

REVIEW

MAY
2024
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COMMUNICATIONS ACADEMY

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STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

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Sharon Ortiz, treasurer of the West Orange EA, presents NJEA Secretary-Petitioner Petal Robertson with a donation from WOE to the NJEA Hardship Relief fund at Delegate Assembly meeting on March 11. You can learn more about the fund at hardshiprelief.njea.org.



Mercer County EA President Dan Siegel and South Orange Maplewood EA President Rocio Lopez prepare to speak the March 11 Delegate Assembly meeting.



Three of this year's County ESPs of the Year record radio spots on BEN-FM highlighting the work of educational support professionals. Clockwise from top left: Kim Mauroff (Burlington), MaryJo Nagy (Mercer), DJ and producer Kevin Gunn, and Rose Casey (Camden).

FEATURES



26 | WOODSTOWN'S COMMUNICATIONS ACADEMY

Students in Woodstown High School's Communications Academy, a magnet program that attracts students throughout Salem County, are exploring careers in communications through a mix of hands-on courses and creative assignments. These include producing a daily television show, a podcast and projects that see them holding press conferences exploring the death of Julius Caesar and analyzing Holden Caulfield's mental health issues after reading *The Catcher in the Rye*.

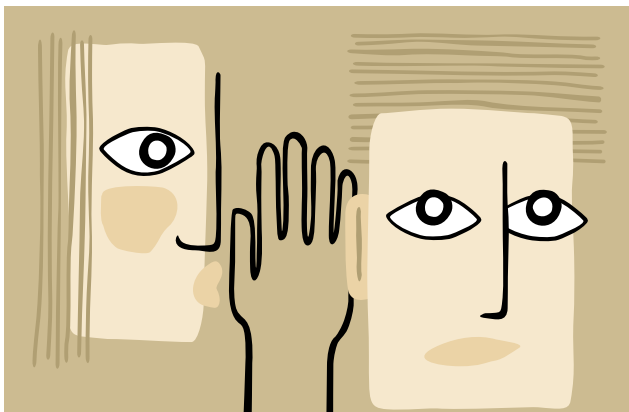
BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



32 | WELCOMING MALE TEACHERS OF COLOR

New Jersey has been rated first in public education across the country for the last several years. But we need to acknowledge where we fall short. When it comes to equity, the representation of male teachers, and specifically male teachers of color, remains disproportionately low in New Jersey's public schools.

BY DR. ANGELLO VILLARREAL



30 | AN ELA TEACHER'S SURVIVAL KIT

English language arts (ELA) teachers routinely struggle to strike a balance between available time and time required to provide meaningful feedback. As a result, they often spend their planning periods assessing student writing rather than developing dynamic lessons. To ease the ELA teacher's load, check out this 10-item ELA Survival Kit.

BY GARY J. WHITEHEAD



36 | PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AND STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

School leaders, teachers, parents and the community all contribute to children's academic development. Parental involvement is crucial to a child's academic success. Their influence on their children's daily routines significantly impacts their learning, behavior, social, and emotional progress, leadership and problem-solving skills.

BY DR. GNANASEHARAN SELLIAH, ED.D.

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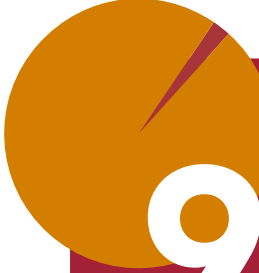
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Parental Involvement



98%

Students with parents actively involved in their schools have 98% average daily attendance rate.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, nces.ed.gov.



GOOD NEWS

NJ ranks in top three states to live and work

According to CNBC, "The Garden State is one of America's most inclusive, with broad protections against discrimination, and among the nation's strongest guarantees of reproductive freedom. New Jersey is one of America's safest states, according to FBI crime data. Its violent crime rate is among the lowest in the nation."




Source: "These are America's 10 best states to live and work in for 2023, and there are some notable omissions," CNBC, July 14, 2023



Students in Woodstown High School's Communications Academy explore careers in communications through a mix of hands-on courses and creative assignments.

PHOTO BY
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REVIEW

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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; 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*

Preparing our students for their futures

As the school year begins to wind down, we look ahead to what's next for our students. They may be advancing a grade, entering a new school or completing their PreK-12 education. No matter the ages of the students our members work with, they know that they are preparing their students not only for the next step in their educations, but also the future. Public school employees dream big dreams for their students and celebrate their students' successes alongside them and their parents.

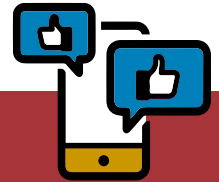
In this issue, we take a look at Woodstown High School's Communications Academy. This magnet program attracts students from across Salem County who are interested in exploring careers in communications. They build their skills in everything related to communications, including writing, video editing, production, graphics, broadcasting and so much more. In addition, students can earn college credits through a partnership with Salem Community College, a great way to introduce high school students to what community colleges can offer.

For Jim Dementri, one of the instructors in the program, the skills the students learn in the program are applicable no matter what career path they ultimately choose. The program's hands-on approach also gives them the confidence to create whatever they can imagine.

Dementri was so motivated to provide the students with every resource possible, he applied for an NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Grant for Excellence in Education. With the \$9,000 grant, Dementri purchased the materials the students would need to create their own podcasts. The students tackle the topics that matter most to them, giving them a voice—and an audience—for their perspectives on everything from bullying to mental health.

Every student deserves the chance to dream and succeed. Working together, our members are part of a team they can count on to guide, inspire, educate, nurture and protect them. Thank you for all that you do every day for your students and thank you for choosing a career in public education. To quote a Chinese proverb, "If you are planning for a year, sow rice; if you are planning for a decade, plant trees; if you are planning for a lifetime, educate people."

In Unity,



SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

@SpillerforNJEA: NJEA members and Milken Educator awardees Taylor Trost, an elementary school teacher in Hightstown and Virginia Fasulo, a high school teacher in Lodi are featured on Steve Aduabato's One-On-One. Check out the episode.

On April 4, NJEA President Sean M. Spiller shared a video of the "One-On-One with Steve Aduabato" episode of him interviewing two of the 2023-24 Milken Educator Awardees, Taylor Trost and Virginia Fasulo. The Milken Educator Awards is an educator recognition program that provides unrestricted grants of \$25,000 cash to teachers deemed exceptional. Winners receive the news of their award in surprise ceremonies at their schools.

STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: Celebrating our unsung heroes! Thank you to all of our librarians for keeping it real—really!

On April 4, NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty shared a meme including the words "National School Librarian Day" in bold white letters within a large red heart surrounded by books to demonstrate how much he appreciates the work of public school librarians across the country. April was National School Library Month.

PETAL ROBERTSON

Facebook

@PetalforNJEA: Get your purple ready!

On April 12, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson shared a post from the NJEA Patriots Alliance Facebook page to show her support for military children. The post read "Please share in your locals! If you take group photos, tag them on your local's page with #NJEA4MilKids and tag our page! Let's show our support for military children!!" April was the Month of the Military Child.

OFFICERS ONLINE

The ADVOCATE

RESOURCES FOR YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATION

Delegate Assembly to consider bylaw amendment

At the NJEA Delegate Assembly (D.A.) meeting on May 18, delegates will consider an amendment to NJEA Bylaw 1 – Dues, Section e – Retired members.

Amending the association's bylaws requires votes at two separate meetings. First, a simple majority affirmative vote of the NJEA Executive Committee or the D.A. is required to propose an amendment. That vote took place at the Executive Committee meeting on Feb. 14. At a subsequent D.A. meeting, a three-fourths affirmative vote is required to successfully amend the bylaws. That vote is anticipated for the May 18 D.A. meeting.

The proposed bylaw amendment adjusts the formula used to calculate full cost to be a retired member for life. The language of the amendment to Bylaw 1(e) is below. Additions appear in boldface underlined, and deletions are bracketed and struck out [—].

*(e) Retired Members – For the 1990-91 fiscal year, twenty-five (\$25) dollars, which shall be increased for each succeeding fiscal year by applying the appropriate Social Security cost-of-living factor to the preceding year's dues and rounding the resulting amount to the nearest dollar, of which twenty-eight percent (28%) rounded to the nearest dollar shall be remitted to the New Jersey Retirees' Education Association in accordance with a unified dues agreement between the NJEA and the NJREA, and provided that a member receiving an annual retirement allowance of less than five thousand (\$5,000) dollars not be required to pay annual dues; and provided further that, upon payment in full of the amount to the nearest dollar produced by multiplying the dues for retired members as established above by [~~fifteen (15)~~ **twenty-five (25)**] the member shall be a retired member for life, with twenty-eight percent (28%) of this amount rounded to the nearest dollar remitted to the New Jersey Retirees' Education Association in accordance with a unified dues agreement between the NJEA and NJREA."*

This proposed amendment does not affect the dues formula for retired members who chose to renew their NJREA membership annually nor does it affect retirees who are already lifetime NJREA members. The purpose of the proposed amendment is to ensure the long-term financial stability of NJREA.

Nontenured? Know your rights and responsibilities

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

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

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

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

Membership Chairs: WDEA List #3 is due!

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 May. Once processed by the NJEA Membership Division, local presidents and membership chairs will be able to reconcile their list using the new 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. 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."

Where are the election results?

While NJEA elections were held in April for representatives to the NJEA Executive Committee, NJEA Delegate Assembly, and NEA Representative Assembly, as well as for positions as NJEA Delegate Assembly-Alternates, the process concluded after press time for this edition of the NJEA Review.

Election results will be posted on njea.org after the Elections Committee certifies the election results, which was scheduled to take place after press time on April 25.

Changing school districts? Salary guide placement is negotiable

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

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

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

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



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New attorney general guidance on NJ Family Leave Act

By David Bander



In February, the New Jersey attorney general's office distributed new guidance concerning the New Jersey Family Leave Act (FLA), which provides up to 12 weeks of job-protected, unpaid leave in a 24-month period for a variety of reasons, including to bond with a child and to provide care for a family member dealing with a serious health condition.

The guidance provides important clarifications to questions that members may have about FLA.

How is eligibility calculated?

In order to be eligible for leave, an employee must have worked 1,000 hours in the past 12 months. How is this calculated? These hours, referred to as "base hours," include the employee's regular work schedule, any overtime hours for which the employee received extra pay, any hours for which the employee received workers' compensation benefits, and any hours for which an employee would have worked except for having been in military service.

Base hours do not necessarily include paid time off (PTO), such as vacation or sick leave. An employer can include PTO as base hours but is not required to do so. However, if there is provision in the collective bargaining agreement or if the employer has a past practice of counting PTO as base hours, there may be a viable argument that it must continue that practice and cannot unilaterally change it.

How is leave time calculated?

Employees can take up to 12 weeks of leave in a 24-month period. How is this 24-month period calculated? The guidance indicates that the employer decides how to calculate it, provided that employees are given sufficient

The guidance provides important clarifications to questions that members may have about FLA.

notice and it is consistent for everyone. The leave period can be any of the following:

1. The calendar year (Jan. 1 to Dec. 31)
2. Any fixed-year period (such as the school year)
3. The 24-month period measured forward from the date that an employee first takes leave.
4. A rolling 24-month period measured backward from the date an employee uses any FLA leave.

Example 1

- An employer uses **Option 3** above for the leave period. An eligible employee who has not taken leave before, requests two weeks of FLA leave to begin on Nov. 1, 2024.
- Under this scenario, the employee could take no more than 10 additional weeks of leave through Nov. 1, 2026.
- This also means that the next 24-month period would begin the first time the employee takes leave after the completion of the prior 24-month period (Nov. 1, 2026)

David Bander is an associate director of NJEA Legal Services and Member Rights in the NJEA Executive Office. She can be reached at dbander@njea.org.

Example 2

An employer uses Option 4 above for the leave period. As in Example 1, an eligible employee who has not taken leave before, requests two weeks of FLA leave to begin on Nov. 1, 2024.

- Under this scenario, each time an employee takes leave, the remaining leave is the balance of the 12 weeks not used during the immediately preceding 24 months.
- Thus, if the employee requests two weeks of FLA leave to begin on Nov. 1, 2024, the employer would then look back 24 months (from Nov. 1, 2024 to Nov. 2, 2022) and during that time period, the employee could have used no more than 10 weeks of FLA leave in order to receive the requested two weeks.

Guidance for pregnancy and childbirth leaves

The guidance provides additional examples of when FLA can be used in the context of pregnancy and childbirth. It states that an employee can take leave to care for a pregnant family member who is on bed rest before the due date, or to care for a family member recovering from childbirth. These are considered to be “serious health conditions” under the law.

Get it in writing

The guidance indicates that an employer can require that a leave request be made in writing. In emergencies verbal notification is sufficient, but NJEA still recommends later securing a written confirmation. Furthermore, an employee does not have to specifically mention terms like FLA or family leave; it is enough that they express a desire to use leave for a covered reason.



If you are interested in additional resources about New Jersey’s Family Leave Act, contact your local association’s leave chair, local association leadership, or NJEA UniServ field representative who can connect you with the appropriate NJEA staff.



The state attorney general’s new guidance concerning the New Jersey Family Leave Act can be found at njoag.gov/njfla-faq.

What would you do if YOUR PAYCHECK suddenly stopped?

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How to *write* for the NJEA Review

What can I submit for publication?

Feature article

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

Letter to the editor

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

Speak out

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

I Am NJEA

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

Proud moments

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

Toolbox

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

How do I submit for publication?

Submitting content

Email submissions to njeareview@njea.org. Be sure to include your name and contact information, the name of your district and what you do there, the name of your local association, as well as the name and contact information of your local association president.

The review process

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

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



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COOL STUFF



HONOR COUNTY TEACHERS AND ESPS OF THE YEAR WITH THE THUNDER

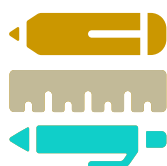
The Trenton Thunder will honor New Jersey's County Teachers and ESPs of the Year on Aug. 6 when they take on Ohio's Mahoning Valley Scrappers. Arrive early: the first 1,030 fans ages 5 to 13 will receive a "Boomer for the People" notebook, presented by NJEA. For more information and to purchase tickets for this game, visit fevo-enterprise.com/202320245.

If your county or local association would like to purchase a block of tickets for the game, email Meredith Barnes at mbarnes@njea.org.



CHECK OUT NJSBF'S SPRING EDITION OF THE LEGAL EAGLE

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation's *Legal Eagle* is not just a legal newsletter for kids. The spring edition includes articles on artificial intelligence, misinformation in social media and combating violence at youth sporting events. A PDF of the issue can be downloaded; copies can be ordered for classroom use; individual articles can be downloaded from the *Legal Eagle Low Down*. Educators can subscribe to receive future issues. Visit publications.njsbf.org.



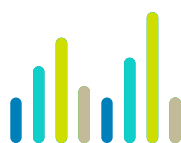
DONATE SCHOOL SUPPLIES AT THUNDER GAMES

The Trenton Thunder will be collecting school supplies all summer to support their "Boomer for the People" campaign. School supplies can be dropped off at the ballpark for any game including the Aug. 6 game honoring County Teachers and ESPs of the Year. For details visit, mlbdraftleague.com/trenton, hover over "Community," and click on "Boomer for the People."



CONVERSATION STARTERS FROM NJSBF

Start a thoughtful conversation during special months, special weeks and on special days using articles published in *The Legal Eagle*, our legal newspaper for kids, *Respect*, a diversity and inclusion newsletter, and *The Informed Citizen*, a civics blog. Articles can be downloaded, and discussions questions are included. Visit njsbf.org/conversation-starters.



STUTTERING AWARENESS WEEK IS MAY 13-19

To someone who stutters, many things in life are easier done than said—the opposite of the old adage. As the Stuttering Foundation notes, this play on words summarizes how the fear of speaking keeps many people from being heard. The foundation offers resources for those who stutter, their parents and their educators. For more information visit stutteringhelp.org.

AID-NJEA CAN HELP

The AID-NJEA helpline has served NJEA members and their families for nearly 20 years.

NJEA members and their families have access to this free and confidential service 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Educators and school counselors are on the line from noon until 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and until 6 p.m. on Fridays to provide peer-to-peer support and information to callers. In addition, University Behavioral Health Care provides mental health professionals who answer the helpline during all other hours for 24/7 coverage.

Why handle tough times alone? Whether you are a new teacher, a support staff member, or a retired school employee, AID-NJEA has people on the line who can provide guidance and information to help. Dial 866-AID-NJEA (243-6532) or email helpline@njea.org.

AID-NJEA is a program or partnership between the NJEA and Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care.



NJEA Report

Trenton celebrates 80th anniversary of Hedgepeth-Williams decision

Ten years before *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, two determined mothers in Trenton, Gladys Hedgepeth and Berline Williams, simply wanted their children to attend the newly built Junior #2 school in their neighborhood. But in grades 7-9, the policy of the Trenton Board of Education was to enroll students in schools based on skin color.

On Feb. 28, 2024, the descendants of Hedgepeth and Williams, as well as the descendants of attorney Robert Queen, gathered to mark the 80th anniversary of *Hedgepeth and Williams v. Board of Education, Trenton*. This landmark decision by the New Jersey Supreme Court brought an end to the official segregation of New Jersey's public schools. Queen was the attorney who took the Hedgepeth and Williams case to the state Supreme Court.

The celebration was held at the former Junior #2 School, which was renamed Hedgepeth-Williams Intermediate School in 1991.

The Hedgepeth-Williams decision

Editor's note: Most of this section of the article is an edited version of the "About Us" section of the Hedgepeth Williams Intermediate School's website.

Until 1944, four of Trenton's middle schools, Junior #1 through Junior #4, were attended exclusively by white students. Trenton's Black students were required to attend the New Lincoln School, later known as Junior #5. Today it is the home of the Luis Muñoz-Rivera Elementary School.

New Jersey was home to many segregated public schools despite a state law dating back to 1881 that prohibited such racism.

In mid-20th century Trenton, many residents lived near the factories where they worked. Consequently, these neighborhoods were racially diverse, as were the enrollments of the elementary schools that served them. All students, regardless of race, attended Trenton Central High School because the cost of duplicating the athletic fields, labs and swimming pool was prohibitive.

In 1939, a brand-new Junior #2 was built in the neighborhood in which the Hedgepeth, Williams and Snyder families lived. Their children, Janet, Leon and



Top: The Williams Family
Bottom: The Hedgepeth Family

Dolores, respectively, had been playmates and classmates through sixth grade. In the fall of 1943, the rising seventh graders applied for admission to Junior #2.

Dolores, who was white, was admitted, but Janet and Leon, who were Black, were turned away by a school secretary. Their mothers appealed the decision, which was first ignored, then denied by the school principal. It was soon also denied by the superintendent and the board of education.

Hedgepeth and Williams petitioned the NAACP, which assigned Queen to their case. When Queen discovered the 1881 law, which had never been enforced, he pursued the case all the way to the New Jersey Supreme Court. Dr. Paul



A commemorative plaque telling the story of Hedgepeth-Williams is unveiled by local, county and state leaders, family members and association representatives.

Loser, Trenton's superintendent at the time, testified that Junior #2 had not been "built for Negroes" and claimed that Black students were "better off" when separated from white students.

On Jan. 31, 1944, the court rendered its decision, ordering the Trenton Board of Education to immediately enroll Janet Hedgepeth and Leon Williams in Junior #2 and admit all Black students to all Trenton public schools by the end of the school year. The decision prohibited any school district in the state from denying admission to students on the basis of skin color.

Ten years later, Thurgood Marshall—who in 1967 became the first Black person to serve as a U.S. Supreme Court justice—cited the Hedgepeth and Williams case, forming the basis of that court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*.

Hedgepeth and Williams also influenced the passage of the 1947 State Constitution outlawing discrimination in all public affairs, ending the "Separate but Equal" doctrine in all government agencies and in the New Jersey National Guard 17 years before the Civil Rights Act of 1964 did the same thing for the rest of the nation.

Historical marker unveiled

An all-day celebration began in the foyer of Hedgepeth-Williams School, with Berline Williams' grandson, Daniel Napoleon, serving as emcee. He first introduced the school's current principal, Adrienne Hill and the district superintendent, James Earle. Both spoke about the

important legacy of the school.

Napoleon introduced Queen's great-granddaughter, Keli Tianga, who had initiated the petition drive to have a historical marker placed at the school.

"Robert Queen was affectionately called 'lawyer Queen' by community members and neighbors," Tianga said. "He loved Trenton, he loved its people, and he took great pride in using his legal training to help Black people gain equal access to our nation's resources."

Let us remember to continue
to make our own spaces
more diverse and inclusive.

Tianga noted that while Hedgepeth-Williams was one his most noteworthy cases, Queen also worked to integrate Rider University in 1941. In 1933, her great-grandfather, a Howard University graduate, argued before the state Supreme Court to desegregate Trenton Central High School's swimming pool.

"If the promise of this nation is working, there will always be change," Tianga said. "But we don't want any student who attends Hedgepeth-Williams, or a person in the neighborhood, to not know the reason why this

school is named what it's named. I hope that in reading the marker, students and neighbors not only take great pride in the history of their community but are inspired by the proof that it is ordinary citizens who have always brought about the greatest change in our nation."

Trenton Mayor Reed Gusciora noted that the anniversary celebration drew not only members of the Hedgepeth, Williams and Queen families and school district staff and leadership, but the lieutenant governor, legislators, city council members, and Mercer County leaders.

"Today, as we unveil this commemorative plaque, we not only honor the memory of the Hedgepeth and Williams families, but we also reaffirm our commitment to the principles of equality and inclusion," Gusciora said. "We acknowledge the progress we've made, but we also recognize the work that still lies ahead."

Lt. Gov. Tahesha Way quoted her daughter, Fiona, saying, "This is one of the greatest days evvvverrrrrr!"

Way noted that one of the highlights of her life was meeting the four surviving members of the Little Rock Nine who braved angry mobs, under the escort of federal troops, to be the first students to integrate Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas.

"Their story is only possible because of what was established and accomplished here in 1944," Way said. "We are stronger as a state because these two families fought to make educational access free and fair. Let us remember to continue to make our own spaces more diverse and inclusive."

Students celebrate Hedgepeth-Williams

In a packed auditorium, one beautifully accented by the Art Deco architecture that recalls the school's 1930s construction, over 500 students in grades 6 to 8 celebrated the anniversary.

Led by the school choir, students sang "Lift Every Voice and Sing." What followed were art exhibitions, poetry and musical presentations from the school's band and choir, as well as a solo from Principal Adrienne Hill.

Sixth graders presented the story of the Hedgepeth-Williams case. A student group called the Living Wax Museum presented the stories of famous Black Americans including Martin Luther King Jr., first self-made female American millionaire Madame C.J. Walker, President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, Vice President Kamala Harris, Olympic athlete Wilma Rudolph, "father" of the video game cartridge Jerry Lawson, first Black woman in space Mae Jemison, youngest known person arrested during the Civil Rights Movement Audrey Fae,

actors Michael B. Jordan and Will Smith, and entertainers Michael Jackson and Beyoncé.

Hedgepeth-Williams Teacher of the Year Shinetta Campbell offered remarks to close the student program.



The Trenton Paraprofessionals Association hosted the 80th anniversary celebration.

Community luncheon celebrates Hedgepeth-Williams

The day continued in the school's gymnasium with a luncheon hosted by the Trenton Paraprofessional Association (TPA). The walls were covered with student-created art commemorating the anniversary of the Hedgepeth-Williams decision. Other decorations, including table coverings were in the school's colors: orange and black.

Berline Williams' granddaughter, Pamela Haughton Owens, who served on the 80th anniversary planning committee along with TPA President Betty Glenn, Daniel Napoleon, Carol Perry, Gaye Taylor and Michelle Walker, opened the luncheon program.

Haughton Owens spoke to the importance of remembering and teaching the story of Hedgepeth and Williams.

"The Hedgepeth and Williams decision and the changes it influenced are virtually absent from New Jersey's rich civil rights history," Haughton Owens said. "But this history must be infused in the social studies curriculum that is taught in every public school in Trenton, in New Jersey and in this nation so that students and staff get a full understanding of how Hedgepeth and Williams has benefited them."

Among the dozen speakers at the luncheon—including school district, government, union and church leaders—



**Keli Tianga,
great granddaughter of
attorney Robert Queen.**



Lt. Gov. Tahesha Way



**A Hedgepeth-Williams student tells the story
Gladys Hedgepeth.**

was Trenton Councilwoman Yazminelly Gonzalez who told the audience that she is proud graduate of Hedgepeth-Williams Intermediate School. She delivered her remarks in English and Spanish and expressed her gratitude to Gladys Hedgepeth and Berline Williams.

“Their courageous spirit and commitment to education is what paved the way for me to attend this school,” Gonzalez said. “Their efforts are why we are able to stay here together all as one, no matter where we came from or what language we speak.

On behalf of Trenton City Council, Gonzalez presented proclamations to the Hedgepeth and Williams families.

“As we know,” Gonzalez concluded, “the Hedgepeth-Williams decision came 10 years before *Brown v. Board*. That speaks to the motto of this city: Trenton makes, the world takes.”

Members of the Hedgepeth and Williams families were well represented. Gladys Hedgepeth’s grandson, Gilbert Hedgepeth, and Berline Williams’ son, Arnold Williams, both spoke.

“My grandmother Gladys Hedgepeth’s unselfish devotion to the cause of fighting against the deeply entrenched barriers of institutional racism, racial prejudice, segregation, Jim Crowism and discrimination cannot, and must not, be depicted as ‘just ordinary,’” Gilbert Hedgepeth said.

He traced his grandmother’s long-term association with the Trenton chapter of the NAACP, particularly her advisership of the Trenton Youth Council. She led the youth to create group and holiday activities for soldiers housed at Fort Dix during World War II, purchase goods to assist needy residents in Trenton, organize travel and lodging for Trenton’s teens and young adults to attend NAACP youth conventions around the country, and plan campus visits to Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Arnold Williams, Berline Williams’ youngest son, traveled from Arizona to attend the anniversary event. He brought with him an official proclamation from the state of Arizona honoring the Hedgepeth-Williams decision.

“I was born in 1944, so I am a legacy child of the Hedgepeth-Williams decision,” Arnold Williams said.

Daniel Napoleon added that in addition the proclamation from Trenton City Council and the state of Arizona, proclamations had been received from the New Jersey Senate and General Assembly through Sen. Shirley Turner and Assembly members Verlina Reynolds-Jackson and Anthony Verrelli, and from the U.S. Congress through Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman.

The keynote speaker, Rev. Dr. Darrell L. Armstrong, placed the anniversary celebration in the context of Black History Month.

“When we look at Black History Month, we remember that for Black people, our history is in our stories—passed down from generation to generation to generation to generation, because for so many years we weren’t able to record our experiences or our history through any official means,” Armstrong said. “So we passed down our stories, expressions, dances, traditions, recipes, recollections, truths and lies. The preservation of the story is the essence of the black experience.”

Armstrong recounted the Hedgepeth-Williams story and the lessons it reveals: the courage and resilience of African Americans—particularly Black women, the power of education as a tool for social change, and that honoring the past allows us to embrace the future.

“As we commemorate this 80th anniversary of Hedgepeth and Williams versus Board of Education, we must remember the sacrifices and struggles of those who came before us while also looking towards the future with hope and determination,” Armstrong said. “It is our responsibility to continue the legacy of the civil rights movement, to stand up against injustice and to work towards building a more inclusive and equitable society for all.”

NJEA celebrates women

NJEA held its third Celebration of Women on March 10 at the Grand Marquis in Old Bridge. NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson and Wayne Township educator Lauren Spiller hosted the event.

Three women in particular were honored at the event: MaryJo Nagy, Spring Williams and Aida Wahba.

To view more photos from the event, visit [flickr.com/njea/albums/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/njea/albums/).

Dedicated to students with special needs

MaryJo Nagy is the 2023 Mercer County ESP of the Year. She is a job coach and instructional assistant in Lawrence Township. Committed to all educators, Nagy focuses on empowering educational support professionals (ESPs). An association representative, she is an unofficial mentor to new ESPs in Lawrence making sure they know their rights under the law and the contract.

A diver in her life outside of school, Nagy had been the head coach of a competitive swim team for 17 years. After one season, she learned that her program helped to save the life of a young man who was privately in a mental health crisis. His family shared that her program was the light at the end of his tunnel.

Nagy is a dedicated volunteer at the Special Olympics in the summer and did personal training with women who had been abused through a program called Beyond the Wall at the Trenton YMCA. She also helped to organize a program called Cinderella's Closet at her school, collecting donations of prom dresses, wraps, jewelry and shoes that helped to outfit several young women for the prom from head to toe.

Championing women's health and students' futures

Spring Williams has been an educator for 21 years. She currently teaches high school biology and environmental science in Moorestown.



Wayne Township educator Lauren Spiller (at microphone) and NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson hosted the NJEA Celebration of Women.

Diagnosed with breast cancer in 2019, she completed her rounds of chemotherapy and radiation in 2020, right before the COVID pandemic. The treatment and care she received from friends and family during her own treatment led her to begin the organization Inspiring Life Together.

The organization gives moms battling breast cancer all the services and support she received during her treatment—both to navigate the disease and to assist with day to day needs. These included free items to help with the symptoms caused by chemotherapy and radiation as well as school supplies and holiday gifts for their children. Williams also offers a recovery program for overall support and to reduce the risk of recurrence.

Williams is an advocate for educational equality. She is 1 of 5 educators in her school district who support at-risk youth through a program called Moorestown Cultural Arts. It introduces the students to various careers and colleges, including Historically Black Colleges and University, so they are aware of the numerous opportunities available to them.





Three NJEA members who were singled out for special honor at the NJEA Celebration of Women are congratulated by NJEA's officers. From left: NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson, Spring Williams, MaryJo Nagy, Aida Wahba, and NJEA President Sean M. Spiller.

Protecting at-risk youth

Aida Wahba has been an educator for 23 years. A high school Spanish teacher in Somerville, Wahba leads a program through her school called the Latino Institute. The program has increased the involvement of Spanish-speaking families by making them aware of the supports they have through the public school system.

Wahba also runs a Spanish Club that welcomes all students and allows them to experience the cultures of the Spanish-speaking world. She also works with the Genesis Club, a faith-based club initiated by students, that visits the elderly, feeds the homeless and provides gift bags to those living with cancer.

Outside of school, Wahba works with Forming Lives. Based in Bogata, Columbia, the organization works

to protect at-risk populations from human trafficking. She's working on bringing professional development and conferences to educators here at home to help them train their students to protect themselves.

Wahba also carries out that work through a group called Hands Full of Hope, with whom she travels each summer to the Dominican Republic. She often finds herself talking to younger girls. Many of them are child brides who married older men to escape poverty. Through conferences, she educates young girls about their options to prevent them from being used and manipulated by older men.



Recognizing ESP excellence

Nominations open for ESP of the Year, ESP Career Achievement, and Friend of ESP awards

At the NJEA Educational Support Professionals (ESP) Conference in February 2025, the association will introduce the 2025 NJEA ESP of the Year. NJEA will also confer the 2025 ESP Career Achievement Award and Friend of ESP Award.

Nominations forms for any of these awards can be found at njea.org/esp.

NJEA ESP of the Year Award

Local deadline: Aug. 5

County deadline: Aug. 19

NJEA will present the ESP of the Year Award to an NJEA member whose activities reflect the contributions of ESPs to public education. The purpose of the award is to recognize an individual who shows outstanding accomplishments in one or more of the following areas:

- Professional practice
- Member advocacy and association involvement
- Community engagement
- Personal achievement
- Enhancement of ESP image

An individual must be an NJEA member for three consecutive years as of Jan. 15 of the award year. The individual must be nominated by their county association through the county association's adopted procedures. Each county can submit only one nominee through its ESP award system.

A county award system is one developed by a county association that gathers nominations through local affiliates and selects one countywide award recipient. Criteria for the county award are designed by the individual county and should not conflict with the state and national award's criteria and purpose.

Local associations are encouraged to select a nominee and submit their name to their county association no later than **Aug. 5**. If you have a nominee in mind, visit njea.org/esp for a nomination form and immediately talk to your local or county association president about the nomination.

County associations must forward their single nomination form to NJEA by **Aug. 19**. The county's nominee is that county's ESP of the Year.

Career Achievement

Deadline: Oct. 15

The NJEA Career Achievement Award is given to a currently employed NJEA member who is an ESP association advocate. The nominee must have a minimum of 10 years employment in public education. The winner will have demonstrated a successful, long-term professional dedication and success to their employment position.

The deadline for Career Achievement Award nominations is **Oct. 15**.

Friend of ESP

Deadline: Oct. 15

The NJEA Friend of ESP Award can be bestowed upon any person or organization whose leadership, acts, dedication, commitment and support on the statewide level have proven that person or organization to be a true friend of and advocate for ESP and their contributions to public education and students.

An individual recipient need not be an NJEA member, but they should reflect the philosophy and principles of NJEA. However, if any individual nominee is eligible for active NJEA membership, such membership is a requirement.

The deadline for Friend of ESP Award nominations is **Oct. 15**.



NJEA leads Diversity Council on Global Education and Citizenship

The NJEA Consortium, in collaboration with the Holocaust Resource Center of Kean University, and the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, hosted a conference on “Journeys of Inclusion” on March 15 at Kean University’s Liberty Hall.

The conference opened with a panel of educators who have participated in the commission’s Holocaust Journey, which enables educators to travel to Europe and expand their understanding of the Holocaust.

The panel was moderated by NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty, who undertook the trip in 2023 with his wife, Cinnaminson special education teacher Tamara Beatty, who also participated on the panel. They were joined by Shana Stein, a teacher in Montclair and an adjunct faculty member at Kean, and Alexander DiGiovanni and Lisa Hanna, teachers in the Township of Ocean.

Breakout sessions led by area experts covered topics such as “Facing History & Ourselves NJ,” “Holocaust Education in New Jersey: 40 Years of Leadership and Learning,” and “LGBTQIA History and Disability Mandate and Curriculum: Practical Approaches for Today’s Classrooms.” “Amplifying Inclusivity and Representation with the NJEA Consortium” was facilitated by NJEA Consortium Design Team Ambassadors, Talena Lachelle Queen and Tamar LaSure-Owens.

The NJEA Consortium also supplied more than 200 inclusive children’s books for attendees.

New Jersey State Teacher of the Year Joe Nappi led a lunch and learn, and the day ended with a film screening of “The Hidden Child” and discussion led by Maud Dahme, a hidden child during the Holocaust who has led the commission’s Holocaust Journey since 1999.

The NJEA Consortium is composed of NJEA staff members and three cohorts of member design-teams. It is partnered with more than 25 colleges and universities, museums and historical commissions, and social and racial justice advocacy organizations. The consortium leads an innovative initiative that intends to infuse historically marginalized identities into K-12 teaching and learning.

Curriculum alone is not enough. The consortium also focuses on developing high-quality professional learning for members and fostering meaningful community conversations that will prepare all stakeholders to understand, embrace and celebrate New Jersey’s diversity.

For more photos from this event, visit [flickr.com/njea/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/njea/).





Teaching Social Justice in Your Classroom.

FULFILLING NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONAL MANDATES

This summer, Fairleigh Dickinson University is offering four 1-credit online classes that align with NJDOE instructional mandates on anti-bias/anti-racist topics. Each is designed to help teachers in grades K-12 effectively teach the history and stories of African Americans, Asian Americans, and LGBTQ+ peoples, and the history of the Holocaust.

About the Courses

FDU's social justice courses offer practicing teachers both content and pedagogical support. They focus on helping teachers confidently integrate these subjects in an age-appropriate way in their classrooms.

Our 1-credit online courses feature:

- Subject background and context, taught by content experts
- Strategies to access resources and identify curricular entry points to incorporate new information
- Guidance in modifying existing curricula

Teachers can take one or all courses. Credits also can be applied to FDU's new 12-credit Social Justice Education Certificate or select graduate education degree programs.

SOCIAL JUSTICE 1-CREDIT ONLINE SUMMER OFFERINGS

Teaching African American History
5 Sessions • Starts May 21 • 4:30-7 p.m.

Teaching LGBTQ+ History in Middle & High School
5 Sessions • Starts June 6 • 4:30-7 p.m.

Teaching Asian American History
5 Sessions • Starts June 24 • 4:30-7 p.m.*

Teaching Holocaust and Genocide
4 Sessions • July 15-18 • 11a.m. - 3 p.m. *

* Also will be offered in Fall 2024

For course descriptions
and additional information
scan the code or visit
fdu.edu/edsummer



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For Assistance in Applying, Contact FDU Graduate Admissions

EMAIL: grad@fdu.edu • CALL: 201-692-2554

Proud member of the school community, advocating for ESPs

Meet 2022-23 Gloucester County ESP of the Year Cori Burton



I felt reassured that my hard work has paid off.

fun with the kids and get to know the parents. You know all the staff and work closely with administrators. You have to wear many hats, and the phone is ringing all the time!”

Beyond her administrative duties, Burton has immersed herself in the school community, volunteering for homecoming, prom and other events. She takes pride in meticulously planning the graduation ceremonies, ensuring that all parties involved cross their t’s and dot their i’s, and even selecting the flowers and shrubs.

However, Burton recognized the underappreciation faced by educational support professionals (ESPs) within the district. Acting as an advocate for them, she emphasizes, “Educational support professionals run the schools—they would not function without us!”

Recognizing her dedication, Burton’s union encouraged her to represent the administrative assistants, leveraging her understanding of their challenges to advocate effectively. Initially hesitant, Burton embraced the opportunity, finding fulfillment in attending conferences, acquiring new skills, and assuming leadership responsibilities.

Her dedication and advocacy did not go unnoticed, as Burton was honored as the 2022-23 Gloucester County ESP of the Year. Reflecting on the recognition, she says, “It was validation. I felt reassured that my hard work has paid off. I love what I do. I always put myself out there and I’m not afraid of rejection. But I’m just so happy to be honored.” 🏆

Cori Burton hadn’t initially set out for a career in education, but fate led her to Delsea Public Schools nearly a decade ago when she applied for a position in the main office. Initially hired as a part-time administrative assistant, she is now the principal’s administrative assistant. Along the way, she found herself in a role that she now cherishes.

“I worked at Sony in Pitman until it shut down,” Burton recalls. “As part of the severance package, Sony paid for us to return to school if we chose. I finished my associate degree in education while caring for my son. When he turned one, I decided I wanted to get out and start working again. I worked at the mall for a year before applying to Delsea. Before I even got home from the interview, they told me I got the job.”

Finding fulfillment in the variety of tasks that each day brings, Burton shares, “It’s a fun atmosphere working in the office. You get a bit of all the worlds—you can have

Islamophobia on the rise

According to many published reports, acts of Islamophobic hatred are on the rise across America in recent months. Among the deeply concerning examples of anti-Islamic hatred and bias are several that have directly affected children and students.

- In October, a six-year-old Palestinian-American boy Wadea Al-Fayoume was stabbed and murdered by his family's landlord in Chicago. According to his mother, who was also attacked, the landlord yelled "You Muslims must die!" before attempting to choke and stab her.
- A teacher in Georgia threatened to beat and behead a seventh-grade Muslim student.
- In Michigan, a Palestinian Muslim student asked a school counselor if he could get a drink of water. The counselor reportedly denied the request because she does not "negotiate with terrorists."

This rise in hatred is both a state and national problem. Unchecked, it will lead to further incidences of violence, endangering Muslim students and educators and harming the learning and living environments of all schools and communities where it is found.

Schools must help students deal with the fear from highly publicized news stories involving Islamophobia, such as the shooting of three Palestinian Americans in Vermont over Thanksgiving as well as repeated threats to mosques in our own state. According to a leading civil rights organization, anti-mosque sentiment and intimidating acts in and around these houses of worship are more common in New Jersey than many other states.

Knowing how best to deal with Islamophobic incidents is only part of the solution. The best time to address Islamophobic acts against students and staff is before they happen. Learning more about how to recognize and address evidence of Islamophobia can prevent such incidents from occurring. That is critical because even the best-addressed incident of Islamophobia leaves a lasting mark on the students and staff who experience it.

Below are several resources to help NJEA members counter Islamophobia in their schools and communities.

Resources to address Islamophobia

NJEA Review

"American Muslim students need understanding and support"

njea.org/american-muslim-students-need-understanding-and-support



National Education Association

"Countering Islamophobia: Resources to challenge anti-Muslim bias and create safer, more welcoming communities."

nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/countering-islamophobia



"Maligned and Misunderstood: Muslim Students Speak Out"

nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/maligned-and-misunderstood-muslim-students-speak-out



Education Week

"How Schools Can Support Arab and Muslim Students"

edweek.org/leadership/opinion-how-schools-can-support-arab-and-muslim-students/2023/04

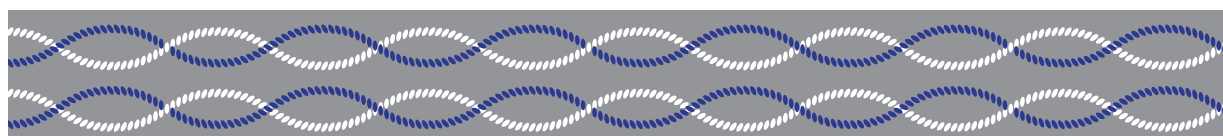


(Note: While *Education Week* is subscription based, your first few articles are free.)

U.S. Department of Education

"Resources for Preventing and Addressing Islamophobia In Schools."

sites.ed.gov/cfbnp/resources-for-preventing-and-addressing-islamophobia-in-schools



Antisemitism on the rise

According to published reports, New Jersey recorded the third-highest level of antisemitism in the nation in 2022, the most recent year of data. This was a 25% increase over the previous year, which at that time had been the highest ever recorded.

New Jersey isn't alone:

- A Brooklyn teacher told CBS News New York that students called her a dirty Jew and drew swastikas on her desk and bulletin boards. She notes Jewish students have left the school as a result of antisemitic incidents.
- A parent of a student in Westport, Connecticut wrote in *Newsweek* that his son was subjected to ongoing antisemitic harassment from other students, shouting at him phrases such as, "We must exterminate the Jews!" and pointing a squirt gun at him while yelling, "Shoot the Jew!"
- There has been a marked increase in desecration of Jewish ritual items such as mezuzot and menorahs, in antisemitic messages blaming Jews for 9/11 and either cheering or denying the Holocaust and in threats of violence and murder against Jews at colleges and universities—including posting the names, faces and faculty positions of Jewish professors.

This rise in hatred is a state and national problem. Education plays a key role in reducing hatred and building safe, inclusive environments for all students. Schools must help students deal with the fear resulting from highly publicized news stories involving antisemitism, such as the shooting at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. The story was again recently in the news following the sentencing of the perpetrator.

Knowing how best to deal with antisemitic incidents is only part of the solution. The best time to address antisemitic acts against students and staff is before they happen. Learning more about how to recognize and address evidence of antisemitism can prevent such incidents from occurring. That is critical because even the best-addressed incident of antisemitism leaves a lasting mark on the students and staff who experience it.

Below are several resources to help NJEA members counter antisemitism in their schools and communities.

Resources to combat antisemitism

NJEA Review

"Connecting educators with Holocaust education resources"

njea.org/connecting-educators-with-holocaust-education-resources



National Education Association

Resources to Counter Antisemitism and Holocaust Denial

nea.org/professional-excellence/student-engagement/tools-tips/resources-counter-antisemitism-and-holocaust-denial



"Taking on Antisemitism on College Campuses"

nea.org/nea-today/all-news-articles/taking-antisemitism-college-campuses



New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education

Curriculum guides and materials for the Holocaust, genocide and human rights

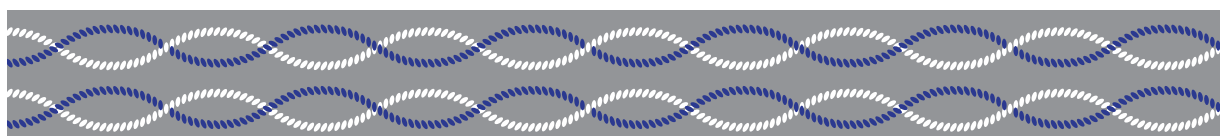
nj.gov/education/holocaust/curr/materials



U.S. Department of Education

Resources for Preventing and Addressing Antisemitism in Schools

sites.ed.gov/cfbnp/resources-for-preventing-and-addressing-antisemitism-in-schools



Woodstown's Communications Academy opens doors to communications careers

By Kathryn Coulibaly



Students in Woodstown High School's Communications Academy, a magnet program that attracts students throughout Salem County, are exploring careers in communications through a mix of hands-on courses and creative assignments. These include producing a daily television show, a podcast and projects that see them holding press conferences exploring the death of Julius Caesar or analyzing Holden Caulfield's mental health issues after reading *The Catcher in the Rye*.

The academy is a collaboration between the Salem County Vocational Technical Schools and Woodstown-Pilesgrove Regional School District, as well as regional experts and advisers in the field of communications. The goal of the program is to provide students with a comprehensive background in audio, visual, written and oral communications.

In addition, students can earn college credits at no cost to them through an agreement with Salem Community College.

"I think this is a great opportunity for kids to showcase themselves, their school and their abilities," says Jim Dementri, a graduate of Rowan University's Communications Radio/TV/Film program, and one of two primary instructors in the program.

Dementri, whose resume includes working on radio stations and time spent as an on-air sports broadcaster, music director and DJ, guides students through video production and radio broadcasting and production.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, media and communications jobs will increase by 6% from 2021 to 2031, although certain careers, particularly in marketing and management, will likely increase at a faster pace.

"We're preparing students for the kinds of careers they can pursue in media and communications," says Dementri. "Everything from video editor, producer, scriptwriter, news writer, camera operator, director, production assistant, audio broadcaster, audio technician, audio producer,

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broadcast journalist, audio visual specialist, news anchor, podcaster, content creator, social media manager, public relations specialist and journalist.”

Four years of intense learning

Students in ninth grade are introduced to communications and these potential careers. They begin working on the preproduction process and how to develop a story. Eventually, they move into production and discuss setting up shots, lighting and cameras. They learn video editing using platforms such as WeVideo. As they build their skills, they move to the industry standard Adobe Premiere Pro editing software as well as Adobe Audition.

In 10th grade, students learn more about audio editing, commercial writing, multitrack audio production, vocal development and public speaking skills. These students are responsible for the morning announcements over the school’s PA system four days a week.

“Every skill that they learn here they can use in their personal or professional lives, regardless of what careers they choose,” Dementri says. “You’re more valuable in a job if you’re able to perform many skills.”

It’s not only careers in media that require strong communications skills. Dementri points out that in careers

such as real estate, people are producing videos, taking photos and making commercials to promote the homes they are hoping to sell.

In 11th grade, students take two periods with Dementri or they take one of his classes and a communications-related elective. The focus is on broadcast communications and students work on the monthly news magazine show, “Woodstown in Focus,” which is available to students and staff in and out of school on the YouTube channel.

Seniors can opt to take two periods of communications classes or a single period paired with an independent study program. The seniors are also responsible for a weekly video news and announcements show called Woodstown Today.

They learn about commercials, PSAs and make promotional videos for school teams or clubs. Students also learn how to make documentaries, and some of the topics explore aspects of their town or the school.

One of the classes students can take is Fiction and Film. In this course they analyze film adaptations. They also learn how to critique films. By breaking down how a film is made and the choices that the creators made, students find that they understand the process better, even as they see their enjoyment of the film change.



"Students have told us, 'You're taking the fun out of the movie,'" Dementri laughs. "But we're teaching them to be better consumers. It's very important to think and look critically at all media you consume."

Other electives include advertising, public relations, journalism and creative writing.

Bringing the world to the students

Teachers in the program work with others outside the academy to provide additional resources and experiences to students. They work with the administration to get their messages out to the school and public. "Let's Talk Woodstown" is the superintendent's show with a student host. They also produce a video to welcome families to Back to School Night. Students livestream the school's annual volleyball tournament. Not only do they run the production, but they also provide play-by-play coverage and analysis.

"Students get excited, and they're taking off in their own directions," Dementri says. "They're doing interviews, working on a horror scene and experimenting with Photoshop and video editing programs. We've had students enter their films in Rowan University's film festival.

"We also participate in the 10 Day Film Challenge, as well as student videos nominated for a National Academy of Television Arts and Sciences Mid-Atlantic Student Production Awards," Dementri says. "We even turned a fun, team building holiday activity of building gingerbread houses into a full-on Food Network-style contest called Gingerbread Wars. We incorporated the entire senior class as the production crew of videographers, assistant producers, editors, production assistants and contestants."



Livestreaming school events

One of the newer projects for students is livestreaming events at the school, particularly sports, for the greater community.

"It took an initial investment of about \$8,000 in livestream equipment, but we've been able to do so much with that money," Dementri says.

Since 2021, the students have been livestreaming graduation, enabling more people to participate, particularly during the height of the pandemic. Students who work on livestreaming after-school events not only earn practical experience, but they are paid minimum wage for their labor.

"We have a budget of \$1,000 to pay students for these after-school activities," Dementri says. "It's important



The hands-on experience lets students create everything from screenplays to podcasts to videos.



After graduating from the Communications Academy, students are ready for the next step in their careers.

for them to be compensated for their time and skill, it's great for their resumes, and it also shows them to value the work they are doing."

A valuable investment in students' futures

The program, which began more than 25 years ago, has seen alumni go on to careers in communications that include editing, filmmaking, public relations, journalism and much more.

"Salem County Vo-Tech and Woodstown High School have invested in the technology we need to run this program," Dementri says. "That includes cameras, tripods, microphones, computers and programs like the Adobe suite, but it's really paying off in terms of giving students the skills and confidence to show what they've learned."

Physical upgrades to the classroom, studio and media center are making the program even more like what students will encounter in media careers. These upgrades include a new news desk, a control room for production, new computer desks, recording booths and storage.

"I like to see the students' results," Dementri adds. "When they give me their finished product, I'm proud of them."

View some of the students' work on the Woodstown High School Communications Academy YouTube page at youtube.com/c/WHSTV1 and follow them on Instagram using @whscommacad. 📺



Student-driven podcast wins grant

For the 2023-24 school year, Woodstown High School teacher Jim Dementri was awarded an NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Grant for Excellence in Education. With the \$9,000 from the grant, Dementri ran "Discussing Teen Issues – a Podcast" to provide students with an outlet to discuss the issues that matter most to them, from harassment and bullying to self-esteem to LGBTQIA+ to mental health.

Apply for an NJEA Hipp Grant

Grants from the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education help educators bring creative ideas to life. The only foundation of its kind in New Jersey, the Hipp Foundation supports initiatives to promote great ideas—whether they come from teachers, secretaries, custodians, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, cafeteria staff or any other member in the school community.

More than \$2.3 million in grants for innovative educational projects that represent a bold, fresh approach by public school employees has already been awarded. Apply for a Hipp grant and bring your innovative ideas to life. The annual deadline is March 1 each year. The portal will open on July 1, 2024 for the coming year. Grants range from \$500 to \$10,000.

Learn more at njea.org/hipp.

An ELA teacher's survival kit

by Gary J. Whitehead

In "Ooh La La," the title track to the 1973 album by the British rock band Faces, Ronnie Wood sings, "I wish that I knew what I know now / When I was younger."

That chorus has been much on my mind as I've delved deeply into the topic of recruiting and retaining high quality educators in my work as a fellow with JerseyCAN, a nonprofit education and policy organization. As a veteran high school English teacher, I've naturally zoomed in on the particular challenges faced by language arts teachers, those dedicated individuals who face the Sisyphean task of assessing and providing feedback to prodigious amounts of student writing each year.

English language arts (ELA) teachers routinely struggle to strike a balance between available time and time required to provide meaningful feedback. There were times when I had so many essays to read that I didn't have the time I needed to plan the dynamic lessons I knew could create. I'm sure I'm not the only one who has ever brought work to a faculty meeting, dividing my attention between my papers and the meeting.

Many of us have given up evenings and weekends—time that should be spent recharging, exercising and socializing—marking papers. Resenting these impingements, some of us may assign less writing, provide less meaningful feedback and derive less satisfaction from teaching. And, let's face it, they quit. Or, if they're eligible, they retire.

Teacher recruitment and retention are at an all-time low. The Task Force on Public School Staff Shortages in New Jersey reported last year that national enrollment in educator preparation programs declined by more than a third from 2008 to 2019. Just as alarming, an October 2022 NJEA survey found that only 21% of our members would encourage a friend or family member to become an educator, and 59% would "tell them that they should do something else." The statistics for teacher retention are just as bleak. The task force found that almost half of new teachers don't last two years.

The decline in teacher recruitment and retention in New Jersey—and the rest of America—can be attributed to many factors: low pay, poor mentorship, lack of work/life balance, heavy workloads, the time it takes to earn tenure

and the arduousness of certification. But poor mental health and wellness are significant factors, too.

Over the years, I've seen young teachers succumb to the stress. One new teacher at my school seemed, in her first few months, to be a natural. She never complained. She worked quietly. She had remarkable classroom management for a first-year teacher. But when winter break came, she left and never came back. Other colleagues, master teachers, even when they could retire, stuck it out for years.

So, how do some English teachers last so long while others don't? We rely on survival tactics.

In an effort to improve both English teacher recruitment and retention, I offer the following 10-item ELA Survival Kit. New teachers, I hope it helps you to hang on. Experienced teachers, I hope it reinforces practices that will ease your heavy load.

Give focused feedback

As well-trained proofreaders, many ELA teachers feel the need to correct every error in an essay and give actionable feedback. Scoring a class set of essays this way can take hours. And the many marks and comments can be overwhelming to students, especially those who dislike writing. Choose one or two skills to focus on and overlook the rest. Target other skills on the next writing.

Assign a part rather than a whole

Especially at the high school level, there's a perception that every summative assessment needs to be a multipage essay. What's wrong with having students write just a few paragraphs? Or a letter?

The same skills can be targeted. Start with shorter writings and assign full essays at the ends of units, quarters or semesters. One of my favorite assignments in AP English is a single-sentence writing for which students study a 139-word sentence by Hawthorne and then write their own grammatically correct sentence of the same length. Students routinely tell me that that tiny writing teaches them so much about sentence-building.

Strive for quality, not quantity

Unless your curriculum requires it, teach fewer books but go into more depth with them. ELA classes shouldn't be a speed-reading competition or a contest to see who can

Gary J. Whitehead, a 27-year English teacher at Tenafly High School, is the 2024 Bergen County Teacher of the Year. He can be reached at garold323@gmail.com.

teach the most books. Rather than a long novel, choose a novella, short stories or poems. Reluctant readers will enjoy the shorter texts. For ambitious readers, give optional independent reading.

Allow for in-class reading

There's a perception that in-class reading is a poor use of class time. That's nonsense. Allowing students to read quietly on their own or reading a text together as a whole class fosters a love of reading and teaches reading strategies.

Make it purposeful by focusing on skills such as developing inferences, identifying rhetorical strategies, and noting important details. Tie the in-class reading to the larger unit.

Flip your classroom

Reverse the typical cycle. Instead of lecturing or covering material in class, prepare short, prerecorded lessons you can assign for homework. Then spend class time on interactive and collaborative activities. There are Google extensions such as Screencastify or smartphone apps to record videos. Reuse these videos from year to year.

Conduct Socratic seminars

When feeling burned out from assessing student writing, switch to discussion. Make it student-centered. After students have read texts for a unit, assign seminar questions. Set the desks in a circle. If it's a large class, use a double-horseshoe and have the students on the inside discuss while the students on the outside listen. Switch midway through the period. Use a rubric to score. Ask students to assess one another's contributions, pairing inner and outer students.


Use online resources when appropriate

There's no shame in using a large language model AI interface to create plot summaries, chapter questions or objective tests. Perplexity or ChatGPT can create in 10 seconds what might take you 45 minutes. Just proof for accuracy and tailor to your needs.

Incorporate peer editing and self-assessment

Not every writing should require only teacher feedback. Peer editing is a valid pedagogical tool, building student relationships and fostering mentoring in which more skilled writers guide less skilled writers toward success.

Encourage self-assessment. Require students to refer to skills sheets and search for their own lapses in writing.



English language arts teachers routinely struggle to strike a balance between available time and time required to provide meaningful feedback.

Use formative assessments

Short and designed to scaffold skills, these can include quick-writes, exit tickets, pair-and-shares, 'one-pagers' and short oral presentations.

Don't reinvent the wheel

While there's always room to refresh your plans and materials, it's fine to repeat what works:

- Borrow from experienced colleagues who are willing to share. Those borrowed lessons will shave hours off your planning time.
- Reuse your own lessons. If you use a learning management system such as Google Classroom, Moodle or Blackboard, you'll have a treasure trove of lessons after a year or two. "Reuse post" is my go-to click when planning lessons, though I often tweak the assignment.
- Organize your Google Drive or desktop folders by course, unit or author to make materials easy to find. Keep binders with assessments.

I hope these strategies alleviate the burden of our ELA teacher members and keep them in the classroom. Until school boards and other policymakers recognize the additional assessment and planning time burdens faced by ELA teachers and reduce ELA class sizes and course loads, we are in survival mode as we strive to provide students with the meaningful and actionable feedback they deserve. 🏠

The power of representation

Welcoming male teachers of color into education

By Dr. Angello Villarreal



New Jersey has been rated first in public education across the country for the last several years. However, we need to acknowledge where we fall short and how it can influence our students' access to equity. One place where we fall short is the number of male teachers, especially male teachers of color. Among all teachers in New Jersey, the presence of male teachers of color is disproportionately low.

The absence of diverse male role models not only limits the potential of students of color but also deprives all students—and staff—of rich and varied perspectives and experiences. Understanding the power of representation is key to cultivating inclusive learning environments and nurturing the holistic development of students.

While female educators bring invaluable skills, hold key roles and bring important perspectives to education, the lack of male representation, especially men of color, leaves a gap. The importance of having significant

Dr. Angello Villarreal with students at the Empowering Young Black Males Summit hosted by Monmouth University.

Angello Villarreal, Ed.D., is an award-winning teacher of Spanish at Freehold Regional High School and an adjunct professor at Monmouth University. Born and raised in Peru, Villarreal focuses his research and teaching on culturally responsive practices, culturalization, language acquisition and providing more equitable opportunities for all students. From creating after-school programs to leading various projects, Dr. Villarreal believes working with the community is critical for the student's success. He can be found on X using @DrV_Profe.

Certified Teachers (2018-2019 SY)		NJDOE Data Report	Certified Teachers (2022-2023 SY)	
116,826		Total	116,698	
90,050	77.1%	Total Females	90,142	77.2%
26,776	22.9%	Total Males	26,595	22.7%

Since the middle of the 19th century, women have dominated the teaching profession, particularly at the elementary level.

numbers of male teachers, particularly those from diverse backgrounds, cannot be overemphasized. Male teachers serve as mentors, advocates and positive role models. This is especially beneficial to young boys of color who often lack relatable figures in academic and educational settings.

What are the numbers in New Jersey?

According to the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), the percentage of high school students graduating in four years in 2021-22 was 90.9%. But it looks very different once this data is broken down by race/ethnicity, where the rate is 95% for white students, and 84.9% for Hispanic students, and 85.5% for Black students. These numbers should be of concern regardless of whether they correlate with the representation of men of color in the profession.

Chronic absenteeism should also be taken into consideration. In New Jersey, students are considered chronically absent when they miss 10% or more school days. Statewide, chronic absenteeism for all students is 18.1%.

Broken down by race/ethnicity the differences are astonishing. New Jersey's white student population has a 12.9% chronic absenteeism rate, while Black and Hispanic students have a 28.4% and 23.4% chronic absenteeism rate, respectively. Is the lack of diverse educators a factor in these numbers?

The importance of a diverse teaching force

The presence of male teachers of color challenges stereotypes, misconceptions, widens students' horizons and helps them dream of greater possibilities for themselves. The societal biases and stereotypes that continue to persist often limit the perceived potential of underrepresented groups. Seeing individuals who challenge these stereotypes can be transformative and empowering for all students.

Male teachers of color serve as living examples of success and role models all while breaking stereotypes and inspiring students to pursue their dreams, regardless of societal and cultural expectations or prejudices.

Moreover, male teachers of color bring diverse perspectives and experiences to the classroom, enriching the educational environment for all students. Their unique backgrounds, experiences and cultural insights help foster a more inclusive and comprehensive understanding of the world. This diversity of perspectives enhances learning and prepares students to thrive in an increasingly multicultural and interconnected society.

Furthermore, male teachers of color play a crucial role in countering the achievement gap that disproportionately affects students of color. Research consistently shows that having teachers who share similar racial or ethnic backgrounds improves academic outcomes for students, particularly those from marginalized communities.

A diverse teaching force, including more male teachers of color, also creates bridges among various demographic groups within the school. Male teachers of color understand the cultural nuances and challenges faced by students who look like them. These teachers can provide targeted support and create culturally responsive learning environments that empower students to succeed. Such approaches otherwise might be overlooked.

Male teachers of color serve as mentors and advocates, offering guidance and support beyond academics. For many students, especially those from underserved communities, having a supportive adult figure can make a significant difference in their lives. Male teachers of color serve as mentors who not only believe in their students' potential but also provide the encouragement, rigor, direction and support needed to overcome obstacles and achieve goals.

Student Enrollment (2018-2019 SY)		NJDOE Data Report	Student Enrollment (2022-2023 SY)	
1,364,714		Total	1,371,921	
663,199	48.6%	Total Female	666,559	48.6%
701,515	51.4%	Total Male	704,687	51.4%
589,865	43.2%	Total White	528,157	38.5%
206,702	15.1%	Total Black	200,630	14.6%
393,474	28.8%	Total Hispanic	455,575	33.2%
84,079	6.1%	Total English Learners	116,699	8.5%

In the last five years, the number of Hispanic students, and English learners (emerging multilingual students) has grown significantly.

Systemic barriers

Despite the clear benefits of having male teachers of color in education, systemic barriers persist, hindering their recruitment and retention. From implicit biases in hiring practices to inadequate support and professional development opportunities, male teachers of color face numerous challenges throughout their careers.

Addressing these barriers requires a multifaceted approach.

Educational institutions must prioritize diversity and inclusion in their hiring practices, actively seeking out qualified male teachers of color and creating pathways for their professional growth and advancement. These efforts to support and retain male teachers of color must extend beyond recruitment, encompassing mentorship programs, culturally responsive teaching training and opportunities for leadership development.

Additionally, policymakers and education stakeholders must work together to address the systemic inequities that contribute to the underrepresentation of male teachers of color. This includes advocating for fair distribution of state funding for education, promoting equitable access to resources, creating task forces to support males in education, and developing policies that promote diversity and inclusion in the teaching profession.



Dr. Angello Villarreal, Tiriq Callaway from Long Branch Public Schools and Dr. Vernon Smith from Monmouth University at the Brookdale Community Male Minority Initiative.



Proud Freehold Township High School students at the Brookdale Community College Male Minority Initiative.

Programs that are working to make a difference

Universities, colleges and various organizations are working to support the diversity of the teaching force across the state and the nation. From NJEA and the Members of Color (MOC) Network supporting members in their union and in their school districts, to college and university programs that support their students of color, change is possible.

For example, Brookdale Community College and its Male Minority Initiative Conference and Monmouth University and its Empowering Young Black Males mentoring program both welcome high school students from diverse backgrounds and ethnicities to attend conferences. Through various presenters, they can develop leadership skills while being empowered to reach their true potential.

For students already enrolled, Rowan University offers Project IMPACT (Increasing Male Practitioners and Classroom Teachers), which aims to increase the representation of males from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds into teaching. At Kean University, Project Adelante is designed to reduce the dropout rate among Latino students by providing immersive experiences and activities designed to help students pursue higher education. Project Adelante is an alliance between Kean University and the Passaic, Perth Amboy and Plainfield school districts.

Working with students at the middle and high school levels, the Center for Future Educators (CFE) is helping today’s diverse students see themselves as the next generation of educators. Based at The College of New Jersey, NJEA regularly partners with CFE.

CJPRIDE, or Central to Jersey Program for the Recruitment of Diverse Educators, is a consortium of school

districts throughout New Jersey. It supports teacher-candidates from diverse backgrounds and advocates for them.

Nationwide, there are many organizations that advocate for diversity in the teaching force while offering support and mentoring for those already in the classroom. These include Edifying Teachers, Real Men Teach, the National Fellowship for Black and Latino Male Educators and the BOND Project, among others. 🏠



Listed here are just a few of the many organizations here in New Jersey and across the country working to diversify the teaching force.

The Bond Project
bondeducators.org

Center for Future Educators
futureeducators.tcnj.edu

CJPRIDE
cjpride.com

Edifying Teachers
edifyingteachers.com

The National Fellowship for Black and Latino Male Educators
nfbhme.org

NJEA Members of Color Network
njea.org/MOC

Real Men Teach
realmenteach.com

Parental involvement improves students' academic achievements

Dr. Gnanaseharan Selliah, Ed.D.

Increasing parental involvement in children's education is crucial for fostering academic success and students' overall well-being. As a public school teacher for the past 25 years, a parents' adviser and the father of a young adult son, I have planned and implemented educational decisions for my son that paved the way for him to excel in education, sports, community service, leadership and other areas during his high school career.

My son went on to complete his undergraduate studies at Princeton University, obtain a master's degree at the London School of Economics and become a Fulbright scholarship recipient to do postgraduate studies in India. He is currently pursuing a doctoral degree on a full scholarship at Stanford University.

While my pride in my son's achievements is clear, it is not my goal to brag, but to stress the importance of parental involvement in education. I share my experience of playing an important role in my son's academic achievements with other parents because I believe this may help them navigate their way in helping their own children.

I began by setting high but realistic academic expectations for my son, and I kept encouraging him to strive for excellence. I emphasized the importance of facing challenges at school and in his personal life and to resolve them with minimal help from his parents or teachers.

By establishing a daily routine that included dedicated time for studying, homework, leisure and reading, I hoped to instill in my son good study habits and discipline in his life.

As an immigrant student trying to navigate through a new educational and cultural system in Newark, my son, like any other immigrant student, faced challenges and



Parental involvement is crucial to a child's academic development.

obstacles. He nonetheless achieved his goal of getting into an Ivy League school with support from his teachers and parents.

Parental involvement is crucial to a child's academic development. Their care and influence on their children's daily routines significantly impact their learning, behavior, social and emotional progress, and leadership and problem-solving skills.

Throughout his school career, I was in constant communication with various school administrators, teachers and counselors to make certain that my son's learning went smoothly. I attended parent-teacher conferences and school events, and I volunteered in his classroom and the broader school community. I believe that building positive relationships with teachers and school staff fosters collaboration and ensures that parents are informed about their children's progress and any concerns that may arise.

Significance of parental involvement

Students with involved parents tend to perform better academically than those without such involvement. Parental involvement is linked to students' improved attitudes toward school and better behavior in the classroom. Moreover, parental involvement helps to build strong parent-child relationships and foster a sense of security. A disconnect between the school and parents negatively affects students' academic standards.

Dr. Gnanaseharan Selliah is an English as a second language teacher at Bloomfield High School in Essex County. He has taught various public schools, community colleges and universities in Sri Lanka, South Africa, Canada and the United States for the past 35 years. Selliah earned his doctorate in Educational Leadership from Liberty University in Virginia in 2023. He conducts in-person and online seminars and conferences to promote parental involvement in children's education. He can be reached via email at drgnanaseharan@gmail.com.



How to improve parental involvement

Parental involvement in education has a long-lasting impact on children's education and on the positive development of the school itself. Their involvement can take many forms, including volunteering, attending parent-teacher conferences and participating in school decision-making processes.

School leaders, teachers, parents and the community all contribute to children's academic success. When parents are involved in school activities and events, it fosters better communication and collaboration between parents, teachers, and school administrators. This can lead to the development of more effective teaching strategies, tailored interventions for struggling students, and a better understanding of student needs, all of which can lead to the school's improvement and development.

Though children often spend more time with teachers than with their parents, education is still viewed as the central responsibility of parents and guardians. Lack of parental involvement has been a great concern for many schools in recent years, and improving parental involvement may lead to positive development in multiple areas including improving the quality of education, enforcing disciplinary measures, and building relationships with families and communities.

It is important that schools actively engage parents in decision-making processes and create opportunities for families to participate in school activities. For example, schools can update parents regularly with information on their children's academic progress and strategies, which may help parents support children's learning at home. Research studies find a positive correlation between

Communication: Establish clear and effective communication channels between parents and schools, such as newsletters, emails and parent-teacher conferences to keep parents informed about their child's progress and school activities.

Family engagement activities: Organize family-oriented events and activities, such as family nights, literacy workshops or cultural celebrations to create opportunities for parents to engage with their child's school and participate in their learning journey.

Technology integration: Utilize technology platforms and digital tools to facilitate communication and engagement between parents and schools, such as parent portals, online forums or mobile apps for accessing school information and resources.

parental involvement and academic achievement across all grade levels, and it is most effective when it is focused on academics and general involvement in school activities.

The history of parental involvement

According to a 2016 report from the U.S. Department of Education, parental involvement was actively encouraged by the 1960s and 1970s, when there was a movement toward greater parental involvement in education.

With the introduction of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1975, parental involvement became mandatory in the education of children with disabilities. This legislation recognized the importance of parental involvement in the education of all children, which paved the way for increased parental involvement in schools. According to the USDOE report, the percentage of students whose parents participated in the meetings at their child's school increased from 72% in 1996 to 89% in 2016.

Fostering increased parental involvement

Parental involvement not only improves children's academic achievement but also has a positive impact on the whole community. Actions that increase parental involvement may include the creation of programs that connect parents, such as the creation of family collaboration networks. These networks can build a strong partnership between parents and teachers, providing tools and guidance for families to help children complete their homework and other school activities.



Positive effects of parental involvement

Academic success: Research shows that students with involved parents tend to perform better academically, have higher attendance rates, and exhibit more positive attitudes toward school.

Social and emotional well-being: Parental involvement contributes to children's social and emotional development by providing them with a strong support system and nurturing environment, leading to higher self-esteem and resilience.

Positive school culture: Schools with high levels of parental involvement often have a more positive and supportive school culture, fostering collaboration between teachers, parents and students, enhancing overall school effectiveness.



Children learn what they live and emulate their parents' behavior.

Through networking, parents can share valuable resources and information related to education, such as recommended tutors, scholarship opportunities, writing contests, educational smartphone apps, study techniques and extracurricular opportunities. This exchange of knowledge can help parents better support their children's learning needs.

Teachers play a crucial role in increasing parental involvement by maintaining close ties with families and creating open lines of communication to keep them updated with the latest educational developments at school.

Improving parental involvement requires school administrators to communicate with parents regularly and build networks and programs that incentivize parental involvement. Creating a welcoming and inclusive school environment encourages parents to actively participate in school activities and events.

Schools can organize orientation programs for new parents, provide volunteer opportunities and involve them in decision-making processes. For example, schools can present workshops, seminars or information sessions aimed at educating parents about the importance of their involvement in their children's education. These programs can also provide parents with strategies and resources to support their children's learning at home.

Parents as role models

Parents, who model positive behavior and emphasize the importance of good conduct at home, school and community, contribute to their children's understanding of appropriate behavior at school. Children learn what they live and often emulate the behavior they observe in their parents. Parents who are involved in their children's education are more likely to support school initiatives such as fundraising efforts, volunteering or advocating for policy changes. This can help schools implement new programs more effectively, which leads to school improvement.

Parental engagement in education during the early childhood years is one of the key strategies that school leaders could use to close the achievement gap among students. Consistency between home and school



More to read

U.S. Department of Education

"Parent and family engagement in education: Results from the National Household Education Surveys Program of 2016"
nces.ed.gov/pubs2017/2017102.pdf



Children with involved parents are more likely to have a positive attitude toward school.

environments reinforces behavioral expectations, contributing to a more stable and positive school experience for the child. When parents become supportive of their children by helping to resolve issues such as preparing for tests and selecting the right courses, they empower them with skills in conflict resolution.

Parents who communicate regularly with teachers and actively monitor their children's progress are better equipped to address behavioral issues promptly. Children who feel emotionally supported at home tend to exhibit fewer behavioral problems at school, which leads to a positive attitude toward learning. Moreover, parents' involvement in resolving children's behavioral issues, such as withdrawal and anxiety symptoms, helps teachers and administrators to resolve those problems before they develop further.

Parental involvement promotes academic achievement

Children with involved parents are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes toward school, higher levels of school attendance, and fewer disciplinary issues. Parental involvement fosters a sense of connection and belonging within the school community, which encourages children to engage actively in their education.

When parents are engaged in their child's education, they often set higher standards and expectations for academic performance, which can motivate children to strive for success.

Collaborative partnerships between parents, schools, and teachers are essential for student success. Involved parents communicate regularly with teachers, attend parent-teacher conferences, and participate in school events, allowing them to stay informed about their children's academic growth and work together with educators to address academic needs.

From the editor:

NJEA Families and Schools Together Work for Children

The NJEA's Families and Schools Together Work for Children (FAST) program encourages families to be involved in their children's education and enhance their academic progress. The program also helps families feel welcome in public schools. FAST is a coalition of education advocates, community groups and schools working together to foster family involvement.

FAST program activities

NJEA FAST offers resources to local and county associations for various initiatives, including:

- Partnerships, discussions and programs focusing on family involvement.
- Family involvement workshops through which parents and caregivers learn more about helping children succeed in school. These events include activities for children so that families can attend them together.
- Visits by school employees to participating places of worship and other community meeting places to invite and encourage parents and caregivers to participate in teacher conferences and school activities.

FAST is a jointly sponsored effort of NJEA, local associations, the Statewide Parents Advocacy Network, and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc, with additional program support from the NAACP Statewide Education Committee.

Visit njea.org/FAST to learn more.

Children generally feel more comfortable discussing their learning challenges with their parents than with their teachers. Learning can thus be more effective in a relaxed environment when parents assist students with homework and discuss various matters related to their education. Moreover, children improve school grades when parents provide assistance at home, which benefits adolescents across all races and ethnic groups. 🏠

Outdoor and ambient air quality at NJ schools

Reviewing key sources and common pollutants

By Zarin Hussain, MPH (c) and Derek G. Shendell, D. Env., MPH



Why is this topic important?

There are many environmental health and safety issues facing New Jersey's K-12 schools every day. One of them is mostly beyond the jurisdiction of the school district and individual school and is driven by both natural and human sources.

What is it? It's outdoor or ambient air quality surrounding a campus and its buildings occupied daily by public school staff and students. These individuals may be managing asthma and other chronic health conditions, making them more susceptible to exposure and more vulnerable to health risks.

In this article, we briefly summarize the major pollutants of concern and associated adverse health outcomes. We note that some pollutants do have indoor combustion sources, but they tend to be present less often in school classrooms compared to homes and many worksites.

Particulate matter

There are two size fractions or aerodynamic diameters used by government agencies and researchers to describe particulate matter or particles (PM): respirable or coarse, PM10, and fine, PM2.5.

In general, excluding natural sources of PM (e.g.,

pollen from grass, flowers, trees and weeds), PM10 is typically more associated with dust on roads and surfaces both indoors and outdoors, and PM2.5 is typically more associated with combustion of fossil fuels like oil, natural gas, diesel, coal and wood.

Factors such as idling and traffic contribute to higher levels of exposure among K-12 students, and frequently cause adverse health impacts on students. Since the bodies of these students are not fully developed, the impacts of exposure to particulate matter are more serious in contrast to staff. Even though serious impacts are experienced by children, long-term exposure can trigger adverse health outcomes for staff.

According to one study, children who were located farther from school in an area with less traffic experienced higher levels of exposure to particulate matter while students who walked to school in an area with high levels of traffic had lower exposures. This was due in part to the fact buses—mostly operated on diesel fuel known to have higher pollutant emissions including PM2.5—are commonly used to transport students living farther away.

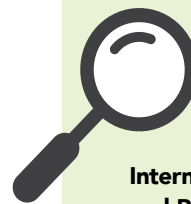
There is a correlation between exposure to PM10 or less and negative effects on test scores and reasoning. There is a positive correlation between PM2.5 exposure from traffic and negative health outcomes among students of color and those who are eligible for subsidized meals. There is a correlation between PM2.5 exposure caused by traffic and visits to the emergency room due to issues with asthma.

Nitrogen oxides

Nitrogen oxides, especially nitrogen dioxide or NO₂, are recognized as one of the most serious air pollutants among K-12 schools. Exposure to nitrogen oxides, especially nitrogen dioxide, not only triggers adverse health impacts among students, but is also one of the most crucial particles involved in the chemical reaction necessary to form other pollutants such as ozone. This triggers more adverse health impacts among students since their bodies are not fully developed.

Students are frequently exposed to NO₂ from traffic located near schools, particularly among students of color and those of low income. Exposure to nitrogen compounds among students with asthma could potentially increase the risk of inhibition of proper airflow.

Dr. Derek Shendell is a professor at the Rutgers School of Public Health where Zarin Hussain is working toward her master's degree in public health, majoring in environmental health sciences. They worked in coordination with the New Jersey Work Environment Council to produce this article.



Resources

According to a review, there is a correlation between exposure to NO₂ and negative impacts on working memory. High exposure to NO₂ potentially increases the chance of lung disease among students. Exposure to NO₂ leads to this compound reacting with the immune system and increases the chance of the development of respiratory tract infections. Notably the chemical reaction between nitrogen compounds, sunlight and volatile organic compounds leads to the formation of ground level ozone.

Ozone

Sources of direct emissions of ozone indoors include equipment that releases the gas such as photocopiers, air cleaners and printers. Factors such as a building's age, window openings, air conditioning, carpeting and window fans are correlated to the level of ozone indoors. Exposure, even within the limits of current federal and state ambient or outdoor air quality standards, still heavily affect rates of absences from school among all grade levels and schools of various socioeconomic backgrounds. All this while the current limits may be considered only initial guidelines for indoor air quality.

Notably, even higher ozone and particulate rate ratios were found among those in elementary school than those in the middle and high school levels. This is because younger children's lungs are still not fully developed and are therefore more vulnerable to ozone and PM_{2.5}. This disparity held even when the elementary school had lower levels of exposure than the higher grades.

According to a study, there was a correlation between exposure to pollutants such as PM_{2.5} and absences. There is also a correlation between exposure to each of these contaminants and the number of absences from school.

International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health

"School Locations and Traffic Emissions—Environmental (In)Justice Findings Using a New Screening Method"

By Philine Gaffron and Deb Niemeier
bit.ly/4crcKJC

"The Effects of Traffic Air Pollution In and Around Schools on Executive Function and Academic Performance In Children: A Rapid Review"

By Nicola Gartland, Halah E. Aljofi, Kimberly Dienes, Luke Aaron Munford, Anna L. Theakston and Martie van Tongeren
bit.ly/4a6pie3

Journal of Urban Affairs

"Impact of School Location on Children's Air Pollution Exposure"

By Mary K. Wolfe, Noreen C. McDonald, Saravanan Arunachalam, Richard Baldauf and Alejandro Valencia
bit.ly/3PqbFaL

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Compliance and Enforcement
Previous ACEAcademy Training Presentations
"Idling Regulations and Idling Enforcement"
bit.ly/3vhr6vl

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

"Sources of Indoor Particulate Matter"
bit.ly/4apx0th



What can local associations do?

It is critical to prevent exposure to these ambient air pollutants. One way this could be accomplished is by reducing idling outside of schools. In New Jersey, this is the law, and cars, trucks and buses are restricted to no more than three minutes of idling year-round.

In addition, we recommend:

1. Provide adequate ventilation, with sufficient particulate matter filtration.
2. To reduce exposure, decrease the use of equipment (e.g., printers) and products such as chemicals used for cleaning because they release ozone and substances that react with ozone.

Other gases

Traffic directly and indirectly leads to exposure to air pollutants—both outdoors and indoors via open windows and doors or poorly functioning mechanical ventilation systems with filtration—including such particulate matter as PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀, nitrogen oxides including NO₂, carbon monoxide or CO, sulfur dioxide or SO₂, and selected volatile organic compounds known or suspected as toxic.

Notably, SO₂ leads to respiratory problems among those who are healthy and patients with pulmonary disease. Exposure to SO₂ (based on experimental results) changes the airway and increases the resistance of the airway.

Notably, there is a correlation between both acute and chronic exposure to carbon monoxide and negative cardiopulmonary outcomes. 🌍



PAST, PRESENT
AND FUTURE

ASSISTANCE FOR SURVIVORS WHEN A LOVED ONE PASSES

The death of a loved one is a traumatic event. Dealing with your own feelings as well as those of the family, in addition to making all the necessary arrangements, can result in overlooked details and confusion.

NJREA and NJEA offer these general suggestions. They should be adapted to your situation through conversations with family and conferences with legal and/or financial advisors.

The following excerpt comes from the New Jersey Division of Pensions and Benefits Fact Sheet #10 which can be downloaded from bit.ly/njpb-fs10.

When the death of a member of one of the New Jersey State-administered retirement systems occurs, the member's family or survivors should notify the Division of Pensions and Benefits at 609-292-7524 and provide the following information:

- The full name of the deceased.
- The deceased's Social Security, pension membership, or retirement number.
- Date of death.
- The name, mailing address, and telephone number of the person handling the deceased's affairs.

Once a member's death is reported, the Division of Pensions reviews the member's account to determine what benefits, if any, are due. The Division of Pensions informs the named beneficiary or beneficiaries by letter of the benefits payable and sends the necessary claim forms.

The processing time for paying a claim depends upon when the Division of Pensions receives the following items from the beneficiary:

- A certified death certificate; a photocopy is not acceptable.
- All claim forms, properly completed.
- Any uncashed pension checks sent to a deceased retiree (any monies due will be reissued to the beneficiaries or the estate).

In addition to notifying the New Jersey Division of Pensions and Benefits, a survivor of the deceased may want to consider some of the following:

- Locate the family's important papers.
- Request several copies of the death certificate (there may be a fee). You will probably find that those who request a death certificate require an original.
- If a spouse/member was actively employed, or on a leave of absence and had not filed an application for retirement, contact the decedent's board of education. The board will process the Division of Pensions and Benefits paperwork for life insurance benefits and for the return of pension contributions.
- If a spouse/member applied for retirement and their death occurred prior to the date of retirement, contact the New Jersey Division of Pensions and Benefits at 609-292-7524. The Division will contact the beneficiary(ies) named in the application for retirement to either select the retired or active death benefit.
- If a deceased person was retired and covered by the School Employee Health Benefits Program (SEHBP), the surviving spouse should request a retired change of status application, if they wish to continue coverage under the SEHBP.
- If the deceased was enrolled in Medicare Part B, notify Social Security.
- If the deceased had an NEA Group Life Insurance plan or NEA Dues Tab Insurance, contact that office at 800-637-4636.
- If death was due to an accident, and/or covered under the NJEA-endorsed Disability Insurance Program, contact Prudential at 800-727-3414.
- If the spouse/member was ever in the military service, notify the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. There may be death benefits.

This is certainly not an all-inclusive, or exhaustive list, and family members of the deceased should always consult with an attorney and/or tax professional.

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

May 14: Spring meeting/luncheon at Seasons Catering in Washington Township. Cost is \$50. To attend, call Randy Allshouse at 973-460-1262 by May 5.

BURLINGTON COUNTY REA

May 16: Spring meeting/luncheon at Marco's at Indian Springs Country Club in Marlton. Cost is \$25. To attend, call Donna O'Malley at 609-268-0838 by May 2.

ESSEX COUNTY REA

May 15: Spring meeting/luncheon at Hanover Manor in Hanover. Cost is \$40. To attend, call Kathie Osborne at 973-715-6591 by May 8.

GLOUCESTER COUNTY REA

May 14: Spring meeting/luncheon at Riverwinds Restaurant in West Deptford. Cost is \$30. To attend, call Margery Walsh at 856-381-1123 by May 4.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY REA

June 13: Scholarship meeting/luncheon with officer installation at The Grand Marquis on Old Bridge. Cost is \$43. To attend, contact Susan Jaysnovitch at 732-925-1606 or andyjace@aol.com by June 3.

MONMOUTH COUNTY REA

June 4: Officer installation and philanthropic luncheon/meeting at Battleground Country Club in Manalapan. Cost is \$45. To attend, call Debbie Adamchak, 848-459-2672 by May 25.

MORRIS COUNTY REA

June 12: Scholarship Awards Ceremony and 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 June 1.

PASSAIC COUNTY REA

June 5: Summer meeting/luncheon at the Brownstone House in Paterson. To attend, call Kitty Sausa at 201-445-7577.

UNION COUNTY REA

May 1: General Membership Meeting/Spring Luncheon at Casa Del Rey in Roselle Park; 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Luncheon is \$40. To register, call Donna Mertz-Burkhardt by May 11 at 908-686-2390.

WARREN COUNTY REA

June 5: Meeting/luncheon at Hawk Pointe Golf Club in Washington. Registration required by May 29. Luncheon is \$30. To register, go to www.warrencountyrea.org/meetings.



Members of Color Empowerment Conference June 7-8, 2024

Double Tree by Hilton Cherry Hill Philadelphia • 2349 Marlton Pike W, Cherry Hill, NJ 08002

GENERAL REGISTRATION OPENS MARCH 21, 2024

REGISTRATION CLOSES MAY 17, 2024

AGENDA:

Friday, June 7

- 3 p.m. Registration | Reception
- 5:30 p.m. Workshop 1
- 7:15 p.m. Opening Session |
Motown Jams Dinner
- 9:30 p.m. Denim & White Party
w/ DJ PAP

Saturday, June 8

- 6:30 a.m. Girl Trek Walking Experience
(optional)
- 7 a.m. Smooth Jazz | R&B Breakfast
- 8:30 a.m. Workshop 2
- 10 a.m. General Session – MOC Edition:
Politics after the Murphy Era
- 11:45 a.m. Saturday Cookout Jams
Luncheon
- 1:30 p.m. Workshop 3
- 3:30 p.m. Mini Courses
- 5:15 p.m. General Session – MOC Edition:
Creative Collective



REGISTRATION @
[njea.org/MOC-
Conference24](https://njea.org/MOC-Conference24)

WORKSHOP OFFERINGS:

(See njea.org/MOC-Conference24 for workshops, overtime, & general session descriptions)

1. **Creating Your Road Map to Leadership & Organizing**
2. **ESP Roundtable: Important Topics that Affect Education Support Professionals.**
3. **Grant Writing Basics: You Can Acquire the Funds!**
4. **Intersectionality, Let's Talk**
5. **When Life Throws You Curveballs**
6. **Understanding Power, Privilege, Oppression & How to Break the Cycle within our Associations.**
7. **How to Rock Your Schedule: Strategies to Get Your Life Back into Balance**
8. **Reframing Us – A Collective Vision for MOC Growth Outside the School House Walls**
9. **Grappling with Whiteness, Colorism & Anti-Blackness**
10. **Racial Literacy Circles: Hip-Hop Edition**

MINI COURSE OFFERINGS (Saturday only)

- A. Game Room
- B. Securing 700 | 800 Credit
- C. Movement is Medicine
- D. Paint with Power
- E. Empowering Our Words
- F. Hot Topics!

Professional Learning

What's alive for '24-'25

By Dr. Christine Miles

As the education landscape evolves, so does the need for dynamic, engaging, and impactful professional learning. NJEA's Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division (NJEA PDII) is at the forefront of this evolution, building upon our professional learning program for another vibrant school year ahead! NJEA PDII's offerings are designed to enhance the professional practice of our members, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet the diverse and ever-evolving needs of all students.

This year, we are hopeful for the impact of the state's newly revised standards for professional learning, which emphasize equitable and excellent outcomes for all students. These standards recognize the importance of high-quality content that is tailored to and accessible for each learner, transformational in its processes and creates the conditions necessary for student success. Through a variety of formats including the affiliate professional development program, a virtual statewide series, the NEA blended learning program, and NJEA Transform and Impact conferences, there's something for everyone's professional learning needs.

Innovations and key themes for '24-'25

New professional learning opportunities include leveraging cutting-edge innovations and addressing pivotal themes:

- **Using Artificial Intelligence in the Classroom:** Explore how AI can enhance learning experiences and outcomes.
- **Optimizing the Evaluation Process:** Rethink evaluation to better support teacher growth and student achievement.
- **Exploring Inclusive Curriculum:** Develop strategies to create curricula that reflect and celebrate the diversity of our student population.
- **It's Not About Fixing Students! Cultivating Environments that Support Growth:** Move beyond the deficit model to nurture environments where every student can thrive.
- **Voices Unveiled – The NJEA Convention Film Festival Highlights:** Engage in meaningful dialogue through film screenings and guided discussions on select films reflecting the diverse histories, identities and experiences.

In partnership with the National Education Association, NJEA's Professional Development and Instructional Issues' Division will again offer blended learning opportunities focusing on supporting multilanguage learners, a vital skill in our increasingly diverse classrooms and communities.

Empowering through professional learning

At the core of the revised standards for professional learning is the belief that education should be equitable, embracing the historical, cultural, and societal contexts of our students. To that end, NJEA's professional learning opportunities are crafted to:

- Enhance educators' understanding and application of rigorous content.
- Promote equity-driven teaching practices.
- Foster a culture of collaborative inquiry and continuous improvement.
- Equip educators with the skills to implement transformational learning designs.

The conditions for successful professional learning underscore the necessity of equitable access, a supportive culture and leadership that champions the importance of ongoing education for educators.

Looking ahead

The 2024-25 professional learning program is not just about acquiring new skills, it's about fostering a community of educators who are equipped to navigate the challenges of modern teaching with confidence, creativity and style. Our diverse array of learning opportunities ensures that there's something for everyone, whether you're looking to integrate new technologies into your teaching, seeking to deepen your understanding of inclusive practices, or aiming to cultivate a growth-supportive environment for all students.

We invite all NJEA members to engage with our professional learning offerings. By participating, you not only enrich your own professional practice but also contribute to the collective advancement of our educational community. Together, we will continue to lead with hope, amplify all voices, and foster equitable, just, and impactful action in education.

Local and county affiliates interested in planning professional learning with NJEA for the 2024-2025 school year should connect with their UniServ representative and PDII Zone lead to forge ahead.

Chrissi Miles is the director of the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. She can be reached at cmiles@njea.org.

SUPPORTING EDUCATORS' MENTAL HEALTH— WITH CONTRACT LANGUAGE AND JOY

By Amy Moran, Ph.D. and Kate Okeson

With May being Mental Health Awareness month, let's acknowledge that educators are charged with juggling it all: designing lessons that engage and expand, assessing student achievement based on learning standards, performing continual data analysis, individualizing instruction, cultivating positive student behaviors and strategically responding to those behaviors that aren't positive, communicating with families and district colleagues, implementing activities that develop students' social/emotional learning competencies, addressing the multiple mandates—such as Amistad, Holocaust and genocide, inclusion of LGBT people and those with disabilities—in addition to teaching a full schedule each day. And most do it all with just one prep period!

It's also a time of year when districts approach new curriculum cycles and local unions negotiate new labor contracts.

As experienced teachers can attest, “unpacking” a new curricular resource is so much more than taking books out of boxes. However, without an articulated rollout plan, the unspoken expectation from districts is that teachers will volunteer their time outside of school hours to “unpack,” analyze, appropriately modify and design lessons with a wholly unfamiliar curricular resource. This is even the case with a new curriculum that may—or may not—have teacher friendly materials that are ready-to-go for first period tomorrow.

That unscheduled, uncompensated labor has costs:

- It pressures teachers to work, uncompensated, after contractual hours to meet district-issued obligations.
- It compromises our ability to address mandates and inhibits our capacity to provide support to marginalized members of our schools—like LGBTQIA+ students.
- It taxes educators' mental health.

Who expects attorneys, dentists, auto mechanics or store clerks to work extra-contractual hours without compensation? No one. Then why in the world would we do that to teachers?

Because of this, it's vital that contract language is put in place to support educators adopting new curricula so that we aren't burdened by additional uncompensated

Meeting statewide curricular mandates, such as LGBT and people with disabilities inclusion, takes time and intention.

work hours associated with the instructional rollout of unfamiliar resources.

Contract language that includes calendared professional development (PD) for grade-level, subject-specific work without students is necessary for an effective rollout of new curricula and to avoid the pitfalls of labor exploitation.

There's no universal way that districts adopt new curricula, but what if contract language *always* included language for:

- Teams of experienced teachers on curricular resource selection and writing committees?
- Calendared days for authentic curricular readiness work prior to students' arrival in September?
- Monthly scheduled time without students—separate from and in addition to regular prep periods—to identify gaps and assumptions and create necessary modifications for the resource, including time to revise, refine, and strategize best practices with colleagues?

Experience has shown us too often that district decision makers can't be consistently trusted to do right by teachers with regard to fair labor practices in this arena and, as such, local education labor unions must negotiate compensated curriculum on-boarding in each new contract.

Amy Moran, Ph.D. and Kate Okeson (both she/her) are out queer educators, leaders and activists working to make education affirming and inclusive for all of their students and colleagues. Moran has taught middle school for 29 years and was a high school GSA adviser for 16 years. Okeson is a 26-year art educator, GSA adviser for 14 years, local association president, and co-founder/program director of Make it Better for Youth.

Why? Because:

- Unpaid labor is exploited labor.
- Students deserve teachers who are authentically supported as respected professionals, rather than exhausted by rag-tag after-hours preparations.
- It's the ethical thing to do.

The current gaps and incomplete foundations we may be experiencing aren't our fault. They're systemic, generated by decision-makers at the district level. But we are still held responsible. And those realities create real wear and tear on educational professionals—the teachers, librarians, and ESPs—who are the backbone of schools.

How can we bring our full selves to education contexts that need us to be fresh and ready to support all the wonderful students before us—including and especially our most vulnerable students, like those in the LGBTQIA+ community—if our capacities and mental wellness is strained or harmed by the very districts we work for?

At "Rainbow Connection," we encourage everyone to demand labor practices and contract language that prevent educator exploitation and authentically support educators' mental health so that we can bring the best of ourselves to school, supporting LGBTQIA+ students and others who need us the most. 🏡

May 1 – Summer Savings with Your Member Benefits!



Let NJEA/NEA Member Benefits help you live your best life during the summer season. Beginning at 4:30 p.m., our May 1 webinar will show you how to book the best deals on travel, local and nationwide attractions, and more.

Register for this and others at njea.org/mbwebinars.



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WHAT CRITICAL PEDAGOGY HAS TAUGHT ME AS A PRESERVICE EDUCATOR

BY PAIGE TAYLOR

Critical pedagogy is a philosophy of education that examines the spaces where social justice and democracy intersect with teaching and learning. The critical pedagogy philosophy embraces the idea that teachers should encourage students to examine power structures and systems of inequality, especially within their own schools or communities. I believe that all preservice teachers should be educated on critical pedagogy because we owe it to our future students to give them as much autonomy and choice in the classroom as we can.

My own journey into critical pedagogy began in my senior year of college when I was enrolled in a course that examined it. I had no idea what the term even meant, but by the time the class ended, I had a completely new outlook on the teaching profession.

Critical pedagogy has taught me to challenge nearly all of my preconceived notions about what it means to be an educator. I have learned to look on a student as a human being first, not just a student in a classroom. To love my students first, no matter what. And most importantly, to always build trust.

At the end of every day, our students go home to myriad unique circumstances and experiences. And although we may never be able to understand some of their situations, it is important to see our students as multifaceted human beings. We cannot give students what they need if we do not take into account all their identities, circumstances and attributes.

Critiquing classroom management systems

One concept we discussed in my critical pedagogy course is the importance of reconsidering classroom management systems and reward systems. Because I

Paige Taylor is a senior at The College of New Jersey and a member of NJEA Preservice. To learn more about NJEA Preservice, visit njea.org/preservice.

“Education is an act of love, and thus an act of courage.”

– Paulo Freire

have worked with students who deeply internalize behavior reward systems and, as a result, are incredibly hard on themselves, these discussions really hit home. I have seen children adopt altered views of themselves, perceive their classmates differently, and even police each other's behavior due to behavior management reward systems.

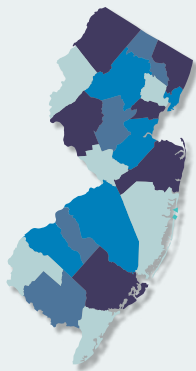
By targeting children through these systems, we inadvertently tell children that they need to be fixed, and we tell their classmates that it is OK to not only judge their behavior but police and reprimand them.

Critical pedagogy has taught me to reframe classroom behavior systems. When we see children questioning their self-worth because of a behavior management system, we need to ask ourselves who is benefiting from that system. If our students are questioning their self-worth and monitoring each other's behavior, we must look at the larger power structures in our classrooms and schools.

Educating ourselves first

Critical pedagogy has not only changed my educational views, but the way I view so many structures of power around us. This philosophy is incredibly important for all preservice educators to learn about and internalize.

After all, today's preservice educators are tomorrow's teachers, and if we want to see any systemic change in public education, we must educate ourselves first. 🌱



SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

Workshops and conferences

highlights

Multilingual learners and teacher coaching

SHOWCASE

Showcase experiences have been endorsed by NJEA's Professional Development Institute and are also posted on 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.

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Location: Philadelphia

Price: \$25 each course (3-day courses)

Course descriptions and registration: Visit knowlesteachers.org click the tab for Knowles Academy, select In-Person Courses to register for the course you are interested in.

Optional graduate course credit is available (\$375 for 3 credit hours).

Please note that courses are subject to cancellation if minimum enrollment is not met.

ONLINE COURSE:

THE AI-ENHANCED CLASSROOM – REDEFINING TEACHING AND LEARNING

This course, *The AI-Enhanced Classroom: Redefining Teaching and Learning*, is designed for teachers of all levels and subject areas, but also has relevance for anyone in the education community—including administrators, teaching assistants, and parents—who wishes to learn more about the use and potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in educational settings.

This course is designed to provide an overview of the use of AI in education, exploring the benefits and challenges it presents for teachers and students. The course is divided into eight modules, with each module focusing on a particular aspect of AI in education.

Offered by Peagog.ai, this remote, asynchronous course is accredited through Southern New Hampshire University (SNHU) with three optional graduate credits available.

Course objectives include:

- Define and explain the basic concepts of AI and machine learning and analyze the impact of AI on education.
- Evaluate the use of AI in curriculum design, teaching, and learning, and design lesson plans and classroom assignments using AI tools.
- Analyze and evaluate the ways in which AI can streamline administrative tasks and improve grading and feedback.
- Critique and evaluate the ethical considerations of using AI in education and develop strategies to address issues of academic integrity and potential bias in AI systems.
- Analyze and reflect on the potential of AI to transform education and its ethical and social implications, and develop a plan for ongoing professional development to expand and deepen knowledge and skills related to the use of AI in education.

Fees:

With SNHU graduate credit: \$549.89

Without graduate credit: \$149.99

Pedagog.ai is now accepting applications for this course on a rolling basis. Participants may register and begin at any time. Those taking the course for graduate credit will receive transcripts from the SNHU term during which they complete the course.

For more complete descriptions, and to register, go to: pedagog.ai/pd/introduction-to-generative-ai-for-educators

MORE TO LEARN

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR CIVICS AND HISTORY

The New Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers University is offering one-day workshops on a variety of civics and history topics. The workshops are supported by state funds and free to all New Jersey teachers. All of the workshops will be held at Rutgers University in Piscataway.

MAY 9: Engaging Students in Middle School Civics

JULY 11: Teaching Controversial Issues and Media Literacy (K-12)

JULY 16: Project Citizen

JULY 24: Engaging Students in Middle School Civics

JULY 30: Infusing Civic, Economics, and New Jersey history into High School U.S. History

All workshops start at 8:30 a.m., include lunch, and conclude by 3 p.m. Teachers can find workshop descriptions and register by going to civiced.rutgers.edu/events/range.listevents.

NEW JERSEY SCHOOL OF CONSERVATION HOSTS OPEN HOUSE

The New Jersey School of Conservation is 240-acre tract of land in Stokes State Forest in Sussex County. It is the nation's oldest and largest environmental education center. An Educators' Open House, held May 18, will demonstrate the school's approach to hands-on learning—something the school believes is critical for sparking long-term interest in conservation. Educators will learn about the school's new climate change field experiences while also taking classes on topics including nature art, poetry, metalsmithing, water ecology, and archery.

Note the registration requires a \$20 deposit. After you attend the event, the deposit is refunded.

For more information and to register, visit bit.ly/njsoc-open.



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Got a great idea?

Get it funded, just like these NJEA members!

Blue Skies – Inspired by a personal family crisis, New Egypt art teacher Rita Williams developed a project to bring hope to patients and family members. Students at Dr. Gerald Woehr Elementary School and New Egypt Primary School produce and donate books, videos and calendars to hospital waiting areas, chemotherapy centers, rehabilitation hospitals, doctor’s offices and other medical facilities.

NJEA’s Frederick L. Hipp grants provide \$500 to 10,000 grants for educators just like YOU and projects like this one!

The only foundation of its kind in New Jersey, the Hipp Foundation supports initiatives to promote excellence in education. Since 1993, the foundation has disbursed more than \$2.3 million in grants for innovative educational projects.

Applications are due by March 1 each year. Applications are closed at this time but learn more and start thinking about your grant ideas and explore previous grants at njea.org/hipp.



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MAY & beyond

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

MAY 10-11	FRI & SAT Carol Watchler LGBTQIA+ Advocacy Conference	JUNE 07-08	FRI & SAT MOC Empowerment Conference	JULY 02	TUESDAY Delegates arrive at NEA RA
MAY 17	FRIDAY Executive Committee	JUNE 14	FRIDAY Executive Committee	JULY 08	MONDAY Delegates depart from NEA RA
MAY 18	FRIDAY Delegate Assembly	JUNE 15	SATURDAY NEA RA Statewide Caucus	JULY 17	WEDNESDAY PDII Impact Conference

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

SAVE THE DATE



**July 17
2024**

On the heels of the successful NJEA TRANSFORM Conference in April, the **IMPACT Conference** will offer even more professional learning opportunities and programs designed for all members around wellness, professional practice, and much more.

For more details, and to register, visit [njea.org/impact](https://www.njea.org/impact).

Employment Opportunities at NJEA

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



NJEA is an equal opportunity employer. Visit [njea.org/jobs](https://www.njea.org/jobs).

It's still true

When parents and schools work together, our children are the winners

In this edition of the *NJEA Review*, Bloomfield educator Dr. Gnanaseharan Selliah describes the power and benefit of parental involvement in schools. He writes that when parents take an active role their children's education and the broader school community, research finds improved performance for both students and the schools they attend.

Parental involvement boosts academic success, fosters social and emotional well-being and creates a more positive school culture and climate. The Annie E. Casey foundation finds that these successes build upon each other in a virtuous cycle: A positive school culture invites family engagement. Family engagement improves teaching. Improved teaching advances student achievement. High student achievement helps create a positive school culture.

NJEA has long been a proponent of family involvement in schools. When the NJEA Pride in Public Education Campaign was launched in the 1990s, its earliest television commercials carried the tagline, "When parents and schools work together, our children are the winners."

Parental involvement, however, might be seen as a luxury for families who struggle to make ends meet, put in many hours at work—sometimes at multiple jobs—or who work evening and night shifts. Families that are still learning English may feel uncomfortable becoming actively engaged in school programs.

Local associations can play a key role helping these families. As educators, NJEA members get to know their students very well, and from that perspective are in a position to know the barriers faced by parents hoping to play a greater role in the school community.

Educational support professionals (ESP), who more often than not live in the communities where they work,

know families in the school especially well. They are very likely to know their student's parents, not only from school, but as friends. They interact in houses of worship, in grocery stores, on sports fields and in all the other places that make up a community.

"When families and schools work together, our children are the winners," was, and is, more than just a slogan for NJEA. The association, from the state to the local level, has a long history of helping families engage with their schools. From championing legislation that would require employers to provide parents leave time to attend school meetings to programs such as NJEA FAST (Families and Schools Work Together for Children) and NJEA Pride in Public Education, state, county and local associations have invested time, money and expertise into parental involvement. Even American Education Week, which typically includes a special invitation for parents to visit classrooms, was created by the National Education Association, our national counterpart.

NJEA and its county and local associations have also relied upon parents as allies in supporting public education. We partner with parents and families to increase funding so that schools have the staff and facilities they need, decrease class sizes so students get the attention they need, and ensure safe and healthy school environments so everyone stays healthy enough to learn.

NJEA encourages its local and county associations, and all of our members, to take advantage of the resources available to them to build a culture of family involvement in their school communities. A great place to start is njea.org. Under the community tab you can learn more about how to apply for Pride and FAST grants and develop Read Across New Jersey programs. You'll also find a link to family involvement resources, including materials in English and Spanish, and links to organizations for parents.

You can also get some great ideas for parental involvement from the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education. Many individual members receive grants from the Hipp Foundation for programs that support parental involvement. You can read about them at njea.org/hipp and perhaps apply for a grant of your own.

It was true before the 1990s and it's still true today, when parents and schools work together, our children are the winners. 🏠





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- Harrah's
- Resorts
- Tropicana

Shuttle service will be available from the hotels listed here.

Go to njeaconvention.org/hotels to check out the discount rates and to make your reservations.

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