

REVIEW



an education and advocacy resource



20

**MEET ANDY KIM:
OUR ENDORSED CANDIDATE
FOR U.S. SENATE**

24

**A GARDEN FOR CITIZEN
SCIENTISTS**

28

**KATE OKESON MAKES
LGBTQIA+ HISTORY!**

34

BARNYARD DAYS

36

**JOIN YOUR PROFESSIONAL
ASSOCIATION**

Meet Andy Kim

Don't just **dream** of retirement, build it.



EXPLORE our new online investing tools
or
PARTNER with a financial professional
to help reach your goals

VISIT neamb.com/retirementprogram





The Sept. 7 NJEA Delegate Assembly meeting was awash in purple, as many delegates wore their Spiller for Governor 2025 shirts. These delegates and guests from Hudson County were no exception. From left standing: Shareen Shibli, Frank Mazzone, Marquisha Reynolds, Gene Woods, Rache Blue and Daniel Granda. Seated: Barbara Young and Daniel Abbadessa.



On the job training: Delegate Assembly (D.A.) member Erin Mooney, brought along D.A. Alternate Richard Geissler, to the Sept. 7 meeting of the D.A., so that he'd get a feel for how it runs should he need to fill in for an absent delegate at a future D.A. meeting.



The Highland Park Education Association is an active participant in the New Jersey Labor Management Collaborative. Highland Park administration, the school board, and HPEA used LMC-inspired practices to rework district opening and dismissal times. (See Page 19.) From left: HPEA President Keith Presty, Superintendent Dr. Kristina Susca and Board of Education President Allison Casal-Dunn.

FEATURES



20 | MEET ANDY KIM

Congressperson Andy Kim is the NJEA and NEA-endorsed candidate for the U.S. Senate. He currently represents the Third Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives. On Aug. 30, he sat down with the editor of the NJEA Review, Patrick Rumaker, to tell his story and talk about his views on public education.



24 | A GARDEN FOR CITIZEN SCIENTISTS

As part of Citizen Science Month this past April, Reading Fleming Intermediate School (RFIS) in Flemington unveiled a pollinator garden and outdoor classroom on school grounds. A \$10,000 grant from the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education funded safety features and signage in the outdoor classroom.

BY LISA COSTER



28 | KATE OKESON MAKES LGBTQIA+ HISTORY!

Raised in rural Warren County, Okeson saw her father organize area businesspeople to raise money to help families who needed financial support. Okeson has taken her father's example of grassroots organizing to new heights, having an indelible impact on how LGBTQIA+ inclusive instruction is integrated into curricula statewide.

BY AMY MORAN (SHE/HER)



34 | BARNYARD DAYS

Phillipsburg High School's Barnyard Days are legendary in the community. For most of the past 46 years, students involved with the Future Farmers of America (FFA) have hosted students from area schools and the wider community to showcase the school's agricultural program. The FFA program introduces students to careers in agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, veterinary science and so much more.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



36 | JOIN YOUR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

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

COLUMNS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 7

Making our voices heard through elections

THE ADVOCATE 8

Resources for your local association

BULLETIN BOARD 11

Cool stuff to check out

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS 12

Shining a light on others

THE NJEA REPORT 14

Education in the news

COLLABORATION CORNER 19

Labor Management Collaborative

HEALTH AND SAFETY 44

Replacing toxic chemicals

RETIRED MEMBERS 46

News and events

NJEA PRESERVICE 48

Aspiring educators

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 49

NJEA Convention

SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY 51

Workshops and conferences

MEMBER BENEFITS 53

Get your money's worth

HIPP FOUNDATION 55

Get your ideas funded

STAFF NEWS 56

Hires and promotions

COMING UP 57

What's next at NJEA

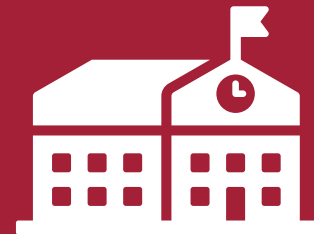
FINAL EXAM 58

Election pro-public education leaders

The number 2,508

The number of Pre-K through 12th grade public schools in New Jersey, with 2005 elementary schools, 392 secondary schools, and 111 combined elementary and secondary schools.

Source: New Jersey Department of Education, NJ Public Schools Fact Sheet, 2023-2024 (nj.gov/education/doedata/fact.shtml)



Top 12 reasons to join njea.

Reason #2: Best Schools in the Nation

New Jersey's public schools are the best in the nation, and our strong union is a big reason why. NJEA advocates for fair funding, strong contracts, quality professional development and safe and healthy schools. Be part of the winning team. Be part of NJEA and your local association.

Visit njea.org/top12 for more.



Congressperson Andy Kim, the NJEA and NEA-endorsed candidate for the U.S. Senate, greets children during his visit to NJEA headquarters on Aug. 30.

PHOTO BY
Jennifer C. Marsh

REVIEW

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

President: Sean M. Spiller | Vice President: Steve Beatty | Secretary-Treasurer: Petal Robertson
Executive Director: Kevin Kelleher | Deputy Executive Director: Denise Graff Policastro

Editorial Director Steven Baker
Editor Patrick Rumaker
Associate Editor Kathryn Coulibaly
Art Director Jennifer C. Marsh
Graphic Designer Jennifer Larson
Advertising Sara B. Ream

EDITORIAL & PUBLISHING OFFICES

The *New Jersey Education Association Review* (ISSN-0027-6758) is an official publication of the New Jersey Education Association, published monthly 10 times a year, September through June, plus one special *New Jersey Education Association Review* Convention issue, which will be published in September. Send correspondence relating to editorial material, manuscripts, membership or subscriptions to: 180 W. State St., P.O. Box 1211, Trenton, NJ 08607-1211. Periodicals postage paid at Trenton, NJ 08650 and at additional mailing offices. Email: NJEAreview@NJEA.org

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Madison Baca, NJEA Preservice; Amanda Best, Cedar Grove; Daniel Cyckowski, Hillsborough; Alphonso Harrell, Atlantic; Hussain Haqq, Trenton; Marcy Helmstetter, Berkeley Heights; Andrew Lewis, Old Bridge Twp.; Linda Miller, Jersey City; Claudette Peterkin, Englewood; Salvatore Randazzo, Deptford; Miriam Reichenbach, retired; Sonya Squitieri, Passaic; Steve Tetrault, Holmdel.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Atlantic: Melissa Tomlinson; Bergen: Esther Fletcher, Robert La Morte; Burlington: Tamara Beatty; Camden: Laurie T. Gibson-Parker; Cape May: Tammi Lee; Cumberland: Ashanti Rankin; Essex: Dr. Dawn Nichol-Manning; Gloucester: Ryan Griffin; Hudson: Ronald F. Greco; Hunterdon: Susan Vala; Mercer: Christine Sampson-Clark; Middlesex: Jennifer Herrick, Melissa Vega; Monmouth: Steven Koumoulis; Morris: Kerri Lee Farrell; Ocean: Lisa Simone; Passaic: Marco Martinez; Salem: Colleen Gilmartin; Somerset: Amy Salinger; Sussex: Carla Mancuso; Union: Richard F. D'Avanzo; Warren: Laurie O'Brien; Higher Education: Michael Frank; Retired: Joan Wright; Non-classroom Teacher: Marie Battist-Rock; Preservice: Bianca Nicolescu.

NEA State Directors: Brenda Brathwaite, Theresa Fuller, Laurie Gibson-Parker, Lauren Greenfield, Susan McBride, Peter Moran, Mark Richards, Barbara Rheault, Stacy Yanko. ESP-at-Large: Karoline Bethea-Jones, Temika Langston-Myers, Tarsha Lawson.

ADVERTISING

Advertising is printed as a service to readers but does not imply endorsement.

POSTMASTER

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

Organizational Directory

NJEA headquarters, Trenton

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

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

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

Communications Division: responsible for all aspects of the association's communications efforts, both internal and external. The division produces the *NJEA Review* and njea.org; 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: \$1,082 (full time); \$216.40 (full time *low-earner); \$541 (part time); \$541 (on leave); \$216.40 (part time *low-earner). Active supportive: \$520 (full time); \$104 (full time *low-earner); \$260 (part time); \$104 (part time *low-earner); \$260 (on leave). Retired professional: \$95; \$1,800 (retired life). Retired ESP: \$49; \$880 (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 2024-25 is \$23,200.





PRESIDENT'S *Message*

Making our voices heard through elections

Every election is important, but there's a fresh sense of urgency right now. As we enter the final sprint before Election Day 2024, there's still so much left to do to ensure that we elect pro-public education candidates at every level of government. And simultaneously, our members and staff are marathoning toward our shared goal of an educator as governor in 2025.

From our local races to the highest office in the land, NJEA members have been working to make our voices heard on behalf of our students, our families and our profession. We know the impact that elected officials have on every aspect of our lives. We've lived through some really challenging times because of adverse election outcomes.

That's why NJEA members have once again been making calls, knocking on doors, hosting fundraisers, handing out signs, and most importantly, talking to the people in their lives about why they are supporting our endorsed candidates.

I am proud to have been endorsed by NJEA for governor in 2025, and I know that together we will be successful in fighting for our students, our schools, our communities, and our state—now and far into the future.

NJEA's and NEA's endorsements are based on voting records, thorough research and conversations with the candidates. Each endorsement is weighed heavily and considered by the people who know our issues—because they are educators and union members just like us.

We are so excited to feature Rep. Andy Kim on the cover this month and to give you an opportunity to hear from him directly about why he is running for the U.S. Senate. As a child of immigrants and as a New Jersey public school graduate, he knows firsthand the value of our great public schools. He has a strong commitment to their continued success.

In addition, we are proud to support Vice President Kamala Harris and Gov. Tim Walz for president and vice president. Union members, educators and working families have greatly benefited from President Joe Biden's leadership and advocacy on our issues. We are very proud of his record and of the fact that his wife, First Lady Jill Biden, is not only an educator but a Jersey girl through and through. We know that having Harris in the White House alongside former teacher Walz will make things even better.

We need to ensure that candidates like Kim, Harris and Walz are leading the way for the middle class and providing the support and resources our students and staff need to succeed. At the same time, we know the importance of local races and the impact that they have on our schools and our communities.

NJEA members have been organizing, advocating, communicating and voting like our future depends on it, because it does. We need to maintain that energy this cycle and through next year, when we will be voting for a new governor for the state of New Jersey. I'm honored by NJEA's endorsement, and I look forward to working with Kim, Harris and Walz to ensure that New Jersey continues to lead the nation in public education.

In unity,

The ADVOCATE

RESOURCES FOR YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATION

Support the NJEA/NEA PAC-endorsed candidates

On the recommendation of NJEA's PAC Operating Committee, the NEA Fund for Children and Public Education has endorsed candidates for the presidency and in various congressional districts. The full list of NJEA/NEA endorsed candidates is:

U.S. President and Vice President

- Vice President Kamala Harris and Gov. Tim Walz

United States Senate

- Rep. Andy Kim

United States House of Representatives

- NJ-1: Rep. Donald Norcross
- NJ-2: Joe Salerno
- NJ-3: Herb Conaway
- NJ-5: Rep. Josh Gottheimer
- NJ-6: Rep. Frank Pallone
- NJ-7: Sue Altman
- NJ-8: Rep. Robert Menendez Jr.
- NJ-9: Pending at press time (visit njea.org)
- NJ-10: Rep. LaMonica McIver
- NJ-11: Rep. Mikie Sherrill
- NJ-12: Rep. Bonnie Watson-Coleman

Check njea.org for the latest updates.

These endorsements were made by the National Education Association's (NEA) Fund for Children and Public Education, which makes endorsements in federal elections.

Plan now for American Education Week

American Education Week—Nov. 18-22—presents an opportunity to celebrate public education and honor individuals who are making a difference in ensuring that every child receives a great public education.

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

Visit nea.org and search "American Education Week" to learn more about American Education Week and to find resources that will assist in planning your local or county association's celebration.

Honor a colleague on Veterans Day

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

If you plan to present the certificate in person at an association meeting, Veterans Day assembly or other event, email the veteran's name, local association and your postal address to Meredith Barnes at mbarnes@njea.org by Oct. 18.

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

Veterans breakfast at NJEA Convention

NJEA members who have served or are currently serving in our military are invited to breakfast at the NJEA Convention on Thursday morning, Nov. 7. To reserve your seat, email Meredith Barnes now, but no later than Nov. 3, at mbarnes@njea.org.

State officer petitions due Oct. 15

Elections for NJEA state officer positions (president, vice president, and secretary-treasurer) will be held during the upcoming school year for the **2025-27 term**.

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

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

Below are the anticipated deadlines and procedures for acquiring and returning petitions. Changes, if any, will be posted at njea.org/NJEAelections.

As noted in the September Review, petitions may be obtained from NJEA Headquarters in Trenton, or from a county or unit representative on the NJEA Elections Committee.

All signed petitions must reach NJEA Headquarters at 180 W. State St., Trenton, or an NJEA-NEA UniServ office no later than **5 p.m. on Oct. 15, 2024.**

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

Balloting for contested positions will take place in the regular **2025 NJEA spring elections.**

YOUR TURN

School office manager leaves lasting legacy

To the editor:

I'm emailing you to thank you for the article on Lawton C. Johnson and the LCJ Summit Middle School.

Lawton and I were first cousins and growing up we were like brother and sister. I'm a product of the Summit school system. We were both active in Wallace Chapel. Our grandmother, Roberta Johnson was a charter member. Lawton was head of the trustee board, director of the senior and gospel chorus, church clerk—until he gave it to me—and church organist for many years.

His devotion to the school and church was exemplary. He taught me a lot about office management along with other things. His example inspire me to this day as I eventually became an executive assistant. I'm still working part time from home part time as an executive assistant. Not a day goes by that I don't think of something Lawton taught me.

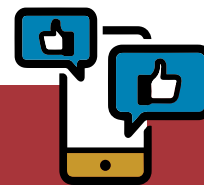
I still don't know how he did it. He was always at the school except when he'd go out for dinner and then he'd come back and work late. He loved the school, the church and people.

I moved to Virginia in 1989 but would come visit him and my mom until they both passed within a year of each other.

Your article bought joy to my heart reading about Lawton's inspiration for others. He's left quite a legacy.

Valerie R. Butler

Bristow, Virginia



SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

@SpillerforNJEA: We must continue to take meaningful steps to address the educator shortage facing NJ's schools. More educators will mean smaller class sizes and strong relationships that lead to lifelong learning. Let's commit to addressing this critical issue throughout this year.

On Sept. 10, NJEA President Sean M. Spiller shared a link to the article "New Jersey Districts still face teacher shortages as new school year begins." In the article, he was quoted saying, "We're seeing class sizes increase. We're seeing courses not being offered, and we're seeing that the educators who are still remaining in the profession are being overburdened in terms of how to pick up some of the work because of unfilled classrooms. It's a big concern."

STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: Hat arrived just in time! It's go time—and then it's GOTV time!!

On Sept. 10, NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty shared a photo of him donning a hat displaying the words "White Dudes for Harris" while also holding a "Coach Walz" sign. In the post, he displays his support of the Harris-Walz campaign prior to the presidential debate that occurred later that evening. NEA has endorsed Vice President Kamala Harris in her bid for the presidency.

PETAL ROBERTSON

Facebook

@PetalforNJEA: Kevin Bliem of Ocean County wins for the best pic on this Football Sunday! Way to support your team and Spiller for Governor at the same time.

On Sept. 8, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson shared an image of NJEA member Kevin Bliem and other New York Giants fans tailgating outside of MetLife Stadium and supporting NJEA President Sean M. Spiller's campaign for governor. Bliem is pictured holding a purple "Spiller for Governor 2025: This is Our Chance" T-shirt, while the women in the photo held up "This is Our Time" flyers that they were giving out in support of the campaign. NJEA's PAC Operating Committee has endorsed Spiller in the Democratic gubernatorial primary for 2025.

NJ SCHOOL JOBS

STAFFING NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS



NJ's #1 Education Job site

Visit our website to:

- ✓ Search for Jobs
- ✓ Apply to Jobs with a click of a button
- ✓ Sign up for **Daily & Real-Time Job Alerts**
- ✓ Upload your resume



www.NJSchoolJobs.com



WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOUR PAYCHECK SUDDENLY STOPPED?

Help protect your income with the NJEA-endorsed Income Protection Plans, issued by [The Prudential Insurance Company of America](#).

From your paycheck to your savings, NJEA wants to help you protect what's important to you should an unexpected disability, injury, or illness occur.

Applying is quick and easy. Visit enroll.njea.org to learn more!



1073398-00002-00

NJE9_AD_G114_01

→ Apply online at enroll.njea.org



Questions?

Call your EIS account executive at 800-727-3414, Option 3, or visit www.educators-insurance.com

Group Insurance coverages are issued by The Prudential Insurance Company of America, a Prudential Financial company, Newark, NJ.

Educators Insurance Services, Inc. is not affiliated with Prudential.

© 2024 Prudential Financial, Inc. and its related entities. Prudential, the Prudential logo, and the Rock symbol are service marks of Prudential Financial, Inc. and its related entities, registered in many jurisdictions worldwide.

COOL STUFF



NOMINATE A TEACHER FOR THE AMISTAD COMMISSION'S EXEMPLARY AWARD

The Amistad Commission is accepting nominations for the Exemplary Award. Potential nominees are public school teachers who have developed exemplary lessons, units of study, or courses of study that implement the Amistad curriculum as aligned to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. Each award recipient receives \$2,500. The recipient's school district will also receive \$2,500. The award will be presented at the commission's 2025 Summer.

Visit njea.org/amistad-award for details.



APPLY FOR A READ ACROSS NEW JERSEY LITERACY GRANT

NJEA's Read Across New Jersey (RANJ) program has created a new \$500 grant empowering local associations to engage with their communities around literacy. Local presidents and Pride chairs are encouraged to think outside of the box to lift literacy in their communities. Local associations that share a community are encouraged to work collaboratively, but each local must submit its own grant application. An RANJ grant may be used for books and expenses such as food or costs related to engaging members, students, families and communities, but may not be used for promotional items. Visit njea.org/ranj for more information and to apply.



DOWNLOAD A TOOLKIT TO END STUDENT HUNGER

Because school meals promote good health and support learning, Hunger Free New Jersey (HFNJ) has launched a statewide campaign to encourage families to complete and submit the new School Meal and Summer EBT Application. HFNJ, in partnership with the state's Office of the Food Security Advocate, developed an outreach toolkit that contains social media graphics and sample posts, a school meal explainer, flyers, and sample texts, emails, and newsletter messages.

Visit hungerfreenj.org/schoolmealtoolkit for the toolkit.



OPPORTUNITIES FROM THE NEW JERSEY HALL OF FAME

In partnership with the NJEA and with the support of Hackensack Meridian Health, the New Jersey Hall of Fame (NJHOF) offers students opportunities to take an active role in shaping their futures with scholarships for college, trade school and extracurricular programs. Learn more below and encourage students to apply.

Areté Scholarship for graduating high school seniors

Areté is a concept used to describe achieving your greatest potential, regardless of the obstacles you encounter. How have you worked to overcome hardship so far, and how do you plan to achieve your arété as you graduate high school? Selected finalists will receive a \$5,000 scholarship for their chosen university, college, or trade school.

Essay contest for grades 3-11

Who is your New Jersey hero? Write about an incredible New Jerseyan who has not been inducted into the NJHOF. Selected finalists will receive a \$500 scholarship to attend their chosen camp, program or extracurricular activity. Essays must be less than 500 words, typed, and double-spaced.

For more information about both opportunities, visit NJHallofFame.org or email Emaleigh@NJHallofFame.org.



DO YOU TEACH ABOUT THE JURY SYSTEM?

Why not order and use NJSBF's Educational Guide for Trial Jurors? It is a 16-page booklet that has been distributed to potential New Jersey jurors for decades. The New Jersey State Bar Foundation will send you free copies for every student (suitable for grades 7 and up). Order at njsbf.org/publications.

Using her strength and skills to benefit others

Meet Middlesex County ESP of the Year Susan Waldron

Susan Waldron does not do things by half-measures. Instead, she goes into every situation with her whole heart to help those around her. She throws herself as passionately into her work as a paraprofessional working with special needs students in North Brunswick, just as she did as a longtime music teacher.

"I taught piano and voice for 20 years until I couldn't do it anymore," Waldron says. "But I love working with students and seeing that breakthrough moment when you see a student achieve something they've been struggling with."

Waldron was drawn to a career in education for many reasons, including the need for benefits for her family. In addition, her mother and brother had both worked with special needs populations, and she grew up comfortable with people.

Waldron started off as a cafeteria worker for three years before transitioning to working as a paraprofessional, initially with the Educational Services Commission of New Jersey. The commission changed names several times. It's now known as the Middlesex County Educational Services Association.

Despite strong motivation to work with special needs students, Waldron initially.

"I went home from the interview crying because I didn't want to do it," Waldron recalls. "I cried after work the first day. We were doing wheelchair lifts, toileting and much more. It was emotionally and physically taxing. But within the first year, it clicked for me."

After several good observations and positive feedback from the principal, Waldron felt like she was making a connection to the students. She eagerly pursued all

"Sometimes people don't know how much power they have, so I like to help them step into their power."



Middlesex County ESP of the Year Susan Waldron was honored by NJEA's officers at the 2024 NJEA ESP Conference. From left: Vice President Steve Beatty, Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson, Susan Waldron and President Sean M. Spiller.

available training to help her become even more confident and comfortable in her role.

"Having other people tell me that I was doing a good job meant a lot to me," Waldron says. "When one of my students moved from my class, I started to cry because I didn't want them to move!"

Waldron got involved in her local association, holding a variety of positions, including co-president.

"I was the webmaster, the Legislative Action Team chair, and co-president," Waldron recalls. "I am now the second vice-president for Middlesex County and sat on the NJEA Delegate Assembly. I also got very active in ESPAN, the Educational Support Professionals Advocacy Network. I now run their Facebook page."

Waldron also represents Middlesex County on the NJEA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee.

Waldron has been working as a paraprofessional since 2005, but in the last few years she moved to North Brunswick Township Public Schools. She is now piloting an ESP mentor program in the district.

"Throughout my career, my colleagues have asked me, 'What can we do to show how much we appreciate

you?" Waldron remembers. "I always said, nominate me for county ESP of the year. That never happened. But this past year, the president of the North Brunswick Township Education Association (NBTEA) called me up and said, 'I'm nominating you for this award.' I haven't been in this district that long, but they already recognize and appreciate what I contribute."

Waldron has enjoyed the celebrations for the county ESPs of the year. Her entire family—15 people in all, including her 91-year-old mother—attended the Middlesex County ESP dinner. Family traveled from Florida to hear Waldron's praises sung. Her friends called it "Happy Susan Day."

"My oldest brother was listening to Lois Yukna, the Middlesex County President, and Beth Passner, the NBTEA president, talk about me and he got to hear my speech," Waldron says. "He had an a-ha moment and he really understood what I do. He started crying. That was the best thing, to have my family and friends hear what I do for my students and colleagues. And I get to wear a fancy gold

nameplate that reads: Middlesex County ESP of the Year!"

Waldron is energized and engaged by the recognition, but she continues to provide the same whole-hearted support to her students and colleagues.

"Sometimes our ESPs are not comfortable asking questions in their local associations because they've gotten pushback or some other negative experience," Waldron says. "They can come to me and get a starting point and start to build some confidence. Sometimes people don't know how much power they have, so I like to help them step into their power."

"I truly believe this is a calling," Waldron says. "It took me a while to find it, but I found it." 🏠



Make the most of your new **MEMBERSHIP!**

Find out how NEA Member Benefits can help you:

- Reduce student debt
- Save on travel and everyday items
- Get insurance that fits your schedule
- Sign up for free life insurance
- Plan ahead for retirement

And so much more!

nea Member
Benefits

CO331024



Scan below
to learn more



NJEA Report

Northern Highlands Regional High School fundraises to provide resources for Burkina Faso



TEEEM Club students at Northern Highlands Regional High School during a 5K fundraising walk as they carry water containers in November 2022. With them is Georgie Badiel, author of *The Water Princess*.

Northern Highlands Regional High School's TEEEM Club, which stands for The Empathy, Equality, Entrepreneurship Mission (TEEEM), has been working hard to fundraise to provide essential resources to communities in Burkina Faso, West Africa.

Guided by adviser Sidonie King, a world language teacher, over 90 members of TEEEM have raised more than \$22,000. Thanks to matching donations, they have been able to provide more than \$32,000 to help provide access to clean drinking water and other supplies.

"We do a variety of fundraisers and partnerships with other schools in our New Jersey community," King says. "In November, we do a 5K walk and students are sponsored by friends and family. Last year, we also decided to recreate a typical Burkina village. We worked with two French-American schools in Jersey City and Englewood. Students could paint little animals or African dolls and older students used fabric from Burkina Faso to make traditional masks. We also built miniature versions of typical Burkinabe homes."

After they completed constructing the village, they brought everything to Northern Highlands to display.

Another fundraising effort was a gala and silent auction. Students put together 23 baskets. The guests of honor included George Ebadien, their Burkinabe counterpart. The event was a success and, as a result of all their hard work, they will be able to fund one oasis and two-to-three wells.

"This has been a wonderful experience," King says. "The students have been really devoted. They have compassion and empathy, and they love being part of this effort. We're very excited because we are truly going to make a big impact."

While TEEEM has been a club at Northern Highlands since 2016, the fundraising has skyrocketed in the past two years. The Northern Highlands students also work with students at Milburn High School and Pascack Valley High School.

"I give students direction, but they really are in charge of everything," King says. "I love seeing them take charge. They have great ideas, and they are making a huge change for the people in Burkina Faso."

Empower students to keep their peers safe

Help students create peer-to-peer campaigns to prevent brain injuries



Lenape High School safe driver photo campaign.

Get ready to be part of something extraordinary! The Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey's (BIANJ) Champion Schools Program is celebrating its 15th anniversary and wants NJEA members to join in on the celebration.

Since 2010, this research-based, peer-to-peer program has played a vital role in reducing teen driver fatalities and injuries by 60%. Be part of this impactful initiative where students create transportation safety campaigns for their peers, parents and community. These campaigns cover crucial topics such as pedestrian, bike, and seatbelt safety and distracted driving prevention.

With support from a BIANJ adviser and a \$1,000 stipend, students create campaigns that are meaningful to them through catchy slogans, T-shirts, engaging videos and social media, having the opportunity to make a difference in their school and community.

Advisers will earn three professional development hours.

Schools compete against each other, and winners are announced at a celebratory Award Showcase at Six Flags in May 2025. The top three schools will win \$10,000, with additional cash prizes for qualifying schools.

Don't have a media department? This year, the Brain Injury Alliance is offering three schools from under-resourced communities the chance to collaborate with a professional production company to film the PSAs, thanks to funding from the National Road Safety Foundation.

Apply by Jan. 31, 2025, at jerseydrives.com/champion-schools, where you can also find inspiration from last year's campaigns.

Email championschool@bianj.org for more information or scan the QR code to learn more. Together, let's help ensure the safety of our students!

This program is presented by the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey. Funding is provided by the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety with support from its founding sponsor, NJM Insurance Group.



njea 2024 convention

NJEA Convention announces exciting keynote speakers, entertainers

Mavis Staples

Thursday, Nov. 7 at 9:30 a.m.
Convention Center



An extraordinary talent and pivotal voice of the Civil Rights Movement

The legendary Mavis Staples will be the headlining keynote for the 2024 NJEA Convention! Known for her soulful energy,

powerful music and unwavering commitment to social justice, Staples and her band will open NJEA Convention with an electrifying and deeply moving performance.

A pivotal voice of the Civil Rights Movement, Staples has spent decades inspiring change through her extraordinary talent and passionate advocacy.

Photo by Danny Clinch

Chasten Buttigieg

Friday, Nov. 8 at 9:30 a.m.
Convention Center



Teacher, bestselling author and LGBTQIA+ rights advocate

Chasten Buttigieg, husband of former mayor and presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg, has become a popular figure in his own right. The teacher's wit, intimate social media musings, and inspiring speeches have prompted glowing media coverage and declarations that he "won the 2020 spouse primary."

As his husband launched a campaign that made him one of the most talked-about Democrats in the 2020 race, Chasten leveraged his own platform to bring attention to improving public schools, access to arts education, and mental healthcare.

Mychal Threats

Thursday, Nov. 7 at 3 p.m.
Convention Center



America's favorite librarian

Mychal Threats got his first library card at the age of 5 and never looked back. After earning his master's degree in library and information science, he went on

to become the supervising librarian at the very same library. Now, he uses social media to share the stories of library kids and library grown-ups that he encounters in Library Land. He's also open about his mental health and talks about it in hopes that it'll help others in their mental health journey.

John Hunter

Friday, Nov. 8 at 3 p.m.
Convention Center



Developer of the World Peace Game

John Hunter is an award-winning teacher who blends his expertise in education with his background as a musician, composer and filmmaker. He sought to teach peace in a world often marked by violence, leading to the creation of the World Peace Game in 1978. This innovative game challenges students to explore harmony and develop collaborative and communication skills, embodying Hunter's belief that "The World Peace Game is about learning to live and work comfortably in the unknown."

Usted y Su Unión: Convención de NJEA

El 7 y 8 de noviembre, miembros tendrán acceso a talleres en su idioma nativo, el español. Cada voz en nuestra unión es importante y las voces de los miembros deben ser empoderadas y escuchadas. Es con eso en mente que NJEA ofrecerá la pista en el idioma de español durante la convención de este año.

Se ofrecerán tres talleres en español. Habrá una mesa en la sala de exhibiciones en el stand de Equity Alliance con personal que habla español para ayudarlo a navegar por los puestos informativos de NJEA.

NJEA continúa creando espacios equitativos y la convención de este año ilustra eso, ya que esperan involucrar a los miembros en su idioma nativo.

Su unión, Su Poder

JUEVES, 11 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

SALA 405

Este será un taller en español destinado a informar a los miembros sobre las muchas oportunidades que ofrece la NJEA para la organización local.

ADRIAN RODRIGUEZ AND ELOY J. DELGADO

Herramientas tecnológicas

JUEVES, 1-2:30 P.M.

SALA 405

Los miembros hispanohablantes aprenderán a acceder sus cuentas de NJEA y MBOS.

ROCIO LOPEZ, JESSICA D. CAVAGNARO

Los Pasos de Licenciatura Para Enseñar en NJ

VIERNES, 11 A.M.-12:30 P.M.

SALA 322

Este taller se enfoca en transferir la licencia de enseñanza de su país a New Jersey. This workshop focuses on transferring the teaching credential from your country to New Jersey.

JEREMIAS SALINAS, JESSICA D. CAVAGNARO

Higher Education at the NJEA Convention

Keynote speakers

Higher education members are encouraged to attend the convention keynote speaker presentations in Hall A at the Atlantic City Convention Center.

THURSDAY

9:30-10:30 a.m.: Mavis Staples

3-4 p.m.: Mychal Threets

FRIDAY

9:30-10:30 a.m.: Chasten Buttigieg

3-4 p.m.: John Hunter

Register now for the NJEA Higher Education Members Luncheon

Atlantic City Convention Center,

Room 301

Friday: 1-2:30 p.m.

Cost: \$36

Held in coordination with the NJEA Convention in Atlantic City, NJEA higher education members and supporters are invited to attend the higher education luncheon and presentation. The luncheon speakers are NJEA President Sean M. Spiller and Michael W. Ritzius, the NJEA liaison to the New Jersey Labor Management Collaborative.

Sean M. Spiller, NJEA President

In 2025, we have a chance to elect an educator, NJEA President Sean M. Spiller, for governor!

We will be welcoming him as the NJEA PAC-endorsed Democratic gubernatorial candidate. A high school science teacher from Wayne, he has vowed to dedicate his efforts to making sure hard-working families can afford to live and work in the New Jersey they love. He also plans to invest in public education, help small businesses grow and make sure our economy works for regular people.

Michael W. Ritzius, NJEA Liaison to the NJ Labor Management Collaborative

Join us for an overview of what it means to participate in an effective labor-management collaboration with an opportunity to discover resources and tools for use on your campus.

The New Jersey Labor Management Collaborative (LMC) is a collaboration of union members, administrators and board members committed to strengthening our educational system. By challenging traditional norms, and creating opportunities for shared ownership, we can

build a better future for students and their communities.

Participants in LMCs are open to:

- Learning and growing.
- Connecting with each other to create the conditions for authentic collaboration.
- Embracing new approaches that transform the educational system.

Registration

Registration for the Higher Education Luncheon is required and must be done in advance as part of your convention registration. Signing up for the luncheon will be one of your options when you register for the convention. To ensure your space, you must register no later than Oct. 25. Seating is limited, so register now.

The cost of the Higher Education Luncheon is \$36, so have your credit card ready when you sign up for the luncheon. Go to njea.org/conventionregistration to register.

For information regarding the higher education luncheon, contact NJEA's Region 29-Higher Education office at HigherEd@NJEA.org or 609-689-9580.

NJEA HIPP Foundation awards more than \$68,000 in new grants

NJEA believes that educators' ingenuity should not be stifled by lack of funds. That's why the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education has awarded another 10 grants, including three continuation grants to support creative projects by public school Educators totaling \$68,412. This amount includes \$10,000 from Visions Federal Credit Union.

Continuation grants are additional grants for programs that had received a grant in a previous year.

Established in 1993, the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education is dedicated to supporting projects that will enhance and improve the learning environment in our schools. Since its creation, the foundation has awarded more than \$2.5 million in support of 470 innovative educational projects that represent a bold, fresh approach by public school employees.

Visit njea.org/hipp for more about each grant listed below. If you would like information about a grant, contact information for each project coordinator is provided at the end of each online project description.



A previous Hipp Grant program from West Milford. See Page 55.

2024-25 Frederick L. Hipp Grants

Bergen

Global Pages Inspiring Community Voices - \$8,703
**Continuation Grant*
 Harrington Park Education Association

Yarn Crafters Club - \$750
 Fort Lee Education Association

Essex

Period Poverty- Awareness and Activism - \$10,000
 Essex County College Administrative Association

The Heritage of Our Middle School:
 Multi-Cultural Night - \$5,000
 Livingston Education Association

Hunterdon

Infento Pro and Discovery Kit to Ignite a Passion for STEAM! - \$7,466
 Quakertown Education Association

Morris

The Chill Zone: A Zen Den and Wellness Center - \$9,966
 Kinnelon Education Association

Heart SMART II - \$9,558
**Continuation Grant*
 Washington Township Education Association

Sussex

Grow Better Together Annual Interdisciplinary Symposium - \$7,285
**Visions Federal Credit Union Grant for Social Justice*
 High Point Educators Association

Union

Social Emotional Learning Through Art in the LLD Class - \$5,000
 Clark Education Association

Winter Thyme II - \$4,684
**Continuation Grant*
 Winfield Park Teachers Association



Highland Park Labor-Management team tackles school hours

Student arrival and dismissal times adjusted to reflect research

Kimberly Crane

The challenge

Inspired by its Labor Management Collaborative (LMC), leadership teams in the Highland Park School District (HPSD) recently tackled the complex issue of changing student arrival and dismissal times. The change was needed to accommodate research showing that it is healthier for middle and high school students to start school later.

Though start and end times are not officially negotiable, the Highland Park Education Association (HPEA) and HPSD leadership agreed that staff input was critical to ensure that the impact on members and students did not create insurmountable problems. As a result, the school community had a year to anticipate the change. A schedule was worked out that ensured all students could get to school safely, equitably and on time.

Concerns and compromises

There were challenges to the time change. Student busing was an obstacle because all four buildings in the district use the same transportation company. Marilyn Pruce, the Highland Park board of education president at the time, notes that finding solutions was not without conflict.

"There was disagreement from some members of the district communities about the decision to change start times," says Pruce. "To address the concerns, the district's leadership teams gathered data on the impact of the change and worked collaboratively to review the results. They will continue to monitor the impact over the course of the next school year."

LMC inspiration

The district became invested in collaboration after a tumultuous period in 2013-14 that resulted in the replacement of several administrators and a turnover of the school board. The HPEA and Highland Park community advocated for the administrative changes after a RIF

Kimberly Crane is an NJEA Communications Consultant and the vice president of the Highland Park Education Association. She can be reached at kcrane@njea.org.

For more information on the New Jersey Labor Management Collaborative email Mike Ritzius NJEA liaison to the New Jersey LMC at mritzius@njea.org.

of seven HPEA members, including the association's president.

HPEA President Keith Presty looks back on the district's history as a reminder of how far they have come.

"Our focus as educators is to always provide the best outcomes for students," Presty says. "When leaders within a district are at odds, it creates chaos for our kids as well as our members. That is an unacceptable outcome."

In Presty's experience, LMC practices are a necessity for a school district to function at the highest level. Presty has weekly meetings with the superintendent and ensures that the local association has representatives who sit on all district committees, attend school board meetings and participate in as many New Jersey Labor Management Collaborative events and workshops as possible.

LMC practices in place

The HPSD has LMC-focused leadership teams in place that meet monthly within each school building as well as a district level team.

"I am incredibly proud of the collaborative model we've built with the staff and board members," says Superintendent Dr. Kristina Susca. "Together, we tackle challenges head-on, finding solutions that prioritize the success of our students and the well-being of our staff. This partnership continues to strengthen our schools and our community."

LMC = Success

The successful transition in the 2023-24 school year to new start and dismissal times, was a direct result of the intentional investment in the LMC process by the HPEA and district leaders.

"The board truly values its work with the Labor Management Collaborative," says current Board of Education President Allison Casal-Dunn. "So much so that we are including our continued commitment to collaborative practices as part of our board goals. Working together allows us to systematically address our district's needs and ensure that future generations of students will benefit from our work."

HPEA and HPSD leaders and members are expanding their LMC strategies and practices by attend the NJLMC conference in Atlantic City on Nov 5, 6, and 7.

Meet REP. ANDY KIM

Our endorsed candidate for the U.S. Senate

Congressperson Andy Kim is the NJEA and NEA-endorsed candidate for the U.S. Senate. He currently represents the Third Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Rep. Kim was raised in Evesham Township and Cherry Hill and was educated in the public schools in those communities. He attended Rice Elementary School in Marlton and is a Class of 2000 graduate of Cherry Hill East High School. He went on to become a Rhodes Scholar. His children attend public schools in New Jersey.

On Aug. 30, he sat down with the editor of the NJEA Review, Patrick Rumaker, to tell his story and talk about his views on public education.

You've made your, and your family's, public school experience part of your story. What does public education mean to you?

Public education means opportunity. It is the essence of the American dream. My parents immigrated to the United States 50 years ago. When I asked them why, they said it's because here in America, they knew that the family they raised would have a better life and more opportunities than they did. My parents saw education as the key to mobility, to stability, to the kind of lives that they wanted my sister and me to have.

Now, I'm a public school kid who gets to represent in Congress the community where I had my education. That public school education set me up to become a Rhodes Scholar and allowed me to pursue my dreams of serving this country in national security and diplomacy.

You speak glowingly of public education in New Jersey, and our state's public schools consistently rank number one in the nation. What do you believe contributes to our success?

It starts with the big picture, which is that our state recognizes public education as a greater good. We should all recognize that we as a country are stronger with a more

educated population and a more educated workforce. That's going to make our economy stronger, and it's going to allow us to be able to innovate.

I'm proud that New Jersey continues to understand this—not just the political leadership, but the broader population. I've done over 75 town halls and I often talk about education. Whether or not the attendees are parents of school age children, they all have a recognition that public education is something worth investing in. That doesn't mean we're not going to have questions about the budget or about the curriculum, but at least there is a broad understanding of how important education is.

Is there a teacher, an educational support professional, or an educational services professional who had a particular impact on your K-12 schooling or who is memorable in some way?

I've had a lot of great teachers and educational support professionals throughout my public school education. When I was in elementary school, I went through years of speech therapy. I had a lot of trouble forming words, a lot of difficulty in articulating what it is that I felt. Part of the reason why I go by "Andy" is I had a hard time pronouncing the "R" of Andrew. It made me feel like there was something wrong with me. I remember the care with which a teacher [a speech therapist] worked with me almost every single day through a good chunk of elementary school. It helped me understand that this didn't make me less of a student.

How, in your role as a U.S. senator, can you help lift the debt burden on current and future college graduates and make college more affordable overall?

I spend a lot of time in Congress thinking about how to invest in technologies, and we're talking about how to supercharge semiconductor manufacturing in this country or other types of innovation. Well, part of that is by investing in students and investing in our education.



Our endorsed candidate for the U.S. Senate, Congressperson Andy Kim, sat for an interview with the *NJEA Review* editor on Aug. 30.

I'm looking at, and support, efforts to drop interest rates down as low as possible, allow refinancing of student loans, things like that that give greater flexibility.

I was a Pell Grant kid, and that helped me pay the bills. But we haven't invested in Pell Grants nearly enough—we should be increasing the amount because it hasn't gone up in years. We also need to expand the number of students who have access to it. I was also a work-study kid. That's how I helped pay my way through college. And that's something that's on the chopping block right now in Congress as we're seeing a Republican majority in the House of Representatives trying to halve the amount of support for work-study programs.

I think that having a comprehensive approach in line with what President Biden's also been pushing, such as repayment plans being income-driven so that it is not going to overly burden those who are trying to repay.

We, as a country, need to confront the fundamental question of why higher education costs so much to start with. We want higher education to be accessible to everyone. While not every single person needs to go to a four-year college—there are apprenticeships, trade schools and other opportunities—but we want people to

have a choice. I'd love for that choice not to be driven by how much debt they're going to be in.

In Minnesota, Gov. Walz signed legislation to provide free breakfast and lunch to all students. Last year, you reintroduced the Summer Meals REACH Act. Why is this legislation important to you?

I think of education as caring for students—caring for these young Americans in our community. A huge part of that is about educating them. But it's also about their overall well-being. I don't see how a student can perform to the level that they need—to study and focus and learn—if they're hungry.

New Jersey is one of the wealthiest states in this country, and this country is the wealthiest, most powerful country in the history of humankind. But in my congressional district alone, we estimate that there are upwards of 16,000 to 18,000 children who are considered food insecure, which we know is just a bureaucratic way of saying they're hungry.

I continue to support efforts like the child tax credit, which had dropped child poverty in half for the period of time that it was in place. Unfortunately, was allowed to expire by the Republicans in Congress.



Rep. Andy Kim speaks with a student during his visit to NJEA, just days before the school year began.

I've had some tough conversations with some of my colleagues, and it boggles my mind sometimes, just the lack of care that we have for our kids—when they don't have enough to eat or don't have the resources they need through no fault of their own. Do not punish them, do not disadvantage them, simply because of the circumstances in which they live.

How do you balance the need for gun violence prevention—especially in and near our schools—with the Second Amendment?

I was in high school when the Columbine shooting happened, and I remember how shocking that was for us. And I don't think we understood at that time that mass shootings at schools would become so commonplace. It almost feels like we're becoming numb to some of it.

I remember when the Sandy Hook shooting took place. I just broke down at work. And when I saw the inability for leaders of our country to do anything after first graders were massacred, I lost a lot of hope.

I believe that the opposite of democracy is apathy. We can't give up on this. Nothing is inevitable in our country. The violence is not inevitable. But also progress towards your security is not inevitable. We have to fight for what we believe in.

There was a gentleman who came to talk to me after [one of my town hall meetings]. He told me, "I'm a veteran. I served in our military. I'm a lifelong member of the NRA, and I have more firearms than I can count." Then he said, "I'm right there with you on universal background checks

I really do believe that the next four to five years are going to shape the next four to five decades of this country.

for gun safety. I'm a responsible gun owner. I understand the power of a firearm, and I don't want to be lumped in with mass murderers."

That was powerful. It reminded me that this is not a binary issue. It is not that everyone is solely in the camp of saying "We want as many guns as possible," or "We're worried about gun violence."

There is room for a new type of coalition that recognizes that there are some people in this country who, because of different reasons, should not be allowed to carry a weapon that can do that much damage to another human being. That's what I hope we can build towards—to recognize that this is not a binary issue. But unfortunately, with so many of the problems that we face in our country, our politics tries to force that into a binary position. It's creating this level of tribalism that I think is hard for us to break through.

We should all remember that we were Americans first, that my job is to serve and protect the Constitution of the United States. And I'm hopeful that that kind of mindset can lead us to make the decisions that are necessary. Because it's heartbreaking when my kids talk about "bad guy" drills at school and how normal this expectation of violence is.

I'm not saying that there isn't gun violence in other countries, but the level and pervasiveness that we have in this country, it stands out, and it's something that is really alarming and must be tackled.

What do you see as the most significant concerns around the proposals found in Project 2025 concerning public education?

I think it's important for the American people to keep in mind that the election of a president is about more than just one person. It isn't just about who occupies the Oval Office. It's about what comes behind that election. What policies, what proposals, what vision for America is that person trying to implement?

When you see a large document like Project 2025, and you see things like dismantling the Department of Education, dismantling programs like Head Start—which is incredibly important for early childhood development—and Title I, and all that comes with supporting education to be a force for reducing inequality in our nation at a time when we see the greatest amount of inequality in our nation's history.

But it's not just about the inequality side. It's about

what Project 2025 would do if implemented to give carte blanche to so much more discrimination within our schools and whether that's Title IX, civil rights and opening the door for increased discrimination against the LGBTQ community.

It's sad to see the weaponization of education in this country—that it's being used for political purposes. It's being used to push a certain type of ideology, and it's undermining the sort of fundamental principles of what education stands for.

There's an effort to erode so many other fundamental aspects of our country that can really set our country on a trajectory that is alarming. I really do believe that the next four to five years are going to shape the next four to five decades in this country. That's how pivotal the moment we are living in right now, which is why I'm stepping up to do everything I can—run for the U.S. Senate, to try to fight in Congress to stop these types of actions from happening. It's also why we cannot allow Donald Trump back in the Oval Office.

We also need majorities in the Senate and the House that are going to protect and promote education as a good for our society rather than trying to demonize it. And it's sad for me to see people who are my colleagues [in Congress] being some of the ones that are fomenting this type of hate and fear. Often, they're doing it for their own political ambitions. I find that to be so irresponsible.

What can Congress do to help support teachers, librarians and other school personnel to oppose books bans and the narrowing of the American history curriculum?

I'm the ranking member on the Military Personnel Subcommittee—a subcommittee that normally focuses in on mental health and health care for our troops and for retention and recruitment in our military. Unfortunately, it's become this subcommittee that's been weaponized to get rid of DEI [diversity, equity and inclusion] initiatives in our government, and going after our military academies about their curriculum.

I remember going to the Naval Academy to talk to some of the midshipmen. I wanted to hear their perspective on Congress's attention—especially the Republican majority's attention—on their curriculum and whether or not they're being taught things that are going to be damaging.

I remember one midshipman just looked at me and said, "Doesn't Congress have anything better to do?"

I wish all of my colleagues in Congress could have heard this young person that is just like, "Why is the United States Congress perusing and digging through our curriculum? Let us learn."

And it's not just about our military academies. It's about just education writ large.

Look, I'm a parent. I want to know what my kids are being taught, and I have the ability to go and talk with my



Rep. Andy Kim and a group of youngsters get ready to pose for the October NJEA Review cover photo.

kids' principals and their teachers. And that's fine. But we should do it with respect. We shouldn't have this situation where people are just yelling and screaming.

I hear from teachers and educational support professionals about the mental health anguish that many of them are facing because of the attacks upon them—sometimes very publicly and on social media—about their reputations being smeared. These are people who are just trying to serve our communities—just trying to do something that honestly a lot of Americans just take for granted.

We need to recognize that a lot of these attacks are not just about what books are in the library. This is about an assault upon what education in this country fundamentally means. This is a moment where we have to reassert what education means and how important it is for the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness that was part of the foundation of this nation.

And we see the slippery slope. We're seeing it in many aspects of our lives, whether it's women's reproductive rights or other rights—taking away freedom to be able to do what we want to do, study what we study, and exercise our freedom of speech, our freedom of expression.

We're about to celebrate the 250th anniversary of this country. I hope we take time to reflect upon where we are 250 years later and try to think through what we need to do to ensure our security and success for the next 250 years. Education needs to be a fundamental part of that. 🇺🇸

Hipp Foundation Grant Spotlight

A garden for citizen scientists

By Lisa Coster

As part of Citizen Science Month this April, Reading Fleming Intermediate School (RFIS) in Flemington unveiled a pollinator garden and outdoor classroom in a nook of available space on the school grounds next to the community woods and watershed.

Through the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education, we were awarded a \$10,000 grant to improve safety features and signage in our school's outdoor classroom. This improves accessibility for students who use wheelchairs or who have stability limitations.

Thanks to over \$30,000 in grants and donations and dozens of volunteers, the garden and outdoor classroom offer the fifth and sixth grade students and the community a physical location to learn about biodiversity, become citizen scientists and join together as a community to maintain and expand the project.

A school and community effort

At a ribbon-cutting ceremony, local volunteers, students and scouts were recognized. Over the long winter months and last summer, they planted seeds, cleaned up garbage, assembled garden structures, spread mulch and pulled seemingly endless loads of weeds.

Hundreds of native plant plugs donated by the Xerces Society were planted first in June 2022, but the hot summer months singed the small plants. In June 2023,

the Flemington Borough Department of Public Works and J&J Landscapers came to the garden's rescue, dropping five truckloads of root mulch and rototilling the area. After that, students, parents and staff volunteers, under the guidance of Raritan Headwaters and SEEDED, planted an even larger selection of native plants, again from the Xerces Society, and installed an upgraded sprinkler system.

The efforts worked, and the plants thrived over the summer—but so did the weeds. By August, the weeds reached four feet high, and now the team, led by nature lover and local resident Julia Whitley, focused on weed pulling and damage control. But all was not lost; over the next few weeks, the entrance arbor, deer fence and gravel path were installed and tamed the area.

Now, a beautiful wooden arbor, donated by local charities Safe Harbor and the Grandview Grange, welcomes visitors to the garden before they enter the deer fence that surrounds the one-tenth acre garden. To make the area accessible to all visitors, a crushed gravel path meanders through the garden, passing information signs and a lending library full of nature-inspired books for all ages.

The signage acknowledges sponsors and notes the various certifications and programs the garden and school are participating in, such as Doug Tallamy's Homegrown National Park®, the National Wildlife Federation's certified Schoolyard Habitat® and Raritan Headwaters' River-Friendly School Program. The school recently added EcoSchool's Green Flag, the highest level, to their list of achievements.

Lisa Coster is a sixth grade special education math and science teacher at Reading Fleming Intermediate School in Flemington. She can be reached at lisa.coster@frsd.us.



Students rise to the challenge

Students have been fundamental in the creation of this space. Beginning with a 2022 grant from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Planet Stewards program, the school received funds to clear dead trees in the area. In return, the students committed to a series of tasks to support biodiversity, habitat restoration and the removal of invasive plants and marine debris from the watershed.

The student council rose to the challenge, cleaning up garbage, removing invasive pricklers and planting donated tree saplings. Other classes joined in expanding the efforts, building bee motels and planting milkweed in repurposed milk gallon jugs. Local scouts pitched in on several occasions, primarily spreading mulch. One of the scouts, David Berger, a junior at Hunterdon Central Regional High School, built 16 birdhouses with his grandfather using materials donated by Fox Lumber of Clinton.

In order to increase awareness and involve guests with Citizen Science studies, the garden's kiosks feature ongoing Citizen Scientist campaigns with QR codes. There are even QR codes on the garden's trash and recycling bins so that the various types of garbage can be tracked in a Google Form similar to National Geographic's Marine Debris Tracker app.

Coming soon—as the hundreds of milkweed plants begin to grow—a monarch butterfly release day will be announced so that everyone can learn about the importance of the monarch butterfly and how RFIS is a registered Monarch Waystation. Attendees will also release butterflies raised as caterpillars.

Opportunities for educators, students, community

This past spring teachers had the opportunity to participate in asynchronous professional development sponsored through a grant from Sustainable Jersey. The training addressed the importance of place-based, outdoor education as a means to provide hands-on science lessons on water, soil, air and sustainability as part of fifth and sixth grade curricula.

Citizen science campaigns and student-led data collection inspire student advocacy and address climate anxiety and mental health issues instead of students interpreting graphs and tables without a connection to the situation.

Outdoor exploration promotes collaboration and offers further opportunities to engage in universal design for learning practices as well as chances to demonstrate connections to STEM and outdoor careers that are often unknown to marginalized learners.

Finally, community service projects unite a diverse community in environmental sustainability education and collective action. Teachers can access the training and



Top: Student council members learn from a representative of Bartlett Tree Service about native trees and the damage caused to ash trees.
Bottom: Students plant donated tree saplings.



Students, parents and teachers plant hundreds of native plant plugs from Xerces Society in spring 2023.

online resources on the garden's website. In lending lockers found just inside the school doors near the garden, they'll find magnifying glasses, clipboards and nature books. This fall the will be lockers decorated with painted flowers, butterflies and bees.

A place for quiet reflection

Offering a balance to the stimulation of the pollinator garden, the outdoor classroom is quietly situated just outside the garden at the edge of the watershed in the shade of mature trees. Here a modest display table offers

a stage for demonstrations while seven gray benches await students to sit and journal or reflect.

Upon a closer look, speckles of color can be found in the benches made by the plastic caps and lids that were collected by the school and then melted and molded into benches as part of the ABC Promise Partnership of Green Tree Plastics in Evansville, Indiana.

The school collected 700 pounds of caps and lids and used funds from an NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education grant and the collection of loose change to purchase the benches. A grant from the Foundation for Impact on Literacy and Learning paid for a Home Depot rental truck to bring the collection to Evansville and the benches back. In addition to the classroom benches, four larger benches with backs are placed along the school's walking path.

We have so much more to do. Our next steps include:

- Placing more shade trees around the walking path.
- Installing indoor seeding stations and a hydroponic planter funded by NOAA Planet Stewards.
- Hosting a Monarch Release Day.
- Creating a fundraiser for student programs.
- Maintaining and enhancing the garden.

Participating in the GLOBE Trees app and Planet Stewards carbon reduction programs among other initiatives.

There is something to learn here for everyone and countless ways to contribute to the betterment of our biodiversity and the children of the community. My hope is that it grows into a movement beyond the walls of the deer fence. 🌱



Apply for a Hipp Grant

The pollinator garden and outdoor classroom described in this article is the result of numerous grants from a variety of providers, including a \$10,000 grant from the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education.

The Hipp Foundation provides \$500 to 10,000 grants for educators just like you regardless of your job title.

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.

Apply by March 1, 2025, at njea.org/hipp.

EARN YOUR NEXT DEGREE IN { Education }

**Whether you're recently certified or a veteran educator,
we have a graduate program or endorsement for you!**

Counseling

- School Counseling
- Director of School Counseling
- Student Affairs & College Counseling
- Student Assistance Coordinator (SAC)

Curriculum & Instruction

- Early Childhood P-3 Education
- English as a Second Language
 - Bilingual, Bicultural, TESOL
- Initial Teaching Certification (M.A.T.)
- Literacy
- Master of Education (M.Ed.)

Speech-Language Pathology

Special Education

- Applied Behavior Analysis
- Autism
- Autism + Applied Behavior Analysis
- Learning Disabilities Teacher-Consultant
- Special Education with Supervisor Endorsement
- Teacher of Students with Disabilities

Leadership

- Principal, School Administrator
- Supervisor
- Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership
- Teacher Leader Endorsement

Many online program options available.

LEARN MORE: INFO.MONMOUTH.EDU/EDUCATION



MONMOUTH
UNIVERSITY

Kate Okeson makes **LGBTQIA+** history!

By Amy Moran, Ph. D. (she/her)



Kate Okeson with her fellow honorees at the 2024 NEA Human and Civil Rights Award Dinner. Okeson received the Virginia Uribe Memorial Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights. She is second from right. To learn about all the awardees, visit bit.ly/nea-hcr-2024.

Kate Okeson, my co-writer for the Rainbow Connection column, has been appointed the executive director of the new Advisory Commission on Advancing LGBTQIA+ Youth Equity and Inclusion in Schools with the New Jersey Department of Education. This groundbreaking commission is the first of its kind in the nation and will provide a model for other states that endeavor to follow New Jersey's lead—with Okeson at the helm—in helping schools be authentically safer spaces for *all* students.

Okeson's appointment to the commission is no surprise to those who know her and the work she's done over

Amy Moran, Ph.D. is an out queer educator, leader and activist 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. She writes a monthly column, Rainbow Connection, for the NJEA Review. She can be reached at rainbowconnectionNJEA@gmail.com.

the last several decades. Art educator and local union president of the Rumson-Fair Haven Schools Employees Association from 2008-24, Okeson is a co-founder of Make It Better for Youth (MIB4Y): the Monmouth County Consortium for LGBTQ Youth which, among other things, partnered with Garden State Equality to advance the cause of LGBT-inclusive curricula in New Jersey public schools.

Birth of an organizer

Raised in rural Warren County, Okeson saw her father, David, creatively and collaboratively organize area businesspeople through their local Kiwanis chapter to raise money to help families in their community who needed financial support. They held an annual flower sale and wrote a song that heralded people and places in their quaint country town. Kiwanis members sang the song outside the grocery store to encourage shoppers to buy their potted beauties.

With her father's example of grassroots organizing,

Okeson started organizing in her first year at Rutgers's Mason Gross School of the Arts, where she helped the second-oldest college campus queer group grow from five members to 70.

Between 1993 and 1997, Okeson learned about agitation propaganda art and read about organizing strategies and affinity group cohesion in groups like ACT UP (the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). She and other queer organizers drew on media available at the time, including Vito Russo's book *The Celluloid Closet: Homosexuality in the Movies* (1981), Harvey Fierstein's film "Torch Song Trilogy" (1988), and Jennie Livingston's documentary "Paris is Burning" (1990). Okeson and other club leaders traveled 72 miles round trip to New York City to rent a VHS copy of "Paris is Burning" in the West Village to bring it to her New Brunswick campus for group viewing before making the trip again to return it in person, as was done at the time.

By the mid-1990s, Okeson developed a clear understanding of how embedded and dangerous anti-LGBTQIA+ societal standards were, and that they communicated one message loud and clear: queer futures don't exist.

In media representation, LGBTQIA+ people were simply eliminated through murder, suicide or psychiatric institutionalization. Okeson knew that rural queer youth struggled to envision a life for themselves that didn't include public shunning, ostracization from their families, and employment and housing insecurity because of their status as LGBTQIA+ people in a culture that normalized antagonism toward them.

Okeson looked to other civil rights causes and marveled at others' courage and agency. She read about the "504" protests and disability justice workers who put their bodies on the line to encode societal change with universal design to better access public education, now considered normal institutional practice. "504" refers to Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which mandates the integration

"We know too much to not act."

of people with disabilities into mainstream institutions.

She was inspired by Black, Brown, and Indigenous queer and transgender poets who wrote about lived layers of injustice and learned how limiting the white perspective is for comprehensively explaining and advocating for justice in its many places of need.

During the time when Okeson was organizing with peers in dorm rooms, she came to understand the importance of centering "we" above "me," knowing the justice work they were designing was to have ripple effects reaching far and wide.

Okeson started teaching as an out lesbian in 1997, eventually transferring in 2002 to Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School, where she centered her practice on "the discipline of creative and critical thought as a means to ask beautiful questions which lead to growth and action."

Understanding how a rural upbringing disallowed "outness" about one's LGBTQIA+ identity was a major motivator for action. Okeson synthesized what she learned about minority stress models, chronic exposure to social trauma, school dropouts and reduced academic outcomes of queer kids to co-found Make It Better For Youth (MIB4Y): the Monmouth County Consortium for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning Youth, saying, "We know too much to not act." Through MIB4Y, Okeson organized concerned and determined educators, community leaders, arts and cultural organizations, businesses and individuals to pool resources of many kinds to affirm queer young people through education and outreach.

In November 2017, Okeson was honored with Monmouth County Junior League's "Women Making a Difference" award, accompanied by a small monetary sum.



Kate Okeson speaking at the 2020 NJEA Equity Alliance Conference upon receiving the NJEA Equality Champion Award.

Knowing that LGBT-inclusive curriculum initiatives were working their way slowly through the legislative process in Trenton, Okeson called friend and longtime activist Carol Watchler for advice on how she might use the award money to help advance the cause. Watchler had seen the passage of harassment, intimidation, and bullying laws and statewide guidelines on transgender students under the governorship of Chris Christie. She was up to date on much of the literature about LGBT-inclusive education practices.

At the time, Learning for Justice and GLSEN provided some of the only models of LGBT-inclusive curricula in circulation, other than college-level work and “Making the Fair Act Fair,” the 63-page academic critique of California’s 2011 groundbreaking social studies curriculum. Concurrently, inclusive curriculum legislation that had advanced slowly under Christie was picking up momentum after Gov. Phil Murphy’s 2016 win, and Okeson used her award money to organize a one-day summit.

Imaginative mobilizing

In 2018, Okeson sent an email to people she thought would be interested in developing inclusive curricula and put out an open call on social media inviting educators to meet at Red Bank Regional High School on March 23 of that year. Almost 30 people joined the one-day summit,

**“The heart is the size of our fist.
Keep loving, keep fighting.”**

which was designed to begin exploring ways to address the potential of a complex, unfunded, LGBTQ+ curriculum mandate, and how to do so with integrity-rich academic content for students in schools.

They anticipated pushback from uninformed stakeholders. At the time, this felt like a “third rail” issue. Much of the queer youth advocacy happening in schools was done by vulnerable queer and queer-allied teachers who were earnestly working to prevent young people from having as difficult a time as they’d had in school.

The morning session was designed to explore questions followed by an afternoon of conversation about what best practices could look like with LGBTQ-inclusive curricula:

How can discussions in schools expand beyond a “heroes and holidays” approach and move toward complex pedagogies that explore systems of oppression and their impact on people?

How can queer-inclusive curricular content steer clear of the risk of respectability politics, where real voices and experiences are excluded in favor of queer people who are considered mainstream and “palatable” by straight, cisgender people?

How can the boundaries of “acceptable” examples in history be expanded to reflect the authentic queer American experience, better enabling New Jersey students to envision an authentic future for themselves?

In the second half of the day, guiding questions and breakout discussion groups yielded several understandings. First, representatives from various stakeholder positions in schools needed to be engaged, including administrators, counselors, teachers and curriculum writers. Second, an LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum mandate might pass, but it would be unfunded. Getting the word out to districts would require a plan so that teachers knew they had the green light to proceed with inclusive lessons. It would also require exploring what skills and content knowledge teachers would need to implement the mandate with fidelity.

Participants agreed that resources needed to be developed, whether or not the law passed in Trenton, because this work mattered. Providing educational insight as classroom teachers—both in service and retired—Okeson and Watchler lobbied for the bill early that summer. The bill was passed by both houses of the state Legislature that December.

Meeting in the middle

It is Okeson’s practice to work organically with teachers at the grassroots level around the pragmatics of bringing LGBTQ-inclusive curricula into schools. Core to this practice is her understanding that top-down mandates (i.e., legislation) must be fed from the bottom up (i.e., grassroots organizing). This allows both the Legislature and the grassroots to co-create best outcomes for New Jersey students.

In January of 2019, Gov. Murphy signed A-1335, the LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum bill, into law. Behind the scenes, Okeson created an application process for stakeholders to join a donation-funded, three-day retreat to deepen the visioning work, now that New Jersey public schools were legally mandated to use LGBTQ-inclusive instruction in middle and high school classes in all content areas. The mandate, after all, came with no clear directives for how each district should manifest it.

By February, participants were selected, and the retreat was held that March at Murray Grove in Barnegat.

Using what Okeson referred to as “old school organizing” strategies, the retreat was designed to be nonhierarchical and generative, where the nearly 30 retreat participants’ ideas about LGBTQ-inclusive curricula were welcome, and the leading question was simply, “How can we make this happen?”

Everyone brought what they could, ranging from food to a boom box, from the latest research paper to a particular



Participants at the conclusion of a three-day retreat in early 2019 to create a vision for how schools could implement the LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum bill.

inroad for school counselors, from grant writing access to grassroots donation possibilities, and more.

These collaborative creatives hailed from many areas that are integral to youth advocacy: English language arts and humanities, school administration, school counseling, PFLAG, archivism, anti-bullying curriculum development and more.

Participants came away with clear insights:

- **Find practical fixes.** Participants who analyzed attributes of their own districts noticed trends and identified gaps, making recommendations around what would be most useful and realistic for teachers.
- **Include administrators.** Administrative issues were identified, including aspects of building functioning, school culture and the importance of “queering” the lesson plan formats as an expectation by leadership.
- **Recruit allies.** The people who came with prior interest—those who identified as queer, had connection with members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and other connections—needed a broader group to work with if the outcomes intended by the newly minted mandate would realize their intended benefits for New Jersey students.

Teach.LGBT

Garden State Equality and Make It Better for Youth collaborated to create the website, *Teach.LGBT*. The website is a repository of LGBTQ-inclusive lesson plans. Special sections provide resources for administrators and teachers.

You’ll also discover an executive summary, authored by Dr.

Lori Burns, of the findings of the LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum Pilot Program for New Jersey’s Public Schools that was launched in 2020.

Of special importance for Okeson and her allies was connecting the experiences of marginalization rather than framing racial equity and queer equity, for example, as separate justice causes. They acknowledged and explored the parallels of systems of oppression, rather than isolating efforts around social justice for different groups.

In April, Okeson met with Ashley Chiappano-Riker, the Safe Schools & Community Education Manager for Garden State Equality who is also the parent of a transgender daughter, and Dr. Lori Burns, an out lesbian administrator, to distill essential takeaways and action items. From this conversation, Chiappano-Riker and Burns started Educators for Equality and, with Okeson, developed the data-driven LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum Pilot Program for New Jersey's Public Schools.

The pilot was the first of its kind in the nation and worked in partnership with researchers from area colleges and universities. Seventy-two districts applied to participate, and 12 were selected. Curriculum writers also applied and were selected, adhering to the beliefs that LGBTQ+ inclusive education is an obligation, must be intersectional, and that we cannot wait for textbooks to be revised or for districts to provide professional development.

In January 2020, the pilot was launched, just as Okeson received NJEA's prestigious Equality Champion Award. Despite the pandemic's abrupt interruption of the in-district work and data collection process, 10 schools completed the pilot, and Burns created an executive summary of the pilot's findings. It can be read, along with a repository of the program's LGBTQ-inclusive lesson options online at [Teach.LGBT](#).

That fall, curriculum writers and instructional coaches became professional developers who gave virtual trainings in schools beyond the original pilot schools. This work was born of Okeson's three-day retreat initiative and continues to be available at [Teach.LGBT](#).

Continuing to move forward

In the spring of 2021, Okeson and I discussed how so many school-based training needs *still* centered on entry-level understandings and that many group workshops had attendees with wide ranges of readiness. This requires unique on-the-spot differentiation in content delivery.

Some people were still curious about what LGBTQIA+ stood for and what those words meant, while others

were ready to learn how to incorporate lessons into their eleventh-grade math class or fifth-grade English class in ways that affirm LGBTQIA+ students.

We'd noticed that districts across the state were differently activated around implementation of this now two-year-old law. We wanted to provide public school teachers across the state with discussion points about LGBTQIA+ issues in schools, regardless of whether their individual districts had made moves to incorporate LGBTQ-inclusive practices. With the understanding that nearly every NJEA member—essentially, nearly every educator in the state—receives the NJEA Review magazine every month, the "Rainbow Connection" column was born. Starting in September of 2021, Okeson and I co-authored 10 articles each year across a range of topics relating to queer issues in schools.

This forward motion—started years ago by people who Okeson considers mentors, supportive organizations invested stakeholders, and Okeson herself and her collaborators—continues to generate benefits in myriad education spaces.

This forward motion has also been supported in New Jersey public schools by:

- The law against harassment, intimidation, and bullying in schools.
- Statewide guidelines for supporting transgender students in schools.
- Adoption of social/emotional learning competencies.
- Updated health and physical education standards.
- The LGBTQ-inclusive curriculum mandate.

NJEA's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Committee launched its first annual conference, the NJEA Carol Watchler LGBTQIA+ Advocacy Conference in 2023 and will have its third annual convening on May 9 and 10, 2025. It is open to all NJEA members.

When advocating for and affirming vulnerable queer youth in schools was once a risky choice for adults in schools who were often alone in that work and unclear about their own civil rights, some facing backlash at the hands of administrators and community members, supporting LGBTQIA+ students (and teachers!) in schools is increasingly understood to be a concern for *all* of us.

Okeson receives national recognition

In July of 2024, as a result of NJEA's nomination, Okeson was awarded the National Education Association's Virginia Uribe Memorial Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights. In her acceptance speech, Okeson honored mentor collaborators, acknowledging that "their actions to demonstrate their values, one of which is showing how we can speak, write, represent and live OUT loud so that our LGBTQIA+ students know there is a future for them full of possibility."



She also thanked NJEA leadership “for connecting representation, practice and promise.” In reflecting on her recent decade of advocacy work, she came to these conclusions:

We know so much now about LGBTQAI+ outcomes that we are compelled to act, and often those actions are happening in environments, both political and social, that are hostile to these efforts, and it is those who lift up their LGBTQAI+ students through the choices in school and the classroom by giving visibility to others in these hostile environments, and those that navigate and utilize their own queer and trans visibility in a system still making strides to accept and affirm us...

State advisory commission formed

The New Jersey Department of Education’s new **Advisory Commission on Advancing LGBTQIA+ Youth Equity and Inclusion in Schools** also formed as a result

of this forward motion, and we know Okeson’s activism and advocacy for students and educators in New Jersey will be only magnified in her new executive directorship.

This year’s publicly held Commission meetings will be at 10 a.m. on Dec. 2, Feb. 24, and May 5 at 100 River View Plaza in the 1st Floor Conference Room (CR1A) in Trenton. You can email Okeson at kokeson@doe.nj.gov or YouthEquity@doe.nj.gov for more information about the commission.

Okeson will be missed beyond words in the Rainbow Connection column, but please join me and all of NJEA in congratulating her and thanking her for all she’s done and continues to do for LGBTQIA+ students and their advocates. 🏡



TEACHER LEADERSHIP

It’s **MORE IMPORTANT** than ever!

NJEA’s Teacher Leader Academy is a N.J. Department of Education approved one-year program for candidates seeking to earn the NJ Teacher Leader Endorsement.



For more details, visit
njea.org/tla

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

Apply today to join a dynamic community of educators who are finding ways to lead from the classroom as they share ideas, support their colleagues, and work with school and district leaders to create systemic change that supports high-quality teaching and learning.

WEB: njea.org/tla

EMAIL: teacherleader@njea.org



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



BARNYARD DAYS

By Kathryn Coulibaly

There's nothing elementary school children like better than interacting with cute, furry farm animals, but when your tour guides are also cool, older high school students, the excitement is off the charts.

It's no wonder, then, that Phillipsburg High School's (PHS) Barnyard Days are legendary in the community. For most of the past 46 years, students involved with the Future Farmers of America (FFA) host students from area schools and the wider community for two days to showcase the school's agricultural program and introduce children to common farm animals such as horses, goats, ducks, chickens, sheep and more.

FFA students are assigned to various locations where they instruct area schoolchildren on how to care for the animals, what they like to eat and drink, and other characteristics. The PHS students create posters with vital statistics about the animals and answer questions.

Over the course of two days in the spring, the students will interact with more than 1,200 students from 10 schools and more than 400 adults.

"This is still an agricultural community, but we want to expose younger children to typical farm animals and get them excited about working with animals," says Jessica Heritage, an agricultural science teacher at PHS and the school's FFA advisor.

Kathryn Coulibaly is the associate editor of the NJEA Review and provides content and support to njea.org. She can be reached at kcoulibaly@njea.org.



Phillipsburg High School Future Farmers of America (FFA) hosts more than 1,200 students over two days for the annual Barnyard Days.

In addition to leading discussions about the animals, students demonstrate farm equipment, guide school groups and show off the school's greenhouse. One of the highlights is the community pig roast.

Phillipsburg High School's future farmers

PHS has an active FFA program that introduces students to careers in agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, veterinary science and so much more. Students compete in statewide and national competitions, networking with other students across the state and the country.

"Programs like this are for future generations," says Nate, a student and FFA member. "Without farmers there's no food. We're building up rural areas, and we're losing farmland and that could cause us to be unable to feed people."

Along with teaching agriculture, FFA imparts many other skills that students can take into any aspect of their lives.





Area elementary students learn about various animals and farm equipment. They visit the greenhouse and explore the many facets of agriculture in the Garden State.

“FFA teaches public speaking and communications,” says Cindy Bowman, a retired paraprofessional in the district who volunteers to help with Barnyard Days. “I was a member of FFA as a student and now I’m involved with the Grange.”

A labor of love

Chase Sherburne, the 2023-24 New Jersey State FFA president, drove more than two hours from his home in Salem County to attend Barnyard Days and support the program.

“I got involved in FFA because I wanted to try something new,” Sherburne recalls. “I had a friend who was attending Salem County VoTech, so I took a chance and joined the agriculture program. I fell in love with FFA immediately.”

Sherburne is now studying agricultural education at Salem County Community College and hopes to someday be an FFA adviser.

For Heritage, connecting students through a love for taking care of plants and animals is a big part of why Barnyard Days is such a labor of love, and she’s grateful for the support they receive from area businesses and government entities.

“We’re so fortunate to have support from the American Dairy Association, Crayola, ShopRite, Keystone and New Jersey’s Fish and Wildlife Department. And so many of our alumni come back to help us, which is a great way for us to show current students the impact of what they’re learning, especially when our graduates are working in agriculture-related fields. Phillipsburg is a tight community, and it’s great to help continue the Barnyard Days tradition.” 🏡



More than a Garden State

According to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture the state had, as of 2022, nearly 10,000 farms and productive farmland covered more than 710,000 acres. New Jersey farmers produce more than 100 different kinds of fruits and vegetables and are one of the top 10 producers of blueberries, cranberries, peaches, tomatoes, bell peppers, eggplant, cucumbers, spinach, squash and more. Fish and seafood are also a huge industry in the state, valued at more than \$185 million.

What is the Future Farmers of America?



FFA is a national educational organization, some 850,800 members strong, preparing young people for leadership and careers in agriculture. As one of the three integral components of Agricultural Education, FFA makes a positive difference in the lives of students by developing their potential for premier leadership, personal growth and career success.

In New Jersey, more than 3,000 members engage in personal, career and leadership development activities that challenge them to excel as they develop agricultural skills and competencies for the future.

Learn more about FFA and NJ’s agriculture education resources at nj.gov/agriculture/ag_ed.

“FFA imparts skills that students can take into any aspect of their lives.”



JOIN YOUR PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION

Connect with others in your job description

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

In your school building, or perhaps even your school district, you may be the only one in your job category. If others don't understand what you do, these organizations present a wonderful opportunity to share strategies and meet educators from other districts who are doing the same work.

Corrections?

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

Find your professional organizations here.

ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION

N.J. ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION ASSN. (NJAEA)

njeaa.org

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

Dues: \$120

Contact: Dr. Adrienne Harrison-Surgeon, president, president@njeaa.org.

ART

ART EDUCATORS OF N.J. (AENJ)

aenj.org

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

Dues: Active – \$50; Retiree, First-year professional and Student – \$20

Contact: Teresa A. De Sapio Diaz; membership@aenj.org.

BUSINESS/TECHNOLOGY

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

njbtea.org

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

Dues: Active and Associate – \$40; Retiree – \$20; Student – \$10

Contact: Robert Carson, rcarson@burltwpsch.org; njbtea@comcast.net.

CERTIFIED ATHLETIC TRAINERS

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

atsnj.org

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

Dues: Professional – \$65; Student – \$25

Contact: Amanda Kelly, secretary@atsnj.org.

CLASSICAL STUDIES

N.J. CLASSICAL ASSOCIATION (NJCA)

njclassics.org

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

Dues: Active – \$20; Retiree and Student – \$10

Contact: James Rowan, *secretarynjca@gmail.com*.

COOPERATIVE EDUCATION

N.J. COOPERATIVE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (NJCEA)

njcea.info

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

Dues: Active – \$40; Retiree and Associate – \$20; Student – \$10

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

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

njceca.org

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

Dues: Member – \$50; Retiree – \$30; see website for more details.

Contact: Erika Beaven, *eribea@bergen.org*, 201-788-8466, or *njcecaorg@gmail.com*.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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

njtesol-njbe.org

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

Dues: Regular – one year \$35, two years – \$59; Retiree – one year \$20, two years \$35

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

FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

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

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

Dues: \$25

Contact: Stacey Dworzanski, *njfccla@gmail.com* or 732-452-2862; Patricia DiGioia-Laird, *njfccla@gmail.com*; or Carolyn Reynolds, *carolreynol@aol.com*, 609-477-0801.

GIFTED CHILDREN

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

njagc.org

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

Dues: General – \$50; Retiree – \$35; Student – \$25

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

HOLOCAUST EDUCATION

THE COUNCIL OF HOLOCAUST EDUCATORS (CHE)

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

Dues: Free

Contact: Colleen Tambuscio; ctambuscio@aol.com or 609-292-9274.

KINDERGARTEN

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

njake.net

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

Dues: Free

Contact: Sharon Dougherty, newjerseyake@gmail.com.

LANGUAGE ARTS

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

njcte.org

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

Dues: In-service – \$25; Retiree – \$15; Preservice \$5

Contact: Valerie Mattessich, president, njctepresident@gmail.com, Denise Weintraut, njctemembership@gmail.com.

N.J. LITERACY ASSOC (NJLA)

njliteracy.org

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

Dues: Free

Contact: Dr. Rachel C. Lella, president, rdelella929@gmail.com; or njla@njliteracy.org.

LIBRARY/MEDIA

N.J. ASSN OF SCHOOL LIBRARIANS (NJASL)

njasl.org

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

Dues: Full-Time Professional – \$80; Student – \$40; see website for additional membership categories.

Contact: Karen Grant, president@njasl.org; Angela Coxen, NJEA liaison, njea@njasl.org.

MATHEMATICS

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

amtnj.org

AMTNJ hosts local conferences, the New Cubed Conference, webinars, and additional professional development opportunities, such as full-day workshops at Rutgers University, customized staff development and summer institutes. AMTNJ offers college scholarships, teacher grants, middle school and high school contests and publications to inspire educators. Visit AMTNJ's website or follow @amtnj on X.

Dues: Professional – one year \$30; two years \$50; Retiree and Preservice – \$15

Contact: info@amtnj.org. Cheryl Fricchione, president, president@amtnj.org; John Kerrigan, NJEA liaison, kerriganj@middletownk12.org.

MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION

N.J. ASSOCIATION FOR MIDDLE LEVEL EDUCATION (NJAMLE)

njamle.org

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

Dues: Individual – \$25; Student – \$15; Institutional or school – \$125

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

MUSIC

N.J. MUSIC EDUCATORS ASSN. (NJMEA)

njmea.org

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

Dues: Active – \$135; Retiree – \$62; Collegiate – \$35; Introductory active (first time students who were collegiate members) – \$66

Contact: William McDevitt, executive director, wmcdevittnjmea@gmail.com or 856-433-8512 or Nancy Clasen, NJMEA liaison, at nancyclasen@gmail.com.

NURSES

N.J. STATE SCHOOL NURSES ASSOCIATION (NJSSNA)

njssna.org

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

Dues: For a dues schedule go to NASN.org; membership in NJSSNA is included.

Contact: Rose Catton, executivedirector@njssna.org or Eileen Gavin, president, president@njssna.org.

OFFICE PROFESSIONALS

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

njaeop.net

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

Dues: \$20. For more information, visit njaeop.net.

Contact: Melissa Cruz, president, mcruz@westorangeschools.org; Donna Cushlanis, vice president, cushlanisd@gtps.nj.us.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION/HEALTH

N.J. ASSN. FOR HEALTH, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, RECREATION AND DANCE (NJAPERD)

njahperd.org

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

Dues: Professional – one year \$65, two years – \$120; three years \$175; Retiree – \$20; Future professional – \$10

Contact: Carol Ciotto, executive director, executive_director@njahperd.org; 203-679-1568.

PRESERVICE EDUCATORS

NJEA PRESERVICE/N.J. ASPIRING EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION (NJAEA)

njea.org/preservice

NJEA is organized on the college level and provides services to ensure preservice members are well prepared and ready to enter the teaching profession. NJEA Preservice holds an annual conference and has a strong presence at the NJEA Convention, including workshops and other programs. NJEA Preservice is transitioning to a new name, New Jersey Aspiring Educators Association.

Dues: \$32/\$0; membership is unified with NEA. This year, dues are returned to members through a reimbursement program.

Contact: Email NJEA Preservice at preservice@njea.org.

PSYCHOLOGISTS

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

njasp.org

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

Dues: Regular – \$75; Student Affiliate – \$15; Retiree – \$45; see website for additional membership categories.

Contact: *NJASP.membership@gmail.com*

RETIRED EDUCATORS

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

njea.org/njrea

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

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

Contact: Joan Wright, president at *jwright@njea.org*, or NJEA at 609-310-4546, Option 9.

SCHOOL COUNSELING

NEW JERSEY SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSN., INC. (NJSCA)

njsca.org

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

Dues: Professional – \$40; Student- \$30; Retiree – \$15

Contact: Jim Lukach, executive director, *jimlukach@msn.com* or 732-846-6468 or *njsca.org@gmail.com*.

SCIENCE

N.J. SCIENCE TEACHERS ASSN. (NJSTA)

njsta.org

NJSTA strives to support all teachers of science with professional development and professional learning community opportunities supporting high-quality instruction in varied and diverse settings. Help NJSTA promote public interest in science and science education for all. Join for virtual or in-person programs. Learn more at *njsta.org*.

Dues: Regular – \$25; Student – \$10

Contact: NJSTA president at *njstapresident@gmail.com* or NJSTA membership at *njstamemberhip@gmail.com*.

SOCIAL STUDIES

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

njcass.org

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

Dues: Teachers – \$25; Preservice – \$15; Joint membership with the N.J. Social Studies Supervisors Assn. – \$40

Contact: Hank Bitten, executive director, *hbitten@optonline.net*; Joseph Dwyer, president, *jdwyer@nutleyschools.org*. Visit *njsssa.org/njsssa* for the Social Studies Supervisors Association.

SOCIAL WORKERS

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

njassw.org

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

Dues: Regular – \$50; Retiree and Student – \$25

Contact: *natlcsw@hotmail.com* or June Simmons, president, *junesocialworker3@verizon.net*.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

N.J. ASSOCIATION OF LEARNING CONSULTANTS (NJALC)

newjerseyalc.org

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

Dues: Regular – \$75; Retiree and Student – \$40

Contact: Michelle Page, president, *president@newjerseyalc.org*.

N.J. COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN (NJCEC)

njcec.org

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

Dues: Basic – \$80; Full – \$135; Premier – \$215; Student, Family and Retiree memberships also available.

Contact: Dr. Julie Good, president, *jandcgood@msn.com*.

SPEECH AND THEATER

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

stanj.org

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

Dues: Regular – \$65; Retiree and Student – \$45

Contact: David Marconi, president, *stanjboard@gmail.com*; Dan Paolucci, vice president, *dcpaolucci@gmail.com*.

STUDENT ASSISTANCE

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

asapnj.org

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

Dues: \$50; see website for additional membership categories.

Contact: Pamela L. Felder, president, *asapnjboard@gmail.com*

TECHNICAL EDUCATION

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

acteonline.org

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

Dues: Professional – \$100; Retiree – \$41. Membership is unified with ACTE.

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

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

njteea.org

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

Dues: Individual – \$50; Undergraduate Student and Retiree – \$15; District – \$750; Lifetime – \$500

Contact: Frank Caccavale, executive director, *executive-director@njteea.org*; or *njteea@njteea.org*.

WORLD LANGUAGES

AMERICAN ASSN. OF TEACHERS OF FRENCH, N.J. CHAPTER (AATF-NJ)

frenchteachers.org

AATF-NJ promotes the teaching of French language, culture and literature, at all educational levels. The AATF offers scholarships, workshops and contests for both students and teachers. Members can also sponsor official honor societies at all levels. Members' students can participate in Le Grand Concours, trivia and media contests and more.

Dues: Individual – \$62 for unified national and state membership.

Jennifer Schwester, president, aatfnj76@gmail.com; Dawn Fiorilli, state administrator for the National French Contest, frenchcontestnj@gmail.com.

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

flenj.org

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

Dues: Regular – one year \$40; two years \$70; three years \$90; Student – \$20; Retiree – \$5

Contact: membership@flenj.org or FLENJ, PO Box 385, Fanwood, NJ 07023

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

njaatsp.org

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

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

Contact: VSybil Sanchez, president; sybsanjac@gmail.com or aatsp.nj@gmail.com.

N.J. CHINESE TEACHERS ASSN. (NJCTA)

usnjcta.org

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

Dues: Individual – \$20; Groups of six to ten – \$100; Groups of ten or more – \$10 per person.

Contact: Shihong Zhang, president, usnjcta@gmail.com; or visit the website.

NEED HELP?

FREE AND CONFIDENTIAL
HELP WITH PERSONAL,
FAMILY AND SCHOOL-
RELATED DEMANDS.

WHY HANDLE TOUGH
TIMES ALONE?

AID NJEA is your 24-hour, confidential helpline.

Staffed by NJEA members and professionals
from Rutgers University Behavioral Health
Care, the helpline offers practical advice,
direction, ideas and resources from those who
have walked in your shoes.

866 (1-866-243-6532)
AID-NJEA
24/7 Member Support Focused on YOU!
CONFIDENCE • TRUST • CONFIDENTIALITY



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 600 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 NJEAREview@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.

NJEXCEL New Jersey EXpedited Certification for Educational Leadership

 **NJPSAFE**
NJEXCEL



Register for an
Info Session at
www.njexcel.org

Teacher Leader Certification is also
available through NJEXCEL.

(609) 860-1200
www.njexcel.org

Get Started. Get Skilled. Get Certified.

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

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

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

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

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

What's in that stuff?

We need something nontoxic!

By Dorothy Wigmore

Feeling woozy when using something at work? Got a headache or skin rash afterward? Maybe some breathing problems or reactions? Just wondering what's in a product?

It's time to use your "right to know" about chemical hazards on the job, and to push for products that are less nasty or nontoxic, a practice called informed substitution.

What's the "right-to-know"?

New Jersey has three overlapping laws to help workers and employers find out about chemical hazards at work:

- The federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Hazard Communication law
- The state's Hazard Communication Standard, adding more to the federal version.
- The hard-won state Worker and Community Right to Know Act.

Together, they require school district employers make information accessible to workers, including:

- Up-to-date 16-section Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) for each hazardous product.
- A current list (inventory) of each product's hazardous chemicals found in in SDS Section 3.
- A list of the state's right to know hazardous substance fact sheets and sheets for each listed chemical, provided one exists among the approximately 2,000 English and 900 Spanish documents.
- The employer's annual Right to Know Survey.
- Effective training about the product/chemical hazards, and where to find and how to use the SDSs, labels, fact sheets and Survey—before someone "may be exposed," with refreshers every two years.

Data sheets have problems

Unfortunately, chemical data sheets are notorious for missing or downplaying hazards and being too technical for most of us.

Despite an international agreement, companies are

Dorothy Wigmore is a long-time health and safety specialist and WEC consultant. She has worked in Canada, the U.S. and Mozambique, focusing on prevention and worker participation to solve job-related hazards. She's also a pioneer of body and workplace mapping and other tools to find and fix those hazards.

supposed to use all available evidence, and then decide if the "weight of evidence" or classification criteria are met. Without mandatory lists in the U.S., they can, and do, omit important hazards (see the BlueGreen Alliance's report).

Many chemicals also have not been assessed for long-term effects (e.g., cancer, reproductive harm), despite on-going calls for full premarket testing. Even when they have been assessed, it may not lead to regulation. The chemical industry is famous for replicating the tobacco industry's tactics, making doubt their product.

Companies also can claim "trade secrets" for chemicals, although it is often unnecessary. The 2012 changes to data sheets let them make a similar claim for amount of a chemical in a product; only ranges are required if for a "trade secret."

Mandatory SDS training is often only a general overview, without information about their limitations or how to find out more.

"I know they mentioned things at our professional development sessions," says Nikki Baker of Healthy Schools Now, remembering her own experiences. "They weren't super detailed about how to read everything. You got hand-outs, maybe, and a slide show. You didn't get a chance to practice."

"It's more 'Be aware', 'We told you and now we're not responsible.' 'We warned you to read it yourself,'" she explains. "And they never talked about nontoxic options. We're just expected to put up with the hazardous ones."

Then there's greenwashing. Products are called "safe," "nontoxic" or "green" without independent certification that it's true. The certification criteria matters too. Check if they allow "quats," chemicals known to cause health effects including asthma and reproductive harm.





Resources

There are dozens of resources to assist you in exploring nontoxic and least toxic substitutions for various products used in a school environment. There are also many resources to assist you in clearly ascertaining exactly what is in the products you use—whether at work or in the home.

Toxics Use Reduction Institute

Cleaner Solutions Database
cleanersolutions.org

NJ Right to Know Hazardous Substances Fact Sheets
<https://bit.ly/nj-rtkfs>

Informed substitution

Wigmorising
Bev Thorpe, Dorothy Wigmore and Larry Stoffman
“Tools for Informed Substitution. How Do You Find Safer Chemicals for the Workplace?”
wigmorising.ca/cleaning-products-can-be-green

OSHA

Transitioning to Safer Chemicals: A Toolkit for Employers and Workers
osha.gov/safer-chemicals

Right to Know

NJ Department of Health:
Right to Know (including where to get help)
bit.ly/nj-rtk

NJ Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health (PEOSH)

Hazard Communication Standard
bit.ly/peosh-hazcom

Find out more!

New Jersey’s unique fact sheets provide more reliable and clear language material, with a glossary of terms to understand phrases like “vapor pressure” and “mutagen.” However, it’s unclear how often they are updated.

See the resources section for other independent sources, or ask for help from the New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC), through your UniServ rep.

Chemicals may have several names; others are complicated or long. The best identification is the Chemicals Abstract Service (CAS) number that must be on SDSs, except for “trade secrets”. They’re like a chemical’s unique “fingerprint”.

Start with these sources:

Chemhat

chemhat.org

Designed by and for workers, Chemhat is available in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. Based on the comprehensive Pharos database of international chemical hazard assessments and regulations. See the menu for background explanations.

Check the color coding. Something may be on a list for unclear reasons, especially if it has a black icon, indicating there’s little evidence.

Some chemicals have substitution links. If it’s a cleaner or disinfectant, also see below.

Risctox

English: risctox.istas.net/en

Español: risctox.istas.net

The Spanish Union Institute of Work, Environment and Health (ISTAS) database of 100,000-plus hazardous substances gives clear, organized and concise information about chemical hazards. It is particularly useful for information based on European regulations, which are much stronger than U.S. ones, especially for what’s banned or restricted. It is available in English and Spanish.

For cleaning and disinfecting products

smartlabel.org

California’s regulation about disclosing cleaning and disinfecting product ingredients is very useful. Unfortunately, there’s no related central database. For those not in Smartlabel, search the fine print on company websites. When in doubt, send a note to the “contact us” link, requesting the list. Follow up on Risctox, Chemhat or elsewhere. Also see NJEA’s Disinfecting Can Be Hazardous to All Staff and Students.”


For substitutes, check the TURI database and earlier NJEA Review articles.

If it’s hard to interpret what you find, ask science teachers or go through your UniServ rep for outside help.

What about less toxic or nontoxic products?

Rather than accepting the use of hazardous products, it’s time to ask, “Are they necessary?”

Why is a commercial cleaning product needed when soap, water and microfiber materials work? Why are there three graffiti removers? Why do we need a floor stripper? Why do we have carpet instead of flooring? And do we really need things that off-gas?

For nontoxic and less toxic options, it’s crucial to connect school procurement with health and safety committees. Purchasing staff likely are not familiar with an item’s hazards, despite “green” or “environmentally preferable” buying programs. Nor are they likely to know about the consequences without a way to tell them. (See Tools for informed substitution.) 

NJREA | PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

NJREA CONGRATULATES 2024 SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Each year, NJREA awards four statewide scholarships to recognize students' academic accomplishments, participation in school activities and dedication to community service. Scholarships are awarded to attend two- and four-year colleges and trade schools.

Walter P. Krichling Jr. Trade/Vocational Program Scholarship

Ryan G. Salerno
Sussex County Technical School
Attending: Universal Technical Institute
Major: Auto/Diesel Technology II Program



Ryan Salerno, an accomplished student with a GPA of 3.7, made the honor roll every marking period throughout high school. He has earned a Forklift Operator Certificate and the ASE Refrigerant Certificate. Salerno was also a varsity ice hockey player on a championship team. In a letter of recommendation, his teacher wrote that Salerno is, "a highly motivated young man and a great teammate and leader."

Fred E. Aug Two Year Scholarship

Joseph Shepherd Jr.
Cinnaminson High School
Attending: Rowan College at Burlington County
Major: Communications through Media and Film



Joey Shepard Jr. has completed the KYW News Studies Program at KYW Headquarters in Philadelphia. He has earned numerous awards at his high school for leadership, math and social studies. His teacher noted that, "Joey is a model student through the year and has become a valued member of the class through his work ethic and addition to class discussions." Shepard's goal is to do professional voiceover work in film, TV and radio, along with earning his teacher certification. Shepard has overcome significant challenges. He was born without a cerebellum, which affected his ability to communicate. His brain compensated by developing neural pathways that use different part of his brain to communicate and learn. Speech therapy, films and script writing helped him to express himself and interact with others.

Elizabeth A. Allen Four Year College/University Scholarship

Alexander Kang
Cherry Hill High School East
Attending: University of Pennsylvania
Major: Dual Program of Biology and Business at the Wharton School and College of Arts and Sciences



Alex Kang graduated as valedictorian at Cherry Hill High School East after having juggled 11 AP courses. During the pandemic, Kang founded the Patch heART Works program to uplift spirits through art therapy at rehab centers and nursing homes. He has also competed at state and international DECA Competitions in the Entrepreneurship Series. Kang was the principal clarinetist for the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra. Kang is one of only 24 students accepted to the Vagelos Program in Life Science and Management Coordinated dual degree program at the University of Pennsylvania. His goal is to become a CEO of a pharmaceutical company developing treatment for diseases such as Alzheimer's.

Isabelle M. Hickman Four-Year College/University Scholarship

Kaitlyn Culbert
Toms River High School North
Attending: Harvard University
Major: Political Science and Biology



Kaitlyn Culbert has conducted research at MIT on honeybees, and her research was published by Harvard's Journal of Emerging Investigators. As the 2023-24 New Jersey Honey Queen, she is the spokesperson for the Central Jersey Beekeepers Association. She advocated for, and saue the introduction of, a bill in the New Jersey General Assembly that would prohibit planting of nonnative species in landscaping at state parks and forests and establish grant program to support use of native plants at local parks and forests. The bill, A-1253, is currently in committee. Culbert established a YouTube channel where she interviews STEM professionals around the world. She earned a GPA of 5.4, taking nine AP courses. Kaitlyn plans major in political science and biology at Harvard University.

Around the counties 2024-2025

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

BERGEN COUNTY REA

Dec. 10 Winter luncheon meeting at Seasons Catering. Reservation deadline is Dec. 1, and the cost is \$50. To attend, contact Marie Papaleo at 201-407-2543.

BURLINGTON COUNTY REA

Dec. 12 Holiday bus trip departing from Burlington. Lunch - Black Whale Restaurant and then travel to see "Miracle on 34th Street" at the SurfFlight Theatre. Reservation deadline is Nov. 2, and the cost is \$113. To attend, contact Donna O'Malley at 609-268-0838.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY REA

Dec. 11 Holiday luncheon meeting at Millville Motorsports Park. To attend, contact Pam Garwood at 856-392-6909.

ESSEX COUNTY REA

Oct. 16 Fall luncheon meeting at Hanover Manor. The guest speakers will be Sean Spiller, NJEA president and Petal Robertson, NJEA secretary-treasurer. Reservation deadline is Oct. 9, and the cost is \$40. To attend, contact Kathie McKoy-Osborne at 973-715-6591.

GLOUCESTER COUNTY REA

Dec. 10 Winter luncheon meeting at Riverwinds Restaurant. Non-perishable food donations accepted for a local food bank. Reservation deadline is Dec. 3. To attend, contact Margery Walsh at 856-381-1123.

HUNTERDON COUNTY REA

Dec. 12 Winter luncheon meeting at Mt. View Chalet for members only. To attend, contact Joyce Kucyn at 908-479-6656.

MERCER COUNTY REA

Oct. 23 Fall luncheon meeting at Mercer Oaks Golf Club. Reservation deadline is Oct. 10, and the cost is \$35. To attend, contact Lisa Rizziello at 609-577-6158.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY REA

Dec. 5 Winter luncheon meeting at The Grand Marquis. The entertainment will be the Sayreville Elementary School Chorus. Reservation deadline is Nov. 28, and the cost is \$45. To attend, contact Susan Jaysnovitch at 732-925-1606.

MONMOUTH COUNTY REA

Dec. 10 Winter luncheon meeting at Jacques Catering. Reservation deadline is Nov. 29, and the cost is \$45. To attend, contact Debbie Adamchak at 848-459-2672.

OCEAN COUNTY REA

Oct. 17 Fall luncheon meeting at the Clarion Hotel. Meeting topic: Induction of new officers by former NJEA President Edythe Fulton. The cost is \$32. To attend, contact Pam Raynor at 862-268-5210.

Dec. 5 Winter luncheon meeting at Clarion Hotel. Reservation deadline is Nov. 22, and the cost is \$32. To attend, contact Pam Raynor at 862-268-5210.

PASSAIC COUNTY REA

Dec. 4 Winter luncheon meeting at The Brownstone in Paterson. The meeting is for members only. To attend, contact Kitty Sausa at 201-410-1325.

SALEM COUNTY REA

Oct. 28 Fall luncheon meeting at St. John's Episcopal. The guest speaker will be Nicki Burke. Reservation deadline is Oct. 21, and the cost is \$17. To attend, contact Rosemma Ward at 856-467-4795.

Dec. 2 Winter luncheon meeting at Woodstown Diner. The entertainment will be Woodstown High School Chamber Choir. Reservation deadline is Nov. 25, and the cost is \$17. To attend, contact Rosemma Ward at 856-467-4795.

NJEA PRESERVICE LEADS THE WAY AT NEA ASPIRING EDUCATORS CONFERENCE

PRESERVICE VEEP WINS NATIONAL OFFICE

NJEA Preservice President Bianca Nicolescu and NJEA Preservice Vice President Matthew Yuro attended the 2024 NEA Aspiring Educators Conference in Philadelphia from June 29 to July 2. These preservice officers learned strategies to organize for paid student teaching, attended informational workshops, elected new national leaders and celebrated a year of achievements at the GramAEs.

At the GramAEs, chapters of NEA Aspiring Educators, hence the "AE" in GramAEs, are awarded for exemplary programs.

NJEA Preservice took home the State Excellence Award, the highest award a state program can receive. Hannah Pawlak, a teacher in Highland Park, received the Distinguished State Organizer award for her work with NJEA Preservice.

NJEA Preservice members were delighted when Matthew Yuro was elected to serve on the NEA Board of Directors for the 2024-25 year. He will represent over 40,000 aspiring educators nationally.

Encourage aspiring educators to join NJEA Preservice

Are you the parent of a college or university student preparing for a career in education? Are there preservice educators currently student teaching or fulfilling a practicum in your school?

Encourage them to explore and join NJEA Preservice, the organization that serves aspiring educators.

As NJEA's collegiate membership category, NJEA Preservice is open to students enrolled in a New Jersey college or university pursuing a career in education and/or a public school district. NJEA Preservice aims to enhance the preemployment experience by providing access to benefits, professional learning opportunities, and a network of colleagues within NJEA.

This year, NJEA Preservice membership is free through a reimbursement program. Upon registering, you will be asked to pay \$32 dues for the year, which will be returned to you via check to the address you provide on your membership form.

Have aspiring educators visit njea.org/preservice to join and learn more.



Christine Sampson-Clark (r), an NEA Executive Committee member and Trenton teacher, greets NJEA Preservice President Bianca Nicolescu and NJEA Preservice Vice President Matthew Yuro at the Aspiring Educators Conference.



NJEA Preservice accepts the State Excellence Award at the NEA Aspiring Educators GramAEs Celebration



NJEA Preservice to get a new name

A change of name is in the works for NJEA Preservice. That name is New Jersey Aspiring Educators Association, or NJAEA for short.

The NJEA program for student members is transitioning to NJAEA to align with similar student organizations around the country and at NEA.

Whatever the name, the benefits of joining NJEA Preservice/NJAEA are many. Visit njea.org/join-preservice to learn more about why so many aspiring educators become members.

The power of connection

Empowering educators at the NJEA Convention

By Vicki Serreino



This November, educators from across New Jersey will gather for the NJEA Convention, a unique opportunity to connect, collaborate and grow. The convention empowers educators, providing tools and resources that enhance their practice in all of the spaces where NJEA members work. The diverse offerings are tailored to meet the needs of all educators, whether they are seasoned members or new to the association, ensuring that everyone can find relevant and valuable content.

The convention offers a rich blend of professional development, networking and collaborative opportunities. From the inspiring experiences and captivating displays found on the exhibit hall floor, to the scores of engaging

workshops offered on the upper floors, the convention offers innovative techniques and practical insights. Members will discover methods and resources for immediate use back in their schools. The convention also fosters reflection and generates strategies to enhance the long-term academic and social-emotional well-being of students and staff.

One of the most powerful aspects of the NJEA Convention is the sense of community it fosters. Educators can often feel isolated within the confines of their schools, but the NJEA Convention breaks down these barriers, creating a space where members can share experiences, challenges and successes. These informal interactions help build a network of peers who understand the unique demands of our profession and can provide support, advice and camaraderie.

A long-term impact

The connections made at the NJEA Convention often lead to collaborations that continue long after November. Whether it's partnering with another member to co-present at a future workshop or sharing resources and ideas, these relationships have a lasting impact. Engaging with colleagues and co-workers from different districts and backgrounds introduces members to diverse perspectives, broadening their understanding of the educational landscape in New Jersey.

Whether seeking to gain new skills, build relationships with colleagues or advocate for important causes, the NJEA Convention is an essential experience that empowers NJEA members. Through connection and collaboration, educators gain the tools and support they need to create dynamic, engaging and effective learning environments for all students. 🏠

Vicki Serreino is an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development & Instructional Issues Division. She is the coordinator of the NJEA Convention. She can be reached at vserreino@njea.org.

Board Certified Surgeon
Dr. N. Bill Aydin can help with your

- Painful Hernia
- Growing Lump
- Trouble Breathing
- Breast Reconstruction
- Post Weight Loss Reconstruction



N. BILL AYDIN, MD, FACS

DOUBLE BOARD CERTIFIED PLASTIC SURGEON

- American Board of Surgery
- American Board of Plastic Surgery
- Fellow of the American College of Surgeons
- American Society of Plastic Surgeons
- American Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgeons
- New Jersey Society of Plastic Surgeons
- Over 15 Years of Experience
- RealSelf Top Doctor
- Castle Connolly Top Doctor

EXCLUSIVE OFFER FOR NJEA/NEA MEMBERS*

20% off all Skin Care & Injectables w. our PA/RN
\$200 surgical consult fee with Dr. Aydin is waived



AYDIN
CENTER FOR PLASTIC SURGERY
SKIN CARE & LASERS

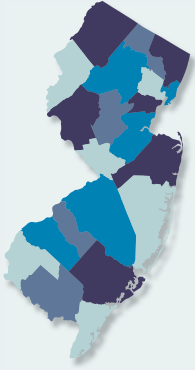
MOST OUT OF NETWORK PLANS ACCEPTED

Paramus, NJ • (201) 345-0100 • IG: @aydinplasticsurgery • Website: www.aydinplasticsurgery.com

*Products and services listed in the NJEA Member Discount Program are provided as a service to NJEA members and do not constitute an endorsement by NJEA or a representation regarding the products' quality or characteristics. NJEA makes no warranties expressed or implied, including the warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose regarding any products or services listed in the NJEA Member Discount Program. **Must show active membership card to receive exclusive member discounts. Cannot be combined with any other offer or discount.



VISIT OUR BOOTH AT THE NJEA CONVENTION!



SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

Workshops and conferences

highlights

Amistad, Civics, and
Arts education

2024 AMISTAD CONFERENCE AT ROWAN

Join the Rowan University College and Education and Humanities and Social Sciences, for an immersive conference featuring cutting-edge research and pedagogy on Black history, interdisciplinary collaborations and innovative initiatives created to strengthen the implementation of the New Jersey Amistad education law. The conference is free to the public.

Dr. Stephanie Harris, director of Africana Studies at Seton Hall University, will deliver the keynote address. The day will include workshops led by K-12 educators, Rowan faculty, scholars, students, and community historians and updates from elected officials on legislation to strengthen the Amistad law.

Date: Saturday, Dec. 15

Time: 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m.

Location: Rowan University, Chamberlain Student Center

To register, visit go.rowan.edu/amistad. The deadline is Nov. 30.

NJCSS OFFERS FALL WORKSHOPS

The New Jersey Council for the Social Studies is offering a series of workshop this fall. All of the workshops are free. They will all be held at Rutgers University in Piscataway, 8:30 a.m.-3p.m., coffee and lunch are included. Five professional development hours are awarded for each session. Materials are provided. To register, and for more information about any of the workshops below, visit civiced.rutgers.edu/events.

Oct. 14: Teaching Civics With We the People and Project Citizen

Nov. 5: Teaching Controversial Issues and Media Literacy (K-12)

Dec. 11: Engaging Student in Middle School Civics

ATTEND THE 2024 NJCSS CONFERENCE

The 2024 New Jersey Council for the Social Studies will hold its annual conference on Monday, Oct. 21, from 7:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. The theme is "Challenges and Changes: Past, Present, and Future." The conference will be held at the Busch Student Center at Rutgers University in Piscataway.

Registration is \$90 and the conference fee includes a one-year NJCSS membership (Sept. 1, 2024 through Aug. 31, 2025.)

The three workshop sessions will be one hour long and run from 8:45 a.m. - 1:05 p.m. There will be a "business breakfast" and the names of local eateries for your lunch. Visit njcss.org and click on the conference link for registration, continuing updates and the overall program. Questions? Email Hank Bitten at hbitten@optonline.net.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

OPPORTUNITIES FROM ARTSEDNJ

Culturally Responsive Arts Education Workout

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

Arts Ed NJ On-Demand course

Empowering Artists: Designing Student-Centered Learning Driven by the 2020 NJSLS-VPA

Build your capacity to develop process-driven arts education practices to fulfill the mission and vision of the 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards in the Visual and Performing Arts. Designed for PK-12 arts educators, arts supervisors, and anyone responsible for ensuring the arts standards are taught with fidelity and in a manner that advances student identity, agency and belonging. This two-part course will provide arts educators with a broad and deep understanding of the 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards in the Visual and Performing Arts. After completing this self-paced course, arts educators will be better prepared to design learning experiences that will activate student empowerment through the four artistic processes. The first module in part one of this two-part course is free.

For more information and to register visit artsednj.org/ondemandlearning-hub.

Discover



NJCTL

njctl.org/NJ/

- Master's Degrees
- Add-On Endorsement
- Alternate Route
- Free, Editable Teaching Materials K to AP

We help NJEA Members **SAVE BIG** on Major Purchases

www.BuyersEdgeInc.com Username: **3386** Password: **NJEA**

APPLIANCES



CARS



FURNITURE



KITCHENS



JEWELRY



CRUISES & TRAVEL



PET INSURANCE



HOME SALES & MORTGAGES



HOME SECURITY



SOLAR



NJEA Sponsored Member Benefit

Savings on many Major Purchases!

Appliances-TV's	800-377-3700	Mortgage Financing	800-971-7721
Cars - New & Used	800-543-8381	Moving Service	800-356-7771
Credit Repair	(see website)	Pet Insurance	(see website)
Furniture-Mattresses	800-631-0286	Real Estate-Buy/Sell	(see website)
Home Security Sys.	888 995-2661	Solar Electricity	800-558-1920
Jewelry-Diamonds	800-635-9136	Travel-Cruises	800-634-8538
Kitchen Cabinets	800-327-3599	...and many more!	

Need help M-F, 9-5: 800-755-5008



BUYER'S EDGE INC.

LOW PRICE GUARANTEED!

BuyersEdgeInc.com

Username: **3386** Password: **NJEA**

 **njea** Member Benefits



Member
Benefits



Do you have a
financial plan?
NJEA can help!



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

NJEA Income Protection Program

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

What is Income Protection and why is it important? Attend our free webinar on Oct. 30 at 4:30 p.m. Register at njea.org/mbwebinars

NEA Life Insurance

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

NJEA Income Protection Program

Financial Planning

Make sure you're saving enough for your children's college funds, retirement and anything else. Find financial planning resources and specialists to help with all your financial planning goals at neamb.com/retirement-goals.

Holiday Hacks and car buying tips

Attend our free webinar on Nov. 13 at 4:30 p.m. Register at njea.org/mbwebinars



For even more information, resources, and discounts: memberbenefits.njea.org

Questions? Email Beth Buonsante at bbuonsante@njea.org.



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



Get Ready for the Best Work of Your Career

ADVANCE YOUR TEACHING CREDENTIALS AT FDU

At Fairleigh Dickinson University's School of Education, we believe education is transformational. That's true for your students. **And it's true for you.** Our affordable graduate certificate and degree programs are offered online or in-person. **You'll be on course to do your best work – ever.**

AREAS OF GRADUATE STUDY

- BILINGUAL EDUCATION
- EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
- DYSLEXIA STUDIES – ORTON-GILLINGHAM
- ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
- HIGHER EDUCATION (EdD) – ALL ONLINE
- LEARNING DISABILITIES
- LITERACY/READING
- PRESCHOOL, ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

**VISIT FDU AT THE
NJEA CONVENTION!**
BOOTH #1100

**Explore Our Graduate Degrees
& Certification Options for Educators**
*Talk with our faculty and learn more about
our opportunities online, on campus and
in school districts.*

NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS FOR SPRING 2025!

For Details Contact Graduate Admissions

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



Personal. Global. Transformational.

fdu.edu/soe



Got a great idea?

Get it funded, just like these NJEA members!

Swimming Upstream – Students from West Milford Township High School team up with students from Maple Road Elementary School on a watershed project in their community. The high school students capture fish and conduct tests as part of a unit on molecular biology while the elementary students work with the high school students to dissect fish and write their findings on the project blog..

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.



STAFF NEWS

HIRES AND PROMOTIONS



NJEA welcomed **DAMARAY GALLETTO** to NJEA staff on May 16 as a secretary in the Region 13 office in Flemington. Prior to joining NJEA staff, she worked as a bilingual clerk in the Warren County Department of Human Services, assisting those in need of social safety net program. Galletto lives in Belvidere with her husband, Frank. They are empty nesters with two children, Justin and Karina, and a grandson, Nathan.



NJEA welcomed **DR. KIM PINCKNEY** to NJEA staff on July 1 as a temporary associate director in the Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. Pinckney has over 20 years of experience in instructional design, needs assessment, performance improvement, program evaluation, research, and workforce development and facilitation. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Pinckney served as a civilian employee at the National Security Agency. She has worked at all educational levels from kindergarten through higher education, as well as in government and industry settings.

Pinckney holds a bachelor's degree in Spanish from Swarthmore College. She holds a master's degree in second language acquisition – Spanish from the University of Maryland. She earned her Ph.D. in instructional design and technology from Old Dominion University. Pinckney is an adjunct professor in Wayne State University's Learning Design and Technology doctoral program.

The daughter of two retired New Jersey educators, Pinckney recently relocated back to the state and lives in Williamstown.



NJEA welcomed **MARISSA MAYOR** to NJEA staff on June 17 as an office assistant in the Region 29 office, which serves NJEA's higher education members. Mayor is a familiar face at NJEA, having worked in NJEA's Government Relations and Organizing divisions as temporary support staff through a staffing agency. Prior to working with NJEA, Mayor provided administrative and customer service support to various organizations in New Jersey. Active in her neighborhood social committee and church, Mayor lives in Plainsboro with her husband.



NJEA welcomed **JASUAN "JAY" BOONE** to NJEA staff on Aug. 1 as the director of Government Relations – Member and Political Organizing. Before joining NJEA staff, Boone served as chief of staff in the New Jersey Department of State. Prior to working for the state, he was a senior vice president and political strategist at Beaudoin and Company.

Boone has also worked for the United Federation of Teachers in New York City as director of City and State Legislative and Government Affairs. Additionally, he has worked as a campaign manager for many high-profile political candidates at both the state and national level.

Boone studied at the Graduate School of Journalism at City University of New York. He holds a bachelor's degree in religion and philosophy from Morehouse College.



NJEA congratulates **KATRINA HOMEL** on being recognized by the New Jersey State Bar Association (NJSBA) as the 2024 Young Lawyer of the Year. Homel is an associate director of NJEA Legal Services and Member Rights. For the NJSBA, she has served as chair of the Young Lawyers Division and a young lawyer trustee on the NJSBA Board of Trustees, among numerous other roles. She is the secretary of the New Jersey State Bar Foundation, the charitable arm of the NJSBA, as well as a former chair of the foundation's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Committee. In the broader community, she serves on the Pennington Historic Preservation Commission and has served on the boards of YWCA Princeton and UU Faith Action New Jersey. Speaking glowingly of her accomplishments, Leonard Jones, an attorney at Buchanan Ingersoll & Rooney (pictured), said, "Katrina stands out in the areas of professional knowledge, skill, integrity and courtesy. She is a sought after and valued speaker."

This November and next let's elect pro-public education leaders

"This is the most important election of our lifetime" has become a political cliché. But clichés often emerge for a reason. In a nation with a closely divided electorate that is choosing between candidates with profoundly different visions for the future of public education and the future of America, the stakes are high in November, and the outcome is far from certain.

Harris for the White House



That is why NEA members across America are joining NJEA members here in New Jersey who are going all-in for our NEA-endorsed candidates for president and vice president, Kamala Harris and Tim Walz. We know what a difference it will make to have a thoughtful,

experienced leader like Kamala Harris in the White House, with a smart, compassionate former teacher like Tim Walz by her side.

We already understand the chaos that awaits us if the election goes the other way. Whether Donald Trump brings back Betsy DeVos or finds someone worse to head the Department of Education, we can be sure that public schools and the people who work in them will again be under attack at the federal level. The mad dash for vouchers, privatization, defunding public education and destroying unions will start faster than you can say "Project 2025."

Of course, it goes beyond funding and economic issues. Whether all students have access to diverse books in their libraries, inclusive curricula in their classrooms and enough food in their cafeterias is on the ballot in November as well. So whether you think this is the most important election of your lifetime, it's certainly the most important election of theirs.

In New Jersey, we have another equally important election coming up next year. Gov. Phil Murphy is wrapping up his second and final term, and the race is on to replace him. NJEA President Sean Spiller has launched a campaign to be New Jersey's next governor, and NJEA members have already endorsed him in that historic effort.

Spiller for the Statehouse



Much like in this November's national election, the stakes could not be higher for students and educators. Over the last seven years, with public education advocate Murphy in the Statehouse, we've made incredible strides.

Our pensions are being fully funded. School funding has reached record levels. Affordable health insurance is finally available for members who get health insurance through their jobs. Educational support professionals have new rights and job protections. We are teaching a broad, inclusive curriculum. And our schools are recognized as the best in the nation.

But we have not forgotten the previous eight years under Chris Christie, where demonization and name calling were daily occurrences. Where pensions and health benefits were slashed. Where paperwork multiplied and privatization was an ever-present threat.

In 2025, we will elect a governor who will build on recent progress, or one who drags us back to the dark days before that. For students and educators alike, the stakes could not be higher in that election, either. That is why we NJEA members are going all-in to elect Sean Spiller as the next governor of New Jersey.

To learn more, join the campaign or donate, go to SeanSpiller.com and sign up today. Do your part to make sure that we elect pro-public education leaders everywhere this November and next, so we can win the **two** most important elections of our lifetime. 🗳️



SeanSpiller.com

45th Annual George M. Adams

Boardwalk Run & Fun Walk

FRIDAY, NOV. 8, 2024 | 9 A.M. | RUN AND WALK

Clip, complete, & mail to:

NJEA Boardwalk Run

NJEA c/o WSFS

PO Box 13661

Philadelphia PA 19101-3661

Deadline for pre-entries Oct. 28

Make checks payable to "NJEA"

5,000-meter race (3.1 miles)

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

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

Awards ceremony immediately following race at Boardwalk Hall.

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

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

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

Entry Fees:

\$25 Pre-entry includes running shirt

\$15 No T-shirt

\$30 Thursday & Friday (includes shirt)

Scan below
for online registration



Name _____ Age _____

(as of 11/9/2023)

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Local Association _____

Phone # _____ County _____

Email _____

Shirt size (Circle): XXL XL L M

This entry is for:

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

Pre-entry runners may pick up their numbers – and post-entry competitors may register for the race – at special Race Booth in the Convention Center on Thursday, Nov. 7 all day or at Registration Table at Boardwalk Convention Hall lobby at 8 a.m. on Friday, Nov. 8. Registration for the 5,000-meter Run closes at 8:30 a.m. on Friday Nov. 8. Shirts must be picked up prior to the race or after the race on Friday, Nov. 8.

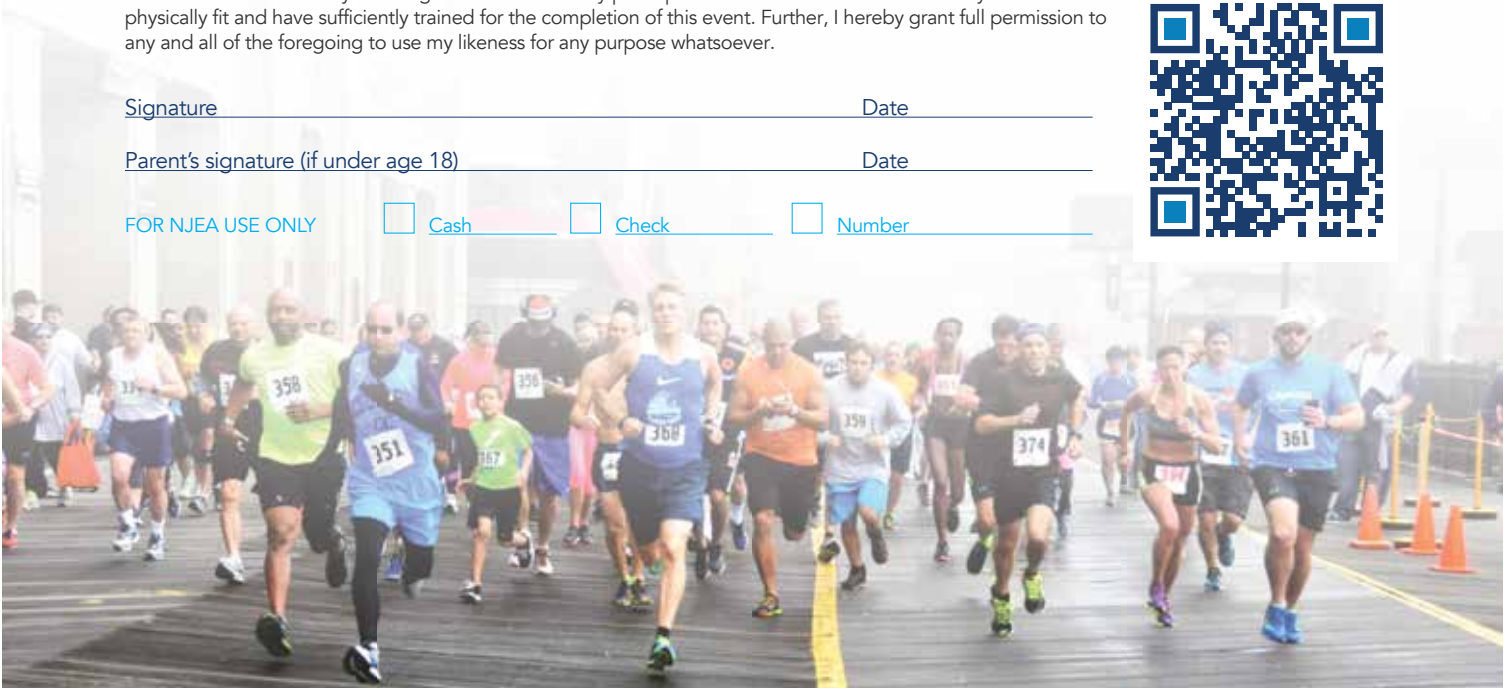
In consideration for accepting my entry, I, for myself, my heirs, and administrators, waive and release forever any and all rights and claims for damages I may have against NJEA, its agents and employees, the City of Atlantic City, and any and all participating sponsors and supporters. I also release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

Signature _____ Date _____

Parent's signature (if under age 18) _____ Date _____

FOR NJEA USE ONLY

Cash Check Number



Bring your innovative ideas to life with an

NJEA HIPPI GRANT

HELP YOUR STUDENTS ACHIEVE GREATNESS!



njea

Frederick L. Hipp
Foundation for Excellence
in Education

*Grants of \$500 to \$10,000 are available from
the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation
for Excellence in Education.*



Visit njea.org/Hipp for a grant application and tips for applying.

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS MARCH 1, 2025.