NJSLS-VPA

Prepare to become an innovator in arts education. Enroll today and build your capacity to develop process-driven arts education practices to fulfill the mission and vision of the 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards in the Visual and Performing Arts. This course is ideal for all PK-12 arts educators and arts supervisors. This two-part course will provide arts educators with a broad and deep understanding of the 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards in the Visual and Performing Arts. After completing this self-paced course, arts educators in New Jersey will feel better prepared to design learning experiences that will activate student empowerment through the four artistic processes. The first module in part one of this two-part course is free. For more information and to register visit [artsednj.org/ondemandlearning-hub](https://artsednj.org/ondemandlearning-hub).

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](https://wpunj.edu/cosh/ASPIRE-STEM-Program)
- Dual Enrollment College Credit Programs: [wpunj.edu/dualenrollment](https://wpunj.edu/dualenrollment)

For more information, contact Patrick Noonan  
[noonanp@wpunj.edu](mailto:noonanp@wpunj.edu) | [dualenrollment@wpunj.edu](mailto:dualenrollment@wpunj.edu)  
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### HOLIDAY HACKS WEBINAR NOV. 15

Maximize your NJEA membership and attend our upcoming webinar, "Holiday Hacks and End-of-Year Car Buying Tips" on Nov. 15 at 4:30 p.m. Register at **njea.org/mbwebinars**

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# STAFF NEWS

## HIRES AND PROMOTIONS



NJEA welcomed **SARA REAM** to NJEA staff on Sept. 18 as a secretary in the Communications Division. Ream's work assignments will include managing advertising for the *NJEA Review* among other duties. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Ream worked as a verifier and recorder in the Mercer County Clerk's Office. She was previously employed by Merrill Lynch, specializing in Siebel Analytics and vendor management. Ream is currently writing a comic mystery novel. She lives in Hamilton Township, Mercer County.



NJEA welcomed **CHERYL WOJ** to NJEA staff on Sept. 18 as a secretary in the Region 13 UniServ office in Flemington. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Woj had been an office manager for M & A Tree Service, Inc., a clerk in Warren County's Division of Temporary Assistance and Social Services, and a bookkeeper for ShopRite. Woj has three daughters, Lindsey, Melanie and Rebecca. She lives in Philipsburg with Melanie and her long-time boyfriend, John.



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# NOVEMBER & *beyond*

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

NOV 08-09	<b>WED &amp; THURS</b> NJREA Convention	NOV 11	<b>SATURDAY</b> Delegate Assembly	JAN 06	<b>SATURDAY</b> Delegate Assembly
NOV 08	<b>WEDNESDAY</b> Executive Committee	DEC 06	<b>WEDNESDAY</b> Executive Committee	JAN 12-13	<b>FRI &amp; SAT</b> Equity Alliance Conference
NOV 09-10	<b>THURS &amp; FRI</b> NJEA Convention	JAN 05	<b>FRIDAY</b> Executive Committee	JAN 26-27	<b>FRI &amp; SAT</b> Winter Leadership Conference South

For more information go to [NJEA.org](https://www.njea.org)

## SAVE THE DATE



**May 10-11, 2024**

*Further details will be available in a future edition of the NJEA Review*



## SAVE THE DATE

### NJEA Equity Alliance Conference

**Friday, Jan. 12**

NJEA Martin Luther King Jr. Human Rights Celebration

**Saturday, Jan. 13**

Equity Alliance workshops and programs

For more information, and to register,  
visit [njea.org/eac-hcr](https://www.njea.org/eac-hcr).

# EDUCATORS INVOLVED IN POLITICS? **ABSOLUTELY!**

Average CEO compensation at Fortune 500 companies hovers around \$15 million per year. Last year, reported federal lobbying in America topped \$4 billion. More than half of all members of Congress report a net worth of more than \$1 million. None of these facts are especially surprising. The powerful in America have long had wealth, and the wealthy have long had political power.

But while it's not surprising, it does not mean that it's good for America to have wealth and power so concentrated. We are a democracy, founded on ideals of liberty and justice for all, and not just for a few. Growing income inequality makes our nation weaker and threatens the future prosperity—and even the basic economic security—of a huge swath of hardworking American families.

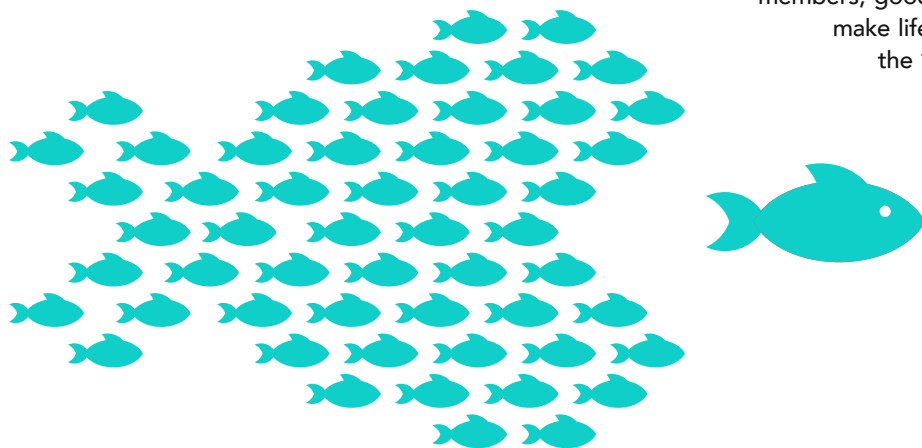
That is why unions are more important today than ever. At a time of record and rising wealth inequality, working people must remain united in our demands for economic justice and a voice in our political institutions. That's why we're inspired by the determination of the United Auto Workers to ensure that the car companies' record profits are shared by the people who made those profits possible. We're encouraged by Amazon workers who are demanding better salaries and working conditions at the world's fifth largest company, owned by the America's second wealthiest person. And we're proud that New Jersey is home to the largest union of public school educators, who work every day to keep New Jersey's public schools the best in the nation.

**At a time of record and rising wealth inequality, working people must remain united in our demands for economic justice and a voice in our political institutions.**

It's no coincidence that most of the states with top-performing schools also have strong unions, while many states near the bottom of the list also have laws and policies that muzzle the voices of working people, including professional educators who know better than anyone what policies and priorities are needed to help our students succeed. In a state like New Jersey, where NJEA members have long advocated for better school funding, stronger curriculum standards and better, safer working and learning conditions in our public schools, the results are clear. The students in our schools are better off because the adults in their schools have political power and know how to use it. Or, to put it more bluntly, where unions have political power, students benefit.

Of course, union political power is threatening to people who benefit from the status quo. That's why Amazon invests huge amounts to stop organizing efforts in its warehouses. It's why Starbucks baristas face threats to their livelihood when they demand collectively bargained contracts. But all the anti-union propaganda in the world does not change the fact that unions are good for union members, good for nonunionized working people and make life better for just about everyone outside the 1%.

There aren't many multimillionaires driving school buses, cleaning cafeterias or teaching long division in New Jersey public schools. But there are hundreds of thousands of committed, capable professionals doing that work every day, and they deserve a vote and a voice as much as any Fortune 500 executive or hedge fund manager. 🗳️





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