

NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

# REVIEW

FEBRUARY  
2022

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an education and advocacy resource

**20** MEET ESP OF THE YEAR  
NANCY COGLAND

**26** THOMAS JEFFERSON,  
HIS ENSLAVED FAMILY,  
AND LIBERTY

**30** TWO MINUTES TO  
MASTERY

**32** DIVERSE  
REPRESENTATION  
MATTERS

*Nancy Cogland*

**2022 ESP of the Year**



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Kimberly Scheetz, Pride chair and treasurer for the **Burlington County Special Services Education Association (BCSSEA)** with Jennifer Moses, a BCSSEA member who is a social worker and chief master sergeant in the Air Force. The local association, whose members serve students from ages 3 to 21, held its 11th annual Military Appreciation Pride Program in November. Families and community members submit addresses of active duty service members and veterans to be honored with a special card created by the school's students.



The **Deptford Education Association**, with Pride Chair Shannon Pizzuta, installed and filled eight Little Free Libraries for the Deptford community last spring. The libraries are for all community members to borrow from and enjoy.



Working with BITE, an organization whose programs include a food pantry, the **Jersey City Para-Professional Association (JCPPA)** donated 50 turkeys to local families in November. JCPPA members also volunteered distributing the turkeys and many other food items and necessities such as bottled water.

## FEATURES



### 20 | MEET ESP OF THE YEAR NANCY COGLAND

Nancy Cogland, a paraprofessional at Old Bridge High School, is the 2022 NJEA Educational Support Professional (ESP) of the Year. As a paraprofessional, her students and their families know they can count on her to ensure a well-rounded high school experience. As a vice president of the all-inclusive Old Bridge Education Association, her colleagues know they can count on her to protect their interests.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



### 30 | TWO MINUTES TO MASTERY

When teachers and students research and question, we embark on a sacred journey. When we use course content to better understand our world, we get outside our comfort zone and grow personally and professionally. In an end-of-unit assessment called Two-Minutes to Mastery, students complete two-minute speeches with no notes. In the best sense, it scares students; it causes them to band together, hear divergent points of view, learn from each other, and work as a team.

BY GLEN COLEMAN



### 26 | THOMAS JEFFERSON, ENSLAVED PEOPLE, HIS ENSLAVED FAMILY, AND LIBERTY

Peter Onuf, a historian who specializes in Thomas Jefferson, Monticello has taken the lead in promoting new scholarly and pedagogical perspectives on slavery, race, and freedom in the formative years of American history. Teachers and students can gain a deeper understanding of the new nation's revolutionary promise, its limits, and its enduring legacies.

BY SUE KOZEL



### 32 | DIVERSE REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Cumberland County, a rural county with fewer than 3,000 members, has a lot to boast about. In terms of population, the county is the fifth smallest in New Jersey. When you see the diverse leadership in Cumberland County, it should make you proud. Believe it when you see it—minority leadership and recruitment work.

BY DR. TIFFANIE THRBAK



# COLUMNS

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 7***Celebrating educational support professionals***THE ADVOCATE 8***Know. Lead. Act.***THE BULLETIN BOARD 10***Cool stuff to check out***THE NJEA REPORT 12***Education in the news***CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION 18***CTE Month®***HEALTH AND SAFETY 36***Overcrowded schools and classrooms***ACTIONS4ACES 38***Taking action***SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY 41***Workshops and conferences***LAW AND YOU 42***Public Service Loan Forgiveness***PRESERVICE MEMBERS 43***Building connections with students***RAINBOW CONNECTION 44***LGBTQIA+ Issues in our Schools***EARLY CAREER 47***Culturally Responsive Teaching***MEMBER BENEFITS 49***Get your money's worth***RETIRED MEMBERS 52***News and events***CLASSROOM CLOSE-UP 55***Falcon's Forest***STAFF NEWS 56***Hires and promotions***COMING UP 57***What's next at NJEA***FINAL EXAM 58***Students deserve the truth*

## The number \$58,700

The average remaining student loan balance among educators nationwide is \$58,700, with 32% owing \$65,000 or more, and 14% owing \$105,000 or more. See Page 42 for a story about the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.

Source: "Student Loan Debt Among Educators: A National Crisis," National Education Association.



## GOOD NEWS

### First in the nation to provide universal access to arts education

Widely recognized as a national leader in arts education, in 2019 New Jersey has become the first state in the nation to provide universal access to arts education for all public school students.

Source: Source: ArtsEdNJ, "New Jersey Becomes First State to Provide Universal Access to Arts Education; nearly 1.1 Million Students Actively Participate," [artsednj.org](https://artsednj.org).



### On the cover



Nancy Cogland, a paraprofessional at Old Bridge High School, is the 2022 NJEA Educational Support Professional of the Year.

PHOTO BY  
Kathryn Coulibaly

# VOLUME 95 NUMBER 06

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NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

# REVIEW

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

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Active professional: \$999 (full time); \$199.80 (full time \*low-earner); \$499.50 (part time); \$499.50 (on leave); \$199.80 (part time \*low-earner). Active supportive: \$488 (full time); \$97.60 (full time \*low-earner); \$244.00 (part time); \$97.60 (part time \*low-earner); \$241.50 (on leave). Retired professional: \$88; \$1,095 (retired life). Retired ESP: \$60; \$675 (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 2020-21 is \$21,700.







# PRESIDENT'S *Message*

## *Celebrating educational support professionals*

As an all-inclusive, statewide educational association and professional union, we believe every member of our school team provides essential services for our students and should be treated with dignity and respect and compensated fairly. Educational support professionals are a key membership group, and every February we celebrate the NJEA Educational Support Professional of the Year.

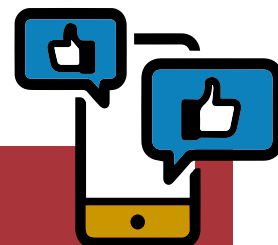
This year, that honor goes to Nancy Cogland, a paraprofessional at Old Bridge High School. Nancy's story, which we share in this issue, highlights the work that paraprofessionals do and the impact they have on students and their families. She also shares the story of how her local association fought privatization and won, after a devastating setback early in her career.

Her story about privatization highlights the importance of the Job Justice legislation NJEA worked so hard to pass. These bills provide ESP staff with due process and prevent subcontracting during the course of a contract. This was a multiyear initiative that depended on the activism and endurance of all our members.

As a result of our efforts, we were ultimately successful in passing the strongest due process law in the nation for ESPs and protections against privatization that made districts address issues at the bargaining table.

ESP staff provide essential services without which our schools would not function. They go above and beyond their job descriptions every day to ensure that New Jersey's public school children are able to learn in safe, secure and nurturing environments.

Working together, we have been able to pass legislation that protects our members and their families and fight against bills that hurt students and school employees. Our school team is strong, thanks to every person who works in our public schools. NJEA is extremely proud of that team. They are truly the reason why New Jersey's public schools have been named the best in the nation three years in a row by *Education Week*.



### SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

@SpillerforNJEA: "Tests don't teach. Never have, never will. It's past time for us re-imagine, on a broad scale, the tools we use to assess student learning. #TestsDontTeach"

In late December, NJEA President Sean M. Spiller shared a *Washington Post* story titled, "Harvard won't require SAT or ACT through 2026 as test-optional push grows." The article noted that skeptics of the use of standardized tests for college admission, "...call the tests a waste of time, skewed in favor of privileged families who can afford private tutoring. They believe high school grades and the degree of rigor in courses are far better guides to student potential." Spiller believe that the same holds true for the overuse of standardized tests in K-12 schools.

### STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: Thank you to the members of the Middlesex County Retired Educators Association for inviting me to your holiday meeting and luncheon! Great to see you all!!

On Dec 16, NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty shared photos from the Middlesex County Retired Education Association's annual holiday luncheon. Beatty attended the luncheon and thanked the members for their continued tireless advocacy on behalf of public education. The group celebrated a successful year and reflected on goals for the year ahead.

### PETAL ROBERTSON

Facebook

@Petal4NJEA: The first day of January has always felt like a rebirth. I feel like anything and everything is possible. I remembered feeling like this in January 2021 too. And while 2021 had more than its fair share of valleys, it also had some of the most unbelievable peaks. I met some amazing friends, saw the strength of our union family, and was elected to serve the best association in the country. I realize now that we don't have to wait for the first of any month to start over or to climb out of a valley. Every day you rise, you can also shine.

So here's to 2022, with all of the peaks and valleys to come (more peaks than valleys please). Whatever these next 365 days bring, I'm grateful that I get to experience those days with all of you. #UnionStrong

On Jan 1, Robertson took the time to reflect on the new year with her online followers by offering an inspirational look-back on 2021 and a motivational look-forward to 2022.

OFFICERS ONLINE

# KNOW. LEAD. ACT.

## NEW MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY PROPOSED

### NJEA members to consider constitutional amendment to add 'Disability Retirement Members'

The NJEA Membership Committee and the Research and Economic Services Division discussed the negative impact on members going through the Disability Retirement (N.J. Pension Tiers 1-3) and Long-term Disability (N.J. Pension Tiers 4 & 5) approval procedure. Under the provisions of N.J.S.A. 43:15A-42.1 (PERS) and N.J.S.A. 18:66-39.1 (TPAF), individuals in the process of applying for Disability Retirement and Long-Term Disability Retirement may not secure employment during the approval process.

It was determined by the Membership Committee that this inability to work coupled with the dues level needed for representation during the Disability Retirement and Long-term Disability process would cause undue financial burden on members seeking approval.

Using its authority under Article XIV of the NJEA Constitution, the NJEA Delegate Assembly (D.A.), at its Jan. 8, 2022 meeting, proposed a constitutional amendment to add a membership category for members going through a disability retirement and long-term disability approval procedure.

As outlined in Article XIV, the amendment must be submitted by ballot to the active members of the Association. The amendment will appear on the ballots mailed to members for NJEA elections this spring, April 1-15.

The specific constitutional amendment question would read as follows:

Constitutional Amendment Question 1:

**Shall the following amendments to the NJEA Constitution, Article III – Membership, be adopted as shown?**

**NJEA Constitution (to be added under Article III – Membership):**  
**“Disability Retirement Members**

**Active members, upon applying for disability retirement or Tier 4 or 5 Long Term Disability, may continue to enjoy all rights and services, including the right to vote, but not to be elected to office, by payment of the annual dues as a disability retirement member.**

**In addition, any active member applying for disability retirement membership must be verified by the Director of NJEA Research and Economic Services at the time of application, as well as before the beginning of any new membership year in which the member applies for continuous membership within this category.**

**Eligibility for membership within this category will cease when:**

**(1) the member is granted disability retirement or long-term disability (as defined by Tier 4 and 5) by the State of New Jersey, or**

**(2) the member is denied disability retirement or long-term disability (as defined by Tier 4 and 5) by the State of New Jersey, including appropriate appeals, or**

**(3) the member returns to regular employment.”**

### D.A. to consider bylaw amendment to add dues structure for 'Disability Retirement Members'

Under Article 55 of the NJEA Bylaws, the Constitution Review Committee is charged with the responsibility of reviewing and making recommendations concerning proposed amendments to the bylaws. At the same Jan. 8, 2022 meeting, the D.A. considered a bylaw amendment to set the dues structure for this new membership category should the constitutional amendment be passed in the April 1-15 elections.

Following the amendment's publication here, final consideration for its adoption will take place at the March 19, 2022 Delegate Assembly meeting.

After extensive discussion and review, the committee recommends the following:

**“...that the NJEA Delegate Assembly move to amend the Bylaws as recommended by the Membership Committee in its report to the Delegate Assembly to establish a Disability Membership Tier as follows:**

**NJEA Bylaws (to be added under Section 1. Dues)**

#### **Disability Retirement Members**

**The dues for any active member qualifying for Disability Retirement Membership as outlined in the NJEA Constitution shall be:**

**(1) three hundred-fifty (\$350) dollars for Professional members, and**

**(2) two hundred (\$200) dollars for ESP members.**

**This shall be a flat-rate for the full membership year and shall not be pro-rated or refundable.**

It is anticipated that the March 19, 2022 D. A. meeting will be held at Doubletree Hotel and Conference Center in Somerset unless it is moved to a virtual format for health and safety reasons.

## 2022 NJEA HIGHER EDUCATION CONFERENCE AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING SUMMIT

### April 8-10, 2022

NJEA is proud to announce the return of our 2022 Higher Education Conference that will be held in Princeton, N.J., April 8-9, 2022. The conference will include two days of union training on a wide range of topics including member engagement, contract negotiations, and social and economic justice. Session details and guest speaker information are being finalized.

Want to take deeper dive into collective bargaining trends across the state? Following the Higher Education Conference, an informative NJEA Higher Education Collective Bargaining Summit will be held on April 9-10, 2022. The summit will take place at the same venue in Princeton, where members and leaders will report out, discuss key topics, and identify trends of their recent and upcoming contract negotiations.

More information will be provided via email and in the March 2022 *NJEA Review*. We look forward to seeing you at these NJEA higher ed events.



## DELEGATE ASSEMBLY TO CONSIDER BYLAW TO "FREEZE" DUES AT 2021-22 LEVEL FOR 2022-23

At its March 19, 2022, meeting, the NJEA Delegate Assembly (D.A.) will consider the adoption of a proposed amendment to the NJEA Bylaws that would freeze dues at the 2021-22 level for the 2022-23 school year for active professional and active supportive members.

The amendment would temporarily suspend the application of the dues increase formula for active professionals and active supportive members for a period of one year.

The amendment was proposed by the NJEA Executive Committee in recognition of the current and protracted economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic affecting every household in some way and other financial hardships affecting many members.

Since March of 2020, the pandemic required NJEA to change how it conducted its business to protect the health and safety of members and staff. While continuing to provide a high level of services and resources to affiliates, leaders and members, the pandemic required the temporary adjustment or suspension of certain regular Association activities in ways that reduced costs.

In other ways, the pandemic created opportunities to dedicate Association resources to provide new services and increased support to NJEA leaders and members. The net budgetary effect of those changes over multiple budget years was a temporary reduction in overall spending. In addition, at fiscal year-end Aug. 31, 2021 and for a good period of time during the pandemic, the favorable investment market played a major part in creating a positive effect on NJEA's financial reporting. These factors resulted in an increase in NJEA's organizational net assets.

Since the dues level, upon resumption, will be calculated using the "frozen" dues level as a base, the Association's anticipated revenues would be impacted not only during the one year period of the "freeze," but each year thereafter. Even while considering that impact on the Association's anticipated revenues and when planning for a full return to regular programs and services in the 2022-2023 fiscal year budget, based on information obtained from NJEA's financial statements at Aug. 31, 2021 and its Business Division, NJEA governance believes that NJEA can provide those services and programs without increasing the current level of dues for one year. All NJEA members will share in the benefit of a one-year dues freeze.

Under the proposed amendment, active professionals and active supportive dues for the 2022-2023 fiscal year only would remain at the current (2021-2022) level. The normal formula would resume for the 2023-2024 fiscal year, but upon resumption, would be applied to the 2021-2022 level.

The amendment would take effect on Sept. 1, 2022. The proposed amendment is as follows:

**...that the Bylaws be amended effective September 1, 2022, by adding the following new section to the end of Bylaw I, Dues:**

**(i) Temporary Dues Formula Suspension – Notwithstanding any other provision of these Bylaws to the contrary, the dues for active professional, active supportive, and retired members shall be maintained at 2021-2022 dues level for the 2022-2023 fiscal year only, and the dues amount for the 2023-2024 fiscal year shall be determined by applying the normal percent increase calculated in 2022-2023 to the base dues amount in effect for the 2021-2022 fiscal year, utilizing the formulas specified in Bylaw 1 (a), (b), and (c). This paragraph shall be deleted from the Bylaws on September 1, 2023.**

It is anticipated that the March 19, 2022 D. A. meeting will be held at Doubletree Hotel and Conference Center in Somerset unless it is moved to a virtual format for health and safety reasons.

## DA TO HOLD NEA DIRECTOR ELECTION

Nominations for three of New Jersey's nine representatives on the NEA Board of Directors and for alternates will be accepted by the NJEA Executive Committee in February and submitted to the Delegate Assembly (D.A.) for its March 19 meeting.

The NEA Board of Directors is responsible for setting general policies between annual NEA Representative Assembly (NEA RA) meetings. It consists of at least one director from each state affiliate, at-large directors to meet representational guarantees, and representatives for students and retired members. Each state is entitled to an additional director per 20,000 active and life members.

The elected board members will serve three-year terms from Sept. 1, 2022 to Aug. 31, 2025. Alternates will serve one-year terms beginning Sept. 1, 2022.

In addition to any NJEA Executive Committee nominations, additional nominations may be made by delegates at the D.A. meeting. No nominating speeches are permitted.

Any NJEA-NEA member, who is also a member of their affiliated local and county association, where eligible, may run. Nominations shall include the nominee's name, school district or higher education institution, and county or other unit of representation.

If there are more than three candidates in either category an election will be held at the March 19 D.A. meeting. If the D.A. meeting is conducted virtually, the D.A. rules provide that D.A. members will subsequently vote by mail to elect the NEA directors and alternates. The D.A. rules detail the nomination and election process.

It is anticipated that the March 19, 2022 D. A. meeting will be held at Doubletree Hotel and Conference Center in Somerset unless it is moved to a virtual format for health and safety reasons.

Under the D.A. rules, when nominations for New Jersey NEA directors are taken at a virtual meeting, candidates will be given an opportunity to submit a recorded speech that may not exceed two minutes. The recordings must be submitted to a provided site within four days of the D.A. meeting. All speeches that meet the time-limit requirements will be uploaded to a site that will be shared with D.A. members. The recordings will be listed by position and in alphabetical order based on candidates' surnames.

Anyone interested in being nominated as an NEA state director or alternate should contact their NJEA Executive Committee member. For more information, contact the NJEA Human and Civil Rights, Equity and Governance office at 609-599-4561, ext. 2290.

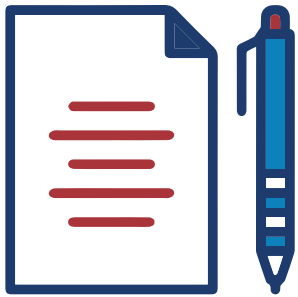


## SISP CORNER

For the 2021-22 school year, Shelia Caldwell, a school nurse in Matawan-Aberdeen Regional School District is serving as an NEA Specialized Instructional Support Personnel (SISP) Fellow. Caldwell is writing a monthly online column that will go live the first of each month at [njea.org/sisp](http://njea.org/sisp). Be sure to check it out.

# COOL STUFF

## NEW JERSEY HALL OF FAME ESSAY CONTEST OPEN



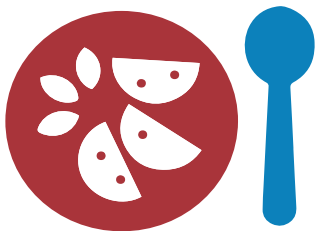
Who belongs in the New Jersey Hall of Fame? The New Jersey Hall of Fame wants your students to participate in the decision-making process. New Jersey public school students are invited to participate in the N.J. Hall of Fame Essay Contest. Students are asked to nominate potential inductees—living or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

Essays must be typed and double-spaced. The student must include their name, age, grade level as of April 1, 2022, address, phone number, parent/guardian's name, school name, and school district. If the essay is a school project, the student should also include the name of the teacher who assigned the activity. Nominations must be postmarked by April 1, 2022, to be eligible.

Send entries to NJ Hall of Fame Contest, c/o Meredith Barnes—NJEA Communications, PO Box 1211, Trenton, NJ 08607-1211, or email [mbarnes@njea.org](mailto:mbarnes@njea.org) with "NJHOF Essay Contest" in the subject line.

Entries will be divided into two age categories: intermediate (grades 4 through 8) and high school (grades 9-12). Entries will be judged by a panel of NJEA and New Jersey Hall of Fame representatives. Winners will be notified by June 1, 2022. The winning students will be invited to participate in the Virtual New Jersey Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony in October 2022.

The winning students' nominations will be forwarded to the New Jersey Hall of Fame Academy for consideration in 2023. The Academy's 100 members, who represent a diverse group of New Jersey's most prominent organizations and media outlets, will review nominees and ultimately select Hall of Fame nominees to be put forth for the public vote in the fall. NJEA serves on the Voting Academy.



## HELP FAMILIES FIND FOOD ASSISTANCE

At [hungerfreenj.org/help](https://hungerfreenj.org/help) you'll find a comprehensive list of resources for food and meals as organized "Hunger Free New Jersey." Note that the link for the 2-1-1 Directory has six options listed and these

include immediate food, infants and children, older adults and individuals with disabilities, among other opens. If you wish to donate food, there's a link to food banks and other food donation programs.



## NEW JERSEY HALL OF FAME OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS

The New Jersey Hall of Fame announces the renewal of the Arête Scholarship Fund. The Arête Scholarships will be awarded to a deserving male and female student graduating in 2022 from a New Jersey high school. Each recipient will receive a \$5,000 scholarship from the New Jersey Hall of Fame (NJHOF).

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

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

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

Scholarship applications are due on April 30, 2022. To access the scholarship application, visit [njhalloffame.org/arete](https://njhalloffame.org/arete).

## PREPARE FOR THE U.S. SEMIQUINCENTENNIAL

The 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution is July 4, 2026. Prepare students with these resources from Crossroads of the American Revolution and the American Battlefield Trust.

Crossroads of the American Revolution is building a network of trails to link New Jersey's Revolutionary War history and sites in a free downloadable app. This storyline-based, hands-free smartphone tool—TravelStorysGPS—will help educators, tourists, and residents alike explore Revolutionary New Jersey. Additionally, a coordinating website presence brings to life the stories of New Jersey citizens and their role in the war for independence. For more information visit [revolutionarynj.org](https://revolutionarynj.org).

The American Battlefield Trust website features animated maps, timelines, articles, videos, and photos to enrich lesson plans about the American Revolution. Visit [battlefields.org/revolutionary-war](https://battlefields.org/revolutionary-war).



## PRIDE GRANTS AVAILABLE FOR READ ACROSS NEW JERSEY

NJEA Read Across New Jersey (RANJ) is piloting a new process to give local associations an opportunity to engage their community around literacy. Using the NJEA Pride in Public Education portal, local presidents and Pride chairs may submit their grant applications. Grants will be \$500 each and local associations are encouraged to think outside of the box to lift literacy in their communities. Local associations are encouraged to work collaboratively when sharing a community, but each local must submit its own grant application. The RANJ grant may not be used for promotional items but may be used for food or related costs in engaging members, students, families and community.

The portal will be open until Feb. 15.

Here are a few examples of possible RANJ grants:

- A local may have a spaghetti night and the cost of admission is books appropriate for grades preK-3. Following dinner, a special guest reads a book to the families present. The collected books may go to a homeless shelter or the local library restoring its collection following a flood.
- A local may sponsor virtual readings every Thursday night with special guest readers. Families participating may receive a book ahead of the event to read along with the special guest or families may receive paints, brushes, and a blank canvas to recreate the stories heard in a special "paint along."
- A local association may host adult literacy nights in the high school media center. Community members are invited and may participate in various classes in a series. At the culmination of the series, there will be a graduation ceremony for participants and their families with refreshments served.

For more information, go to [njea.org/ranj](http://njea.org/ranj).



## NJSBF RELEASES NEWEST BREAKING BIAS UNIT

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation (NJSBF) has released Unit 5 of Breaking Bias: Lessons from the Amistad. The unit is titled The Dawning of The Modern Civil Rights Movement and has six brand new lessons to teach about the Civil Rights Movement through an anti-bias lens.

The curriculum was developed for grades 3-12. New Jersey's Amistad law was passed in 2002 and requires African American history to be taught as an integral part of American history throughout the school year, not just during Black History Month. The law takes its title from La Amistad, a ship where 53 enslaved people revolted against the ship's captain and crew in 1839.

To find Breaking Bias: Lessons from the Amistad, visit [bit.ly/njsbf-breaking-bias](http://bit.ly/njsbf-breaking-bias). For more information about NJSBF, including professional development opportunities around the Breaking Bias units, visit [njsbf.org](http://njsbf.org).

## AIE ARTIST IN EDUCATION RESIDENCY GRANT PROGRAM

The AIE (Artist in Education) Residency Grant Program is accepting applications from interested New Jersey schools. The grants provide a 20-day artist residency, which is developed by the school team, based on their specific community needs. Any school in New Jersey is eligible to apply. AIE Manager Michael Roberson Reid is available to provide support to teachers who are exploring the opportunity. Additional information can be found at [njaie.org](http://njaie.org) or by emailing Michael Reid's at [mreid@yanjep.org](mailto:mreid@yanjep.org). The deadline to apply for 2022-23 grants is March 1, 2022.

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# NJEA Report

## Irvington Pride feeds minds, bodies and souls

By Lauren Greenfield



The Irvington Education Association and Life Endeavors, the school district's community-based instruction program, partnered in November for a food distribution and vaccination event.

What's better than helping the community you work in? Combining it with teachable moments for your students! On Nov. 20, 2021, the Irvington Education Association (IEA) held its third town-wide food distribution event.

This was a Pride in Public Education event held by the IEA with support from the Irvington School District. Pride grant money from NJEA was used to distribute groceries to 140 families from the Township of Irvington. As the IEA Pride chairperson, I worked closely with the Newark Village ShopRite to procure large amounts of fresh produce and pantry staples to give away.

Among the items families received were five-pound bags of apples, onions and potatoes as well as frozen turkey breasts, a dozen eggs, paper goods, butter, oil and enough shelf stable groceries

to make many complete meals.

Organizing this event was an even bigger task this time around because we added a pop-up vaccine clinic as well.

### COMMUNITY-BASED INSTRUCTION

How would one go about organizing this daunting task? Working in Irvington made it much easier this year. The community-based instruction (CBI) program, Life Endeavors, of which I am a co-teacher, worked closely alongside the IEA to ensure the event was a success. The students, ages 18 to 21, went to the IEA offices during the school day on a workplace instruction assignment. There, they were able to sort, bag and organize the entire event.

"It was great watching the students learn while they helped," IEA President Michael Byock said. "They were instrumental in making this event a success."

"The students were so excited to give back to the teachers and community that have given so much to them," said Kimberly Petcos, head of the CBI Program. "When Lauren and I were talking about the event, we both looked at our students

and immediately thought to ask them if they'd like to pitch in and learn how it works. They all volunteered on the spot and learned what was involved. It was great working in that realm side by side with our students knowing that we were making a difference together."

Petcos noted that each student took ownership of packing specific goods and worked as a team to organize the bags that were going to be given out. One of the students also came out to work more the day of the event.

"I felt like I was making a difference," said student Altereek Crawford. "There was a lot of food to pack up, and I was happy I could help my teachers to get the job done. I came out on Saturday because I like being with my teachers, and I am learning life skills to make me a better person. It was an awesome feeling to hand out the food when my neighbors got there."

"As an Irvington Resident and Irvington alumni, it's always great to see everyone giving back, especially when it's my students," said Cynthia Roth, a CBI job coach.

"I think it was a great opportunity for our students, and I know they are looking forward

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*Lauren Greenfield is a special education teacher at Mt. Vernon School in Irvington. She is the treasurer and Pride chair of the Irvington Education Association and is the chair of the NJEA Editorial Committee. Greenfield can be reached at [lbgteach@gmail.com](mailto:lbgteach@gmail.com).*



to more opportunities to work with the IEA and community at large,” said Justin Bonds, also a job coach in the CBI program.

Bonds is also an Irvington resident who along with his family attended the event and were able to receive their COVID vaccinations and groceries.

### CREATING A HEALTHY COMMUNITY TOGETHER

In addition to the food, over 80 vaccinations were given that day, including 24 children who were newly eligible to receive one. It was another step in helping to create a healthy community.

Coordinating such a large and important community wellness event took a great deal of planning, preparation and cooperation between a great number of people and organizations. However, because of the dedication, professionalism and willingness to participate of so many people, 140 families were able to breathe a little easier without worrying about dealing with food insecurity during the start of the holiday season, and over 80 people are one layer safer from contracting COVID.

Irvington Mayor Tony Vauss toured the event and sent a camera crew to video the amazing day of community fellowship and support.



**From IEA and Life Endeavors, 140 Irvington families received apples, onions and potatoes as well as frozen turkey breasts, a dozen eggs, paper goods, butter, oil and enough shelf stable groceries to make many complete meals.**

NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty rolled up his sleeves and filled in for any odd job that was necessary.

“It’s a great event to bring out the community to get food and vaccinations,” Beatty said. “This is a fantastic event. Michael and Lauren, all the people here, are great at this, and they know what it means to be part of the community, and we’re really proud of them.”

The entire day was well orchestrated and

they built a spirit of camaraderie between the community, IEA members, and the New Jersey Department of Health.

During such uncertain times, being able to work together with so many different people toward this type of positive outcome not only fed the community, but also fed the souls of all those involved. And after all, isn’t that what it’s all about?

## NJCTL physics program receives national recognition



The New Jersey Center for Teaching and Learning (NJCTL) was honored as one of only 10 institutions recognized by PhysTEC’s 5+ Club for the 2020-21 academic year. Physics Teacher Educa-

tion Coalition’s (PhysTEC) “5+ Club” is a group of institutions that have graduated five or more physics teachers in a given year.

Most colleges and universities graduate fewer than two trained physics teachers a year, with the majority graduating none at all. Over the past 12 years, 282 teachers have completed NJCTL’s physics endorsement program, about 24 per year.

The presidents of the American Physical Society (APS) and the American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT), Sylvester James Gates, Jr. and Jan Landis Mader lauded NJCTL’s achievements.

“We commend NJCTL on its outstanding

contributions to the education of future physics teachers,” they wrote. “Graduating more than five physics teachers in an academic year puts NJCTL in the 99th percentile of all U.S. colleges and universities. We congratulate NJCTL for its excellence in physics teacher education and for serving as a national model for STEM teacher preparation. NJCTL’s excellent physics teacher preparation program is a service to the state of New Jersey.”

PhysTEC, a flagship education program of the American Physical Society (APS) and the American Association of Physics Teachers (AAPT), aims to improve the education of future physics teachers by transforming physics departments, creating successful models for physics teacher education programs, and disseminating best practices. The project has funded more than 40 sites to build physics teacher education programs. (See [www.phystec.org](http://www.phystec.org) for more details.)

The PhysTEC program is supported by the National Science Foundation and the APS Campaign for the 21st Century.

NJCTL is a nonprofit that is providing a simple, scalable solution for our nation’s STEM teacher

shortage and the great social injustice that comes from depriving underserved students access to STEM education. NJCTL was founded in 2006 by NJEA.

**“  
Over the past  
12 years, 282  
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endorsement  
program, about  
24 per year.”**

# Survey reveals educator priorities to address gun violence

## Student access to mental health services viewed as most effective measure

By Maryanne L.F. Campbell, B.S., Derek G. Shendell, D.Env., MPH, Lauren N. Gonzalez, B.S., M.A., Juhi Aggarwal B.A., MPH, and Koshy Koshy Ph.D.

A recent National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) study suggested how incidence rates for school-associated single-victim youth homicides have not changed significantly but incidence rates for school-associated multiple-victim youth homicides, or mass school shootings, increased from July 2009 through June 2018. Furthermore, Everytown for Gun Safety reported most school-associated youth homicides involving one victim, were more likely to occur in urban public high school and were commonly motivated by gang-related activity or interpersonal disputes.

Other researchers reported students exposed to school violence as victims, perpetrators, or witnesses are more likely to have personal, academic, behavioral, mental, and other health problems such as chronic diseases.

New Jersey Safe Schools Program (NJSS) reviews safety and health plans related to environmental health and workplace safety for high school career-technical-vocational (CTE) programs in hazardous occupations once every five years for New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE). The goal is to reduce injury and illness and increase safety practices among school faculty, staff and students.

NJSS conducted a secure online study on school gun violence-related preventive practices in the 2019-20 school year, and surveyed teachers and administrators of New Jersey secondary schools who have participated in work-based learning supervision trainings offered by NJSS. Regardless of school type, the educators worked in CTE programs.

### STUDENT ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES RANKED MOST EFFECTIVE

Overall, 151 participants completed the survey. When asked to rank the provided hazards of greatest concern, 69.7% of participants indicated varying levels of concern about a school shooting. Among all the participants, 45.3% indicated high levels of concern. Only 3.3% were not concerned.

Regarding the measures potentially most effective in improving school safety concerning guns, improving student access to mental health care services at schools ranked at the top for 78.9% of those taking the survey. The subsequent answered options were improving school security (72.5%), policies/laws reducing youth access to guns

## For further reading

"The effect of high school shootings on schools and student performance," Louise-Philippe Beland and Dongwoo Kim. Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis. Visit [bit.ly/3FntRdx](https://bit.ly/3FntRdx).

"Navigating Get-Tough and Support-Oriented Philosophies for Improving School Safety: Insights from School Administrators and School Safety Staff," Nicole L. Collier, Samantha J. Brown, Andrea N. Montes, and others. American Journal of Criminal Justice. Visit [bit.ly/31XdruM](https://bit.ly/31XdruM).

"A comprehensive technical package for the prevention of youth violence and associated risk behaviors," Corinne David-Ferdon, Ph.D., Alana M. Vivolo-Kantor, Ph.D., MPH Linda L. Dahlberg, and others. Visit [bit.ly/3qkAOYi](https://bit.ly/3qkAOYi).

"Mental health interventions in schools in high-income countries," Kimberly Hoagwood, Ph.D., Sharon Stephan, Ph.D., and Tasmin Ford, Ph.D., Lancet Psychiatry. Visit [bit.ly/33dMHGW](https://bit.ly/33dMHGW).

"Community violence: A meta-analysis on the effect of exposure and mental health outcomes of children and adolescents," by Carolyn J. Tompsett, Jordan M. Braciszewski, Angela J. Jacques-Tiura, and Boris B. Baltes, Development and Psychopathology. Visit [bit.ly/3tkKu7b](https://bit.ly/3tkKu7b).

"Youth exposure to violence involving a gun: evidence for adverse childhood experience classification," by Sonali Rajan, Charles C. Branas, Dawn Myers and Nina Agrawal. Visit [bit.ly/3nk5maY](https://bit.ly/3nk5maY).

"School shootings and the need for more school-based mental health services," Martell L. Teasley Children & Schools, Visit [bit.ly/3recAhS](https://bit.ly/3recAhS).

"How schools are racing to respond to a mental health crisis," Patrick Wall. NJ Spotlight News. Visit [bit.ly/3tjFeAP](https://bit.ly/3tjFeAP).

"Protecting youth mental health," Dr. Vivek Murthy. The U.S. Surgeon General Advisory 2021. Visit [bit.ly/3rfG0w2](https://bit.ly/3rfG0w2).

*The authors are faculty and staff in various departments in the Rutgers School of Public Health. For more information, Maryanne Campbell may be reached at [mlf159@sph.rutgers.edu](mailto:mlf159@sph.rutgers.edu).*

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**Student access to mental health care services at schools ranked at the top for 78.9% of those taking the survey.**

(70.4%), lockdown drills (47.2%), and establishing school-oriented gun safety awareness (45.1%).

When comparing how many participants selected both policies or laws to reduce youth access to guns and improving student access to mental health care, 64.4% of the respondents who ranked school shooting as their top concern selected both as effective measures.

Among the 93.3% respondents who both reported feeling safe in their school or workplace and selected school shooting as both their top hazard of greatest personal concern and which their school needs to better prepare for, the top three measures selected as potentially most effective were improvements to:

- School security: 21.0%
- Student access to mental health care: 21.0%
- Policies or laws to reduce youth access to guns: 20.6%

Teachers were most concerned about gun violence and believed schools must be better prepared for it, but arming teachers and administrators was perceived as the least effective measure. Other research has also reported law enforcement executives and principals do not believe arming administrators, teachers, or designated school safety officers is an effective school safety strategy.

According to a recent *NJ Spotlight* news article, many New Jersey schools reported not having enough mental health professionals on staff to meet student needs during the 2020-21 school year and the COVID-19 pandemic (see [bit.ly/3tjFeAP](https://bit.ly/3tjFeAP)). New Jersey specifically has set aside \$30 million of its portion of federal aid for mental health services in the 2021-22 school year.

In addition, in December 2021, U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued a new advisory highlighting the urgent need to support the mental health of children and youth in educational, community, and childcare settings (see [bit.ly/3rfG0w2](https://bit.ly/3rfG0w2)).

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# Health and safety conference focuses on physical and mental health

One of first in-person NJEA events since March 2020



Andrew Lewis, the president of the Old Bridge Education Association and an NJEA Organizational Development Consultant, discusses provisions of the American Rescue Plan.

Held Nov. 12-13, 2021, at the Hilton in East Brunswick, the irony that one of the first conferences NJEA held in person since the start of the pandemic was a conference focused on health and safety was not lost on the presenters and speakers, several of whom noted it in their presentations. The NJEA Health and Safety Conference was one of just two in-person NJEA conferences held since March 2020. The NJEA Convention was the other.

The influence of COVID-19 on the conference protocols was impossible to miss. At registration, attendees were required to either show proof of vaccination or the negative results of a PCR test administered in the last 72 hours. In addition, attendees wore masks during workshops held in rooms with reduced capacities.

Keith Hinton II, chair of the NJEA Worksite Safety and Health Committee, explained why it's important for local associations to prioritize health and safety.

"We have countless examples of what happens when we stand our ground and demand remediations and restorations," Hinton said. "We win, not just for our members, but for our students and their families."

NJEA President Sean M. Spiller commended the attendees for setting time aside to come to the conference. Spiller noted that New Jersey has the best schools in the nation because of the dedication and commitment of members like those who attended the conference.

"If we're not advocating for the resources, if we're not advocating to have our voices be part of the decision-making, if we're not advocating for safe and healthy conditions, if we're not advocating for all of the things that our students need to be able to learn, we're not going to have the best schools in the nation," Spiller said. "And nobody does that better than we do—and that is the other half of the equation as to why we have the Number One schools in the nation."

Spiller also noted the value of NJEA's partnerships with the Healthy Schools Now Coalition, Save Our Schools and the New Jersey Work Environment Council in meeting our objectives for safe and healthy learning and working environments.

NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson reflected on health and safety concerns in her own school district and those of other school districts in the past year. Advocating for health and safety, she said, is absolutely the right thing to do.

"When we start talking about schools that are lead free, schools that are mercury free, schools that don't need textbooks to hold the windows open, we're not asking for anything extravagant, we're asking for the bare minimum that we deserve, the bare minimum that our children deserve," Robertson said.

Robertson pointed out that once the pandemic ends the struggle is not over.

"Our job is not done once this pandemic is done," Robertson said. "Our job is to undo the inequities that have been allowed to exist for decades that this pandemic has laid bare."

“

*Decisions to hold in-person or virtual events will be made on a case-by-case basis in consideration of public health and safety.*

## MORE THAN JUST PHYSICAL CARE

Keynote speaker Philip McCormick, a social worker at Columbia High School in South Orange-Maplewood, addressed the topic, "Surviving a Pandemic: It's More Than Just Physical Self-Care."

"We are very much still in a physical health emergency, and we're very much in a mental health emergency," McCormick said.

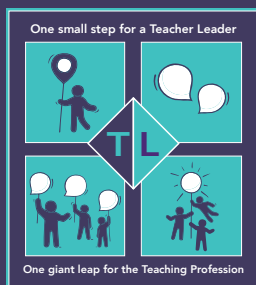
McCormick noted statistics from the National Institute of Mental Health, indicating dramatic increases in the number of U.S. residents reporting anxiety, depression, substance abuse and suicide ideation. He reminded attendees that it's essential that they take care of their mental health.

"Self-care is important," McCormick said. "It's natural as educators to want to help other people, but you're not going to be effective in helping other people if you're not fully taking care of yourself."

NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty echoed McCormick's remarks in an address to the conference the following morning. He outlined the physical conditions that must be present in school buildings to ensure a safe and healthy environment.

"But it's also about our students' social and emotional well-being, and it's about your social and emotional well-being," Beatty added. "Your presence here underscores your commitment. You understand the critical role we play in the lives of our students and our communities."

Coming after the overwhelming majority of NJEA members were fully vaccinated, the health and safety conference signaled a return to in-person events. The spread of the omicron variant over the holiday season, however, serves as a reminder that decisions to hold in-person or virtual events will be made on a case-by-case basis in consideration of public health and safety.



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[njctl.org/enroll/](https://njctl.org/enroll/)

# Career and technical education

## Celebrate Career and Technical Education Month

By Erin Wheeler and Francine Pfeffer

February is Career and Technical Education Month, or CTE Month.\* CTE Month celebrates the value of career and technical education and CTE programs across the country. CTE programs have evolved and changed over time, starting as traditional vocational programs to help train workers for farm and factory jobs and evolving to include both training for a wide range of jobs that do not require college degrees and highly sought-after college preparatory programs.

Federally funded vocational education began in 1917 with the Smith-Hughes Act, designed to fund vocational education to help promote preparation for careers not requiring a bachelor's degree. With the technological changes of the early 20th century, industry needed a skilled workforce to power its factories. Over time, as jobs and the workplace have evolved, so has the scope of vocational education, now referred to as career and technical education, or CTE. Students in today's secondary CTE programs integrate academics and career skills, preparing students to enter the workforce directly after high school, pursue additional training, or go to college.

According to the New Jersey Department of Education, more than 75,000 secondary students are enrolled in CTE programs at comprehensive high schools or in one of the state's 21 county vocational school districts. When we talk about CTE programs, we aren't talking about a class

or two, but rather a course of study with a full sequence of courses that culminates in college credit, an industry-valued credential or enrollment in a registered apprenticeship.

Students in these programs must meet all state graduation requirements but are exposed to specific career programs and experiences. In addition to their coursework, students participate in mentorship and apprenticeship where they work and/or intern with professionals in the field, learning firsthand from them. At the culmination of their program, most students take certification tests in their specified fields. This real-life experience provides students with the skills needed to enter their chosen fields of study and "soft skills" applicable to any job, which also helps those students who continue their education after high school.

CTE programs are developed with local communities and experts to ensure that programs of study reflect local employment needs. Local advisory committees continue to work with schools to provide industry expertise.

So why should we celebrate CTE? CTE programs work for students and the economy. Students in CTE programs are more likely to finish school and have the skills they need to succeed in both high-skill, high-paying careers and college. CTE programs provide skilled employees who are ready for the jobs of the future.

Whether students are interested in pursuing careers in greenhouse operations or green technologies, there's a CTE program for them. With programs that prepare students for the job market right after high school to preparing them for college, CTE is for everyone. Let's celebrate New Jersey's CTE programs and our members who work in them! 🏡

### Want more information on CTE?

**NJ Department of Education:**  
Office of Career Readiness  
[nj.gov/education/cte](http://nj.gov/education/cte)

**New Jersey Council of  
County Vocational-Technical  
Schools**  
[careertechnj.org](http://careertechnj.org)

**Association for Career and  
Technical Schools:**  
Why CTE?  
[acteonline.org/why-cte](http://acteonline.org/why-cte)

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*Erin Wheeler is the chair of the NJEA Vocational, Career and Technical Education Committee. She is a science teacher at Communications High School in the Monmouth County Vocational School District. Francine Pfeffer is an associate director in the NJEA Government Relations Division and is the staff contact for the NJEA Vocational, Career and Technical Education Committee. Wheeler can be reached at [ewheeler@njea.org](mailto:ewheeler@njea.org). Pfeffer can be reached at [fpfeffer@njea.org](mailto:fpfeffer@njea.org).*



# I can't find a plumber

By Larry C. Tisdale

The pandemic has shed a light on the need for skilled workers in the trades and health care and their impact on our daily life. Stories are numerous of people calling dozens of plumbers and having to wait days or even more than a week for a plumber to return their calls. Business for plumbers has increased dramatically as we washed everything in view with sanitizing wipes that we flushed down toilets along with whatever children were flushing while home from school during quarantine. The news coverage of health care workers under a tremendous amount of pressure and stress as they cared the sick and dying was heart-wrenching.

As the shutdown began and certain New Jersey's businesses were deemed essential, it became clear that a new definition of essential workers was being formed. These were jobs that typically could not be done virtually. Jobs in construction, agriculture, plumbing, electricity,

health care and hospitality became crucial. Shortages cropped up in many fields, including biomedical technologies, automotive services, distribution and transportation. America's ports were backed up with thousands of containers waiting to be offloaded and delivered across the country.

These segments of the job market are precisely the kind of work that our county vocational schools specialize in. These schools are graduating New Jersey's future highly skilled workforce. Vocational schools have always played an important role, but one that is somewhat underappreciated compared to the traditional college route.

Vocational schools stand ready to meet the needs revealed by the pandemic. Dual credit and work-based learning along with industry-recognized credentials and apprenticeships will allow students to enter the workforce more quickly

to fill the current gaps. This is a time to analyze data and assess gaps with a focus on students underrepresented in skilled trades to ensure their access to programs that lead to high-wage careers. We must cultivate and sustain relationships with industry to identify the most pressing labor market needs that resulted from the pandemic and allow districts to make changes based on this data. This will require the collaboration of stakeholders: communities, professional and advocacy organizations, schools, and state agencies such as the Department of Education and the Department of Labor.

Career and technical education is a key way to provide meaningful employment, a livable wage, and chances for advancement while providing meaningful work. Let's not miss this opportunity. 📧

Larry C. Tisdale is a culinary arts teacher at the Burlington County Institute of Technology. He is a member of the NJEA Vocational, Career, and Technical Education Committee. He can be reached at [ltisdale05@gmail.com](mailto:ltisdale05@gmail.com).



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## — MEET ESP OF THE YEAR —

# Nancy Cogland

By Kathryn Coulibaly

Nancy Cogland, a paraprofessional at Old Bridge High School and the 2022 NJEA Educational Support Professional (ESP) of the Year, shivers in a brisk December wind as she waits for buses to pull up outside the massive high school. She greets each student with a smile, walking them from the bus or a parent's car to the front entrance of the building. Some students need more coaxing than others, and Cogland's bright smile is a big motivator.

Alongside her other paraprofessional colleagues, Cogland is one of the first members of the school community to greet students each day, gently but efficiently ensuring they get the day started off on the right foot.

It's a role Cogland knows well and excels at. For the past 17 years, Cogland has been a paraprofessional in the Old Bridge School District, building relationships and shaping good days for the many students she has encountered along the way.

"I love being with the high school kids," Cogland said. "The teenage years are difficult to navigate. My students know they can count on my support, both inside and outside of the classroom. Because they trust me, they are willing to allow me to push them out of their comfort zone to achieve what I know they are capable of."

"So many times, it's as simple as walking by and giving them a piece of gum and saying, 'I'm glad you did your homework last night. I'm proud of you.' It validates their efforts and encourages

them to keep trying, ultimately building their confidence."

Cogland still hears from previous students, long after they have graduated, which is a testament to the trust she establishes in the classroom.

"They know I am a cheerleader for them and they are always excited to share their latest accomplishments," Cogland said. "I enjoy hearing about their college experience or their new job and hearing how much they have grown."

For many years, Cogland was partnered with the same student and she built a strong bond with him and his family.

"I knew him as well as I know my own children," Cogland said. "I still get texts from his mother filling me in on their family. She writes, 'our boy just turned 18.' She feels that I'm part of her family and I always will be. I provided structure and boundaries while ensuring he had a well-rounded high school experience."

### A RESPECTED PARAPROFESSIONAL AND LEADER

Cogland loves that every day is different, and every school year is different. She may be working with a teacher in a classroom full of students or working with one student at a time to ensure they remain on task and feel confident in their ability to complete the work.

Cogland is a welcome and appreciated member of the classrooms she enters, making sure that the student she is partnered with is comfortable and

secure. She has a strong rapport with the teachers with whom she works, particularly the husband and wife team of Andrew and Erin Borriello.

Andrew, a woodshop teacher, frequently collaborates with Cogland, not just to ensure that the students she is partnered with participate in the class, but also to develop projects that all the students can tackle.

Cogland's interest in woodworking is infectious and her enthusiasm in discussing and sharing the projects students have completed is abundantly clear.

Erin, a social studies teacher, has an equally strong bond with Cogland. They often confer to discuss students' needs and plan activities.

"So many of these kids are defeated before they even start because they think they can't do the work," Cogland said. "But the teachers and I are fully aware of what the students can achieve. Sometimes, it's a stretch activity to get them to see what they can do. We know their strengths and weaknesses and want what's best for them. I make sure students know that we are all on the same team, working in their best interests."

Cogland's ESP colleagues wholeheartedly join in praising her.

"We have confidence in Nancy," said Lisa Tonnisen, also a paraprofessional in Old Bridge. "As our union vice president and paraprofessional representative, Nancy has shown leadership, strength, and dedication to all 160 of us. We have the security of knowing that Nancy will protect us and will ensure that our district sees how valuable paraprofessionals are to our students, and all that we do to support their needs throughout the school year."

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



“

*I want people to know the value and the impact that educational support professionals provide.*

#### THE VALUE OF THE UNION

Growing up in a strong union family on Staten Island, Cogland knew that she wanted to join NJEA when she began her career in education.

“I’ve always been part of the union,” Cogland said. “But I may not have understood exactly what that meant and the value of it until the district sought to privatize paraprofessionals for the first time in 2011 to close a budget shortfall.”

“The union was involved immediately,” Cogland recalled. “They tried to protect our jobs. Ultimately, the paraprofessionals had to vote at an emergency meeting: would we keep our jobs and lose our family health benefits or run the risk of losing our jobs and benefits. We voted and sadly gave up our family benefits.”

This was a huge hit for many of Cogland’s colleagues.

It was such an awful feeling,” Cogland said. “I know the union did what they could; they wanted to save our jobs. But some of my colleagues worked two or three jobs to make ends meet; they needed the health benefits they received as paraprofessionals.”

The summer after the privatization battle, a friend of Cogland’s encouraged her to attend the NJEA Summer Leadership Conference where she met Bob Antonelli, NJEA field representative for ESP issues, and Nancy Holmes, an NJEA field representative in Camden who is now retired.

“They were phenomenal,” Cogland said. “That conference changed everything for me. It made me take myself seriously in this career.”

During the next round of bargaining, the union was able to get the benefits for paraprofessionals restored, but Cogland felt strongly that the situation should have never happened to begin with.

“You can’t change the past, but I felt strongly that I wasn’t going to let that happen again,” Cogland said.

#### AN UNFORGETTABLE ANTI-PRIVATIZATION CAMPAIGN

Cogland began working with the parents of general and special education students.

“I used the NJEA Pride program to collaborate with the special education parents in the district,”




Nancy and her paraprofessional colleagues greet students as they arrive and help get their day off to a great start.



Cogland enjoys working with students in the woodshop.





Cogland is proud to represent all NJ ESPs, particularly paraprofessionals.

**“  
I provided  
structure and  
boundaries  
while ensuring  
he had a  
well-rounded  
high school  
experience.”**

Cogland said. “We began to develop a bond between paraprofessionals and parents because they saw the value that we had in their children’s lives.”

As Cogland predicted, privatization reared its ugly head in the district again.

In 2017, Cogland got a call in the middle of the day from the local president, informing her that the board had put out their agenda: privatizing the paraprofessionals was once again one of the items.

Cogland knew that Old Bridge paraprofessionals brought tremendous value to the students and community that could not be easily replaced, and she was determined to show the Old Bridge Board of Education how much was at stake if they voted to privatize.

“I got off the phone with my local president and immediately called the president of the Special Education PTA,” Cogland recalled. “She said, ‘We can’t let this happen. Nancy, I’m calling my people,’ and I said, ‘I’m calling mine.’ Together we rallied our supporters and had 300 people at that board meeting. But that was just the beginning.”

What followed was an anti-privatization campaign that no one in the community will forget. The most powerful tool at their disposal was telling the stories of the paraprofessionals and how they profoundly impact students every day.

Cogland’s daughter had taken TV production classes at Old Bridge High School and Cogland’s husband, Gary, works in advertising. Together, they created testimonial videos featuring dedicated Old Bridge paraprofessionals that were then shared on social media.

“We asked video participants three questions: why did you want to be a paraprofessional, how long have you been a paraprofessional, and what is your favorite





Cogland collaborates with her colleagues and helps develop new projects in the woodshop.

memory from your work?"

Some of the videos got more than 5,000 views. It made people question why anyone would fire these essential employees.

As Cogland recalled, "You couldn't go anywhere in town without seeing a sign in a business, a yard sign, or a video on social media. One board member said it got to the point where they didn't want to even enter their favorite pizzeria because they would be faced with questions about privatization."

On April 1 that year, the superintendent informed the union that they would not be privatizing the paraprofessionals; they would find the funds elsewhere.

Cogland was relieved, but also proud.

"Old Bridge has always been a leader with their educational programs, policies and opportunities afforded to every student," Cogland said. "I was proud that the Old Bridge Board of Education decided to buck the trend and find a different solution. They set an example for other districts to follow."

"We came out completely unscathed," she said. "We kept our jobs and our benefits. We showed the community the value of what we do, and we showed our colleagues the power that we have when we work together."

#### PROUD FAMILY

Cogland's family, which includes husband Gary, older daughter Erica, and younger daughter, Carolyn, supports her in her career and union activism. She dedicates a lot of her time to Pride activities and working with parents and the community. They are extremely proud of her achievement as the 2022 NJEA ESP of the Year.

"Ultimately, I'm a wind-beneath-your-wings person," Cogland said. "I love helping people be successful and that's why this attention is so challenging for me. I like to blend in. But most of all, I want people to know the value and the impact that educational support professionals provide. We reach kids that no one else can. We're a vital part of ensuring that every child receives what they need to succeed both emotionally and educationally."

While the global pandemic may disrupt some of perks of being the NJEA ESP of the Year, Cogland has already been nominated for the NEA ESP of the Year award. She will attend the NEA ESP Conference and is entitled to a Disney vacation, funded by NJEA, when it is safe to travel. Cogland also will receive an ESP of the Year ring, she will be a featured speaker at the NJEA ESP Conference, and she will be honored at the 2022 NJEA Convention. 🏡

# Thomas Jefferson, enslaved people, his enslaved family, and liberty

## Reflections on my time at Monticello and teaching resources

By Sue Kozel, NJREA Member

Many of us who have taught American history think about how such beautiful and revered historical sites can also be ones where horrible acts occurred. Monticello, the picturesque plantation of Thomas Jefferson in Albemarle County, Virginia is one example. The Enlightenment thinker and key author of the Declaration of Independence forced over six hundred individuals into enslavement over the course of his life. Students join me in considering how the man who wrote about “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” could also have owned slaves.

During my one-month fellowship, I lived across the highway from Monticello, about two minutes away by car. I was struck by how the enslaved people made Jefferson his wealth in tobacco, nail, and other operations at Monticello and his other plantations in Albemarle, Bedford, and Campbell counties. My fellowship occurred thanks to Peter Onuf, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation professor emeritus of history at the University of Virginia, and Jonathan Mercantini, the acting dean of the College of Liberal Arts Kean University Acting Dean.

My interest in Monticello concentrated on learning more about several Quakers and former Quakers disowned by their religious meetings who Jefferson employed at his slave plantations.

Quakers are often considered abolitionists, and I wanted to understand why some Quakers and former Quakers would work for an enslaver like Jefferson.

It appears, from my research, that 17 of Jefferson’s 28 slave overseers may have had Quaker relatives. While researching at the International Center for Jefferson Studies and in the Jefferson Library, I thought it might be helpful to K-12 teachers to have access to some thoughtful and factual resources. Including lesson plans that explore race, equality, freedom, and family to enhance lessons taught in social studies classes.

Jefferson inherited some of his slaves, purchased others and sold some. However, as the enslaved person had children and grandchildren, he ultimately owned over 600 slaves in his lifetime. See “Monticello – Slavery FAQ – Property” at [bit.ly/monticello-1](http://bit.ly/monticello-1).

Below, you will find oral history interviews with descendants of enslaved families at Monticello, primary documents, links to writings by formerly enslaved persons at Monticello, and rich lesson plans, with an emphasis on the people of Monticello plantation, comprising 5,000 acres. I have also included resources that will connect readers to Jefferson’s Poplar Forest, which comprised 4,800 acres. The map on Page 27 shows teachers and

students how vast the Jefferson landholdings were, and in turn, many as locations for enslaved people.

Professor Annette Gordon-Reed, author of the *Hemings of Monticello: An American Family* and the Carl M. Loeb university professor at Harvard University, sees value in turning to Monticello as teachers discuss race in the United States.

“Monticello—the home of Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the American Declaration of Independence and the site of enslavement of hundreds of African Americans over decades—is the perfect venue from which to launch a discussion of the development of attitudes about race in the United States,” said Gordon-Reed.

Renowned Thomas Jefferson expert Peter Onuf agrees.

“Over the last generation, Monticello, Thomas Jefferson’s hilltop home, has taken the lead in promoting new scholarly and pedagogical perspectives on slavery, race, and freedom in the formative years of American history,” Onuf said. “With access to the best new research on Jefferson and the enslaved community at his Piedmont plantation that Monticello’s Robert H. Smith International Center for Jefferson Studies now affords, teachers and students can gain a deeper understanding of the new nation’s revolutionary promise, its limits, and its enduring legacies.”

### THE GETTING WORD PROJECT

Andrew Davenport, public historian and manager of the Getting Word Project, a project conducting oral histories from descendants of enslaved families at Monticello, welcomes NJEA members to draw on the rich resources at Monticello.

“As a former middle school and high school teacher, I am thrilled to invite New Jersey public school teachers to learn more about Monticello’s Getting Word African American Oral History Project, which will be in its 29th year in 2022,” Davenport said. “Getting Word preserves and documents the family histories of hundreds



Photo by Ian Alfano, Kean University

*Sue Kozel was a 2021 Fellow of the International Center for Jefferson Studies, which is affiliated with Monticello. Prior to her retirement, she worked at several New Jersey higher education institutions where she taught a variety of courses including New Jersey history, American History, African American history, World History, and Western Civilization.*

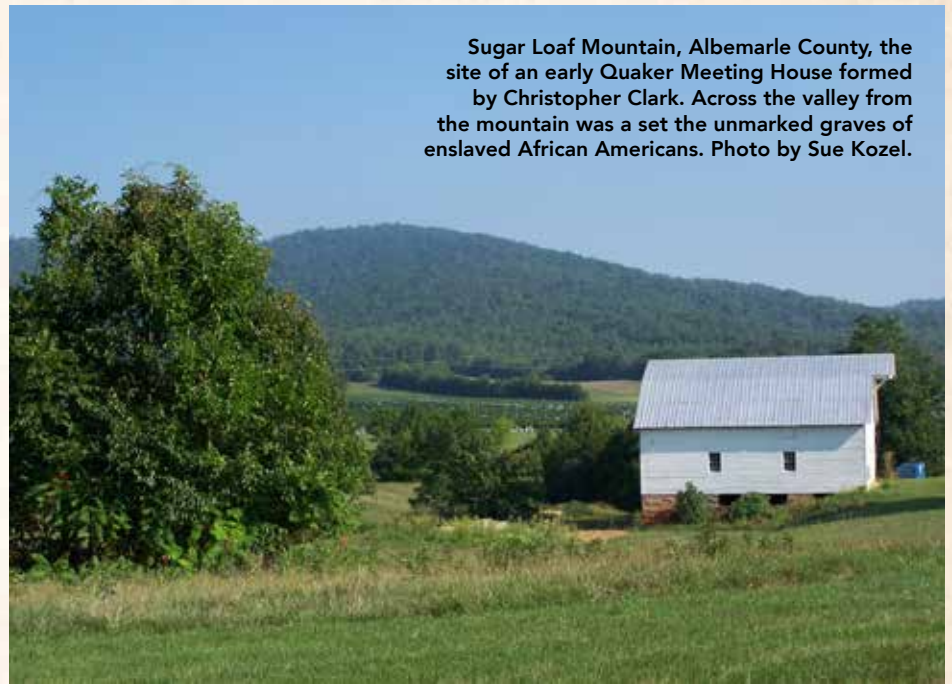
*Kozel is a proud NJREA member and has dedicated her research to answering uncomfortable questions about power, slavery, and freedom.*



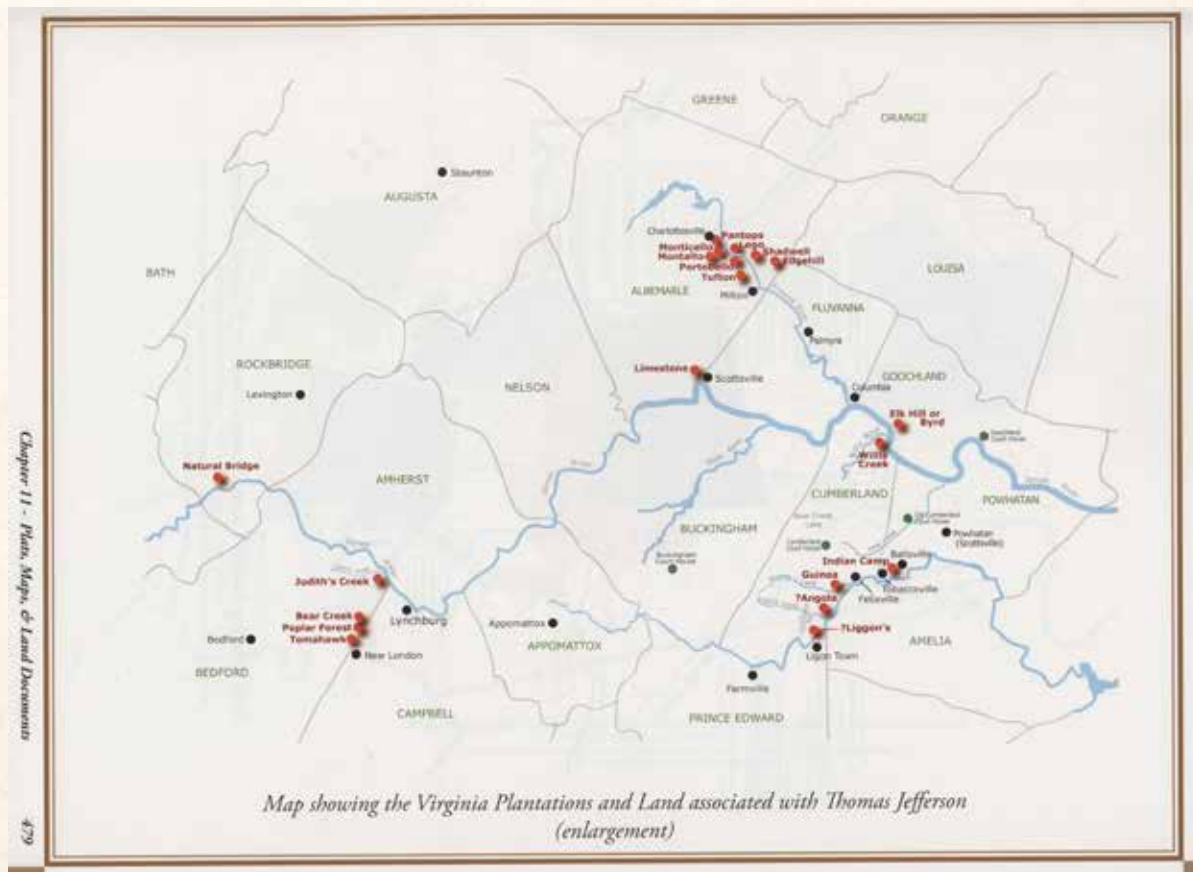
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*Monticello—the home of Thomas Jefferson, the principal author of the American Declaration of Independence and the site of enslavement of hundreds of African Americans over decades—is the perfect venue from which to launch a discussion of the development of attitudes about race in the United States.*

– Annette Gordon-Reed, Carl M. Loeb university professor, Harvard University



Sugar Loaf Mountain, Albemarle County, the site of an early Quaker Meeting House formed by Christopher Clark. Across the valley from the mountain was a set the unmarked graves of enslaved African Americans. Photo by Sue Kozel.



Printed with permission of B. Bernetaie Reed, *The Slave Families of Thomas Jefferson: A Pictorial Study Book with an Interpretation of his Farm Book in Genealogy Charts* - Volume II, Greensboro, NC: Sylvest-Sarah, Inc., 2007, page 497.



of descendants of people enslaved by Thomas Jefferson at Monticello. Getting Word is an archive of freedom because it traces the family histories of those who were once enslaved through the joys and challenges of freedom in the century and a half since the end of the Civil War and the abolition of slavery in 1865. Descendants' willingness to share their stories with younger generations of Americans, your students among them, is proof that oral history is one example of 'how the word is passed down,' as one Getting Word participant has said."

While at Monticello, I met with Krystal Gladden, manager of School Programs, Melanie H. Bowyer, manager of Digital Media and Strategy, and Carrie Soubra, Digital Learning coordinator. This team works with teachers to make virtual visits possible and share free lesson plans and primary sources, some of which are listed below.

Gladden invites NJEA members to visit the extensive classroom resources for lesson plans and teaching ideas. Below are resources that open to examples including Jefferson's enslaved family, the Declaration of Independence, and life for the enslaved at Jefferson's plantations.

## Bibliography of resources on slavery

For a great resource describing books on slavery at Monticello, see [bit.ly/monticello-11](http://bit.ly/monticello-11).

## Twitter

Follow @TeachMonticello

## Research and Education for educators

[monticello.org/research-education/for-educators](http://monticello.org/research-education/for-educators)

## Digital Education Resources and Lesson Plans

[bit.ly/monticello-2](http://bit.ly/monticello-2)

## REFLECTIONS

As I reflect on the experience at Monticello it was one of the most meaningful in my life. I felt the tensions between understanding enslavement and freedom as I listened to visitors react to the Sally Hemings Exhibit and of her possible room location in the South Wing of Monticello. Not all visitors were happy about this space with some complaining about the emphasis on slavery on Monticello.

I drove around Albemarle County to President James Monroe's Highland Plantation, where only one enslaved person was ever freed (See [bit.ly/3ztX70D](http://bit.ly/3ztX70D) and [highland.org/highland-and-slavery](http://highland.org/highland-and-slavery)) and then to nearby Orange County and President James Madison's Montpelier Plantation where no slave was ever freed ([bit.ly/3sWwlaN](http://bit.ly/3sWwlaN)). I was struck by this epicenter of Virginian political power, with three presidents living near each other. Each had slaves. Each made condemnations of sorts, excuses, supported colonization of enslaved and/or free blacks to Africa, but ultimately would not free their full group of enslaved people.

I think of Gabriel's Rebellion and the slaves that attempted to revolt for freedom ([bit.ly/3t1boAY](http://bit.ly/3t1boAY)), then-Governor James Monroe's fears, and the

## Sally Hemings' and Thomas Jefferson's descendants

In Monticello's resource page on slavery, Madison Hemings, one of Jefferson's enslaved children with Sally Hemings, wrote about how differently he was treated by his father, Thomas Jefferson, and how Jefferson interacted with his white children.

"He was not in the habit of showing partiality or fatherly affection to us children," Madison Hemings reflected. "We were the only children of his by a slave woman. He was affectionate toward his white grandchildren, of whom he had fourteen, twelve of whom lived to manhood and womanhood."

Madison Hemings's writings present an eyewitness window from one of Jefferson's African American children and provides us with an opportunity to think about the role of family, or not, in an enslaved community. As published in the Pike County Republican, March 13, 1873, he described how some of his siblings passed for white because of their light skin and chose to marry into white families while others identified as African American.

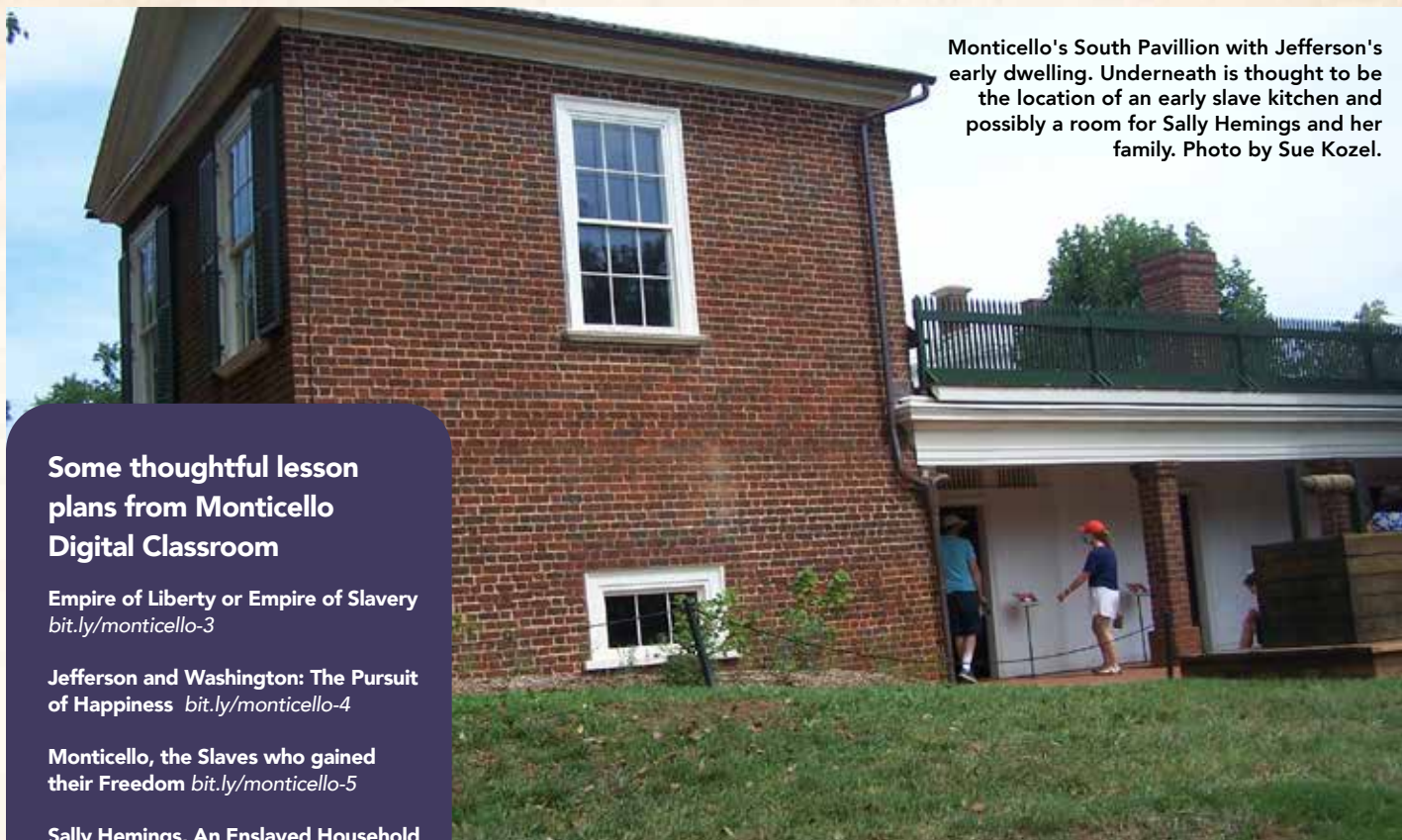
Thomas Jefferson's father-in-law, John Wayles, was a slave trader. (See [bit.ly/3JlkYrY](http://bit.ly/3JlkYrY)). Wayles was the father of Jefferson's wife, Martha. He was also father of enslaved woman and half-sister to Martha, Sally Hemings, who was inherited by Jefferson after his wife's father died, and the property—human and land—passed to Jefferson.

Madison Hemings discusses his enslaved grandmother, Elizabeth, and life with his siblings in this extraordinary writing. See —"Recollections of Madison Hemings at [bit.ly/monticello-10](http://bit.ly/monticello-10).

Source: Getty Images, Phil Cardamone







Monticello's South Pavillion with Jefferson's early dwelling. Underneath is thought to be the location of an early slave kitchen and possibly a room for Sally Hemings and her family. Photo by Sue Kozel.

## Some thoughtful lesson plans from Monticello Digital Classroom

**Empire of Liberty or Empire of Slavery**  
[bit.ly/monticello-3](http://bit.ly/monticello-3)

**Jefferson and Washington: The Pursuit of Happiness** [bit.ly/monticello-4](http://bit.ly/monticello-4)

**Monticello, the Slaves who gained their Freedom** [bit.ly/monticello-5](http://bit.ly/monticello-5)

**Sally Hemings, An Enslaved Household Servant** [bit.ly/monticello-6](http://bit.ly/monticello-6)

**The Lives & Experiences of Enslaved Laborers at Monticello**  
[bit.ly/monticello-7](http://bit.ly/monticello-7)

**Lesson plan created by NJ Teacher Molly McCullough**  
"The Aftermath of Gabriel's Rebellion: Jefferson and The Reaction of Virginia to The Slave Conspiracy Of 1800"  
[bit.ly/monticello-8](http://bit.ly/monticello-8)

**Image on the Monticello Classroom site is an image**  
Enslaved people serving President James Madison, his wife and children, Jefferson, and some of his white grandchildren. [bit.ly/monticello-9](http://bit.ly/monticello-9)

changing Black Codes ([bit.ly/3HEajmB](http://bit.ly/3HEajmB)) that further restricted the movement of both free and enslaved African Americans in Virginia.

In the case of Thomas Jefferson, the Monticello website succinctly summarizes his choices under the question, "Did Jefferson free anyone he enslaved?" The website reads: "Yes. Thomas Jefferson freed two people during his life. He freed five people in his will. He allowed two or three people to escape without pursuit and recommended informal freedom for two others. In total, of the more than six hundred people Jefferson enslaved, he freed only ten people—all members

of the same family." (See "Monticello – Slavery FAQ – Property" at [bit.ly/monticello-1](http://bit.ly/monticello-1).)

Finally, Poplar Forest represented a wealth generating plantation for Jefferson, and tobacco was a key crop. To learn more about these enslaved families, see [bit.ly/poplar-1](http://bit.ly/poplar-1). To read a Jefferson list noting the names of enslaved people in 1811-1812 written in Jefferson's hand in Poplar Forest, see [bit.ly/poplar-2](http://bit.ly/poplar-2).

One of the most moving experiences I had was visiting a little-known cemetery for the Clark family, which had ancestors who knew Jefferson and who possibly worked for him. Looking from the Sugar Loaf Mountain where one of Virginia's first Quaker meeting houses was founded by slave owner Christopher Clark, was an unbroken forest of pine. About 20 minutes from Monticello, I met a guide, we hopped in his Kubota and drove down a narrow dirt path to a silent and lonely space.

A lone child's gravestone was present, and it was explained to me that the stone was facing what was thought to be an unmarked gravesite of several African American enslaved people beyond the child's fenced in grave. I had seen a picture of how the snow covered the land and then showed that rectangular spaces sunk under the snow. I cried. No one remembered, but someone did.

The knowledge of the unmarked graves existed. It is the loss of life, the loss of opportunity, and the loss of "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" that stirs my heart. That is the legacy of slavery—the loss of so many for the greed of others. 🏠

## Getting Word African American Oral History Project

Great links for the Getting Word African American Oral History Project are numerous. Visitors will be able to connect to the stories of the descendants of Monticello's enslaved community, life after enslavement, introduce descendant's Civil War heroes, and address Jim Crow and the Color Line realities, just some of the many topics discussed. Here are places to start.

[monticello.org/getting-word](http://monticello.org/getting-word)

[monticello.org/getting-word/stories/stories](http://monticello.org/getting-word/stories/stories)

[monticello.org/getting-word/stories/fighting-freedom-and-equality](http://monticello.org/getting-word/stories/fighting-freedom-and-equality)

Monticello's Getting Word Oral History Program provides visitors with reflections from the descendants of enslaved people living on Jefferson's slave plantations, including his African American children with Sally Hemings.

**Eston Hemings:** [bit.ly/eston-hemings](http://bit.ly/eston-hemings)

**Madison Hemings:** [bit.ly/madison-hemings](http://bit.ly/madison-hemings)

**Beverly Hemings:** [bit.ly/beverly-hemings](http://bit.ly/beverly-hemings)

**Harriet Hemings:** [bit.ly/harriet-hemings](http://bit.ly/harriet-hemings)



# TWO MINUTES TO MASTERY

## Climbing the mountain of public speaking

By Dr. Glen Coleman

I believe at the center of meaningful teaching is asking students, “What do you think?” —and listening to their answers. When teachers and students research and question, we embark on a sacred journey. When we use course content to better understand our world, we get outside our comfort zone and grow personally and professionally.

I try to hit that target with an end-of-unit assessment that I call Two-Minutes to Mastery. Students complete two-minute speeches with no notes. In the best sense, it scares students; it causes them to band together, hear divergent points of view, learn from each other, and work as a team. The goal is for students to complete that challenging task in a workshop setting and use course content to deepen their insights into societal issues. We climb the mountain together.

The task begins with students addressing challenging prompts. I call them Shangri-la prompts because they lead us to good places. The

prompts require synthesizing course content with our world today. As a social studies teacher, I have asked these kinds of questions:

- What Enlightenment ideal (e.g. democracy, trial by jury, rule of law, election) needs an update so as to avoid another January 6th raid on the capitol?
- Based on your understanding of the French Revolution, what’s next for Venezuela? Predict or suggest a solution. What lesson should the Venezuelans or their government learn from the French Revolution to avoid further calamity?
- Should Andrew Jackson stay on the twenty-dollar bill?
- To what extent is China’s presence in Angola imperialism?
- How did African-American music help end segregation in the South?

These questions require students to show mastery of course content. As importantly, they

use that knowledge to better understand their world. It’s not easy: students need to know what happened on Jan. 6, 2021, need to know what is happening in Venezuela today, need to understand current events in Africa with regard to China’s presence there, need to wrestle with the legacy of Andrew Jackson, or appreciate the historic impact of African American music that continues into the present.

I believe good questions can emerge from any topic: math, science, music, language arts, and on and on. By *good*, I mean questions that spur interest. It starts with silence on the other side of the question mark. If I ask, “What do you think?” allow perfect silence, and care enough to listen, that’s when the learning starts. That’s the opportunity.

I want to give you courage. Don’t think of your subject as calcified. Your subject is dynamic, new, and now.

If our intention is to grow, we must ask inspired questions. Do so with this North Star: “I don’t know, but I will find out with you.” Yes, math too evolves. Take, for example, geometry, with its two thousand year old proofs. When we insert the world into the curriculum, the statue steps down

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*Dr. Glen Coleman teaches social studies at River Dell High School, is an HP Teaching Fellow for using technology for powerful learning, and hosts a podcast, Teacher Breathe. Coleman is the author of 100 or Nothing: Reimagining Success in the Classroom. He can be reached at [info@teacherbreathe.com](mailto:info@teacherbreathe.com).*



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*I believe at the center of meaningful teaching is asking students, “What do you think?”—and listening to their answers.*



from its pedestal. It draws a breath. It's no longer an inanimate object confined to a museum.

Two Minutes to Mastery must get students to think, stretch their limitations, communicate, fail and feel excited about participation. In short, I want it to catalyze the creation of community, the kind that inspires growth. Early in my teaching career one of my students cried because I told her to do her speech again. The girl was brilliant and a perfectionist, but she was thrown off by my request. The room got very tense very quickly, but a touch of humor defused the emotion. Soon, everyone, including the girl, was laughing in a hysterical, joyful way. We were learning that we could do better than “one and done,” getting only a single shot at a project or performance. “One and done” is a lot of weight to carry, a lot of stress that undoes heartfelt effort.

Instead, we workshop, get critical feedback from peers, improve, and eventually create something really good by any measure, for college and beyond. The student who got emotional over her grade later delivered an amazing and powerful speech because she felt empowered by not being bound by a single performance. Ultimately, do-overs allow a class to improve when the bar is high and the intention to improve is genuine, when opportunities to try again are real and the topic engages.

#### DELIVERING THE SPEECHES

Many adults can't speak for two minutes in an organized, compelling, and informed fashion about the complexities of current events. It takes practice, failure, overcoming stage fright, and a supportive audience/team. But when we do the work, a feeling of empowerment emerges.

Speeches are generally delivered from the back of the room, a space typically not associated with where speeches are traditionally delivered. All desks are pushed to the front of the room, except for one. I push it against the wall in the back of the room. The speaker sits on that desk to deliver their speech. This reduces stress.

I position myself between six and 10 feet away, seated to their right at a desk by the wall, taking notes as each student speaks. If prompted, I may offer suggestions. Students do the same. We create a big U shape around the speaker. In chairs only, we sit close to the speaker, creating an intimate atmosphere. Of course, this had to be modified

during the pandemic. Each student has only a notebook, a pen, and perhaps a printed copy of what I handed out previously concerning the expectations for the speech. We're now ready to help.

By the time students present their speeches, they have already researched for at least a day, brainstormed with me for another day, researched with the librarian to learn more deeply about the topic, and spent a day writing their scripts.

Generally, one student volunteers to go first. (There's usually someone who wants to get it over with.) Within a minute, the speaker will realize it's far less stressful than she imagined, even though expectations remain high.

When someone volunteers, I comment on one of the four outlined expectations:

- Content mastery (showing a balanced understanding of course-content and societal issue).
- Thematic coherence (when an idea, insight, or suggestion integrates the various elements addressed)
- Organized presentation (talking about each topic in detail—no switching back and forth—in thoughtful, organized, and well-developed paragraphs)
- Unique insight and research (no repeating other students' answers).

The goal is to get students organized, lucid, and conversant with the material. Together they develop an informal, confident command of the material as each student sits on that desk and tells us what they think. This requires students to become comfortable speaking to the class. They receive feedback and try again. If a student is tongue-tied, no worries. We can discuss alternative approaches. If the theme doesn't work, students suggest ideas or facts to elevate the game.

In other words, on the first go-round, we workshop. We dissect and get a collective sense of what sounds right, although mindful that each student needs to present a unique point of view. No parroting. If someone speaks impressively, we acknowledge it. If a speaker sounds lifeless, as if a speech has been memorized, we'll say, “Say what you think. Don't recite a script.”

The whole point of speaking without a script—or with only 20 words of notes—is to get students comfortable. This may seem counterintuitive, but a

script kills the engagement. The notecard with only 20 words raises the bar and demands focus and the creation of something meaningful. Meaning drives the bus. Students present speeches that are impressive in various ways—serious, witty, soft spoken, dramatic, or authoritative. There are many ways up the mountain, but to summit we must show command of the topic, argue coherently, be organized, and present our unique point of view.

When we give students the opportunity to say what they think, research deeply, use course content to promote divergent thinking, and learn in community with multiple attempts at mastery, the classroom becomes a powerful place indeed. 🏆

### What has made Two-Minutes to Mastery successful?

1. The high bar that might have seemed intimidating at first.
2. The teacher who cares and appreciates the difficulty of the task
3. The common purpose that provides an incentive for students to work together.
4. The workshop format which helps make the goal attainable.
5. Most importantly, real opportunities to “fail gloriously,” try again, and learn with feedback from classmates and teacher.

# WHY MINORITY LEADERSHIP AND RECRUITMENT MATTER

## Cumberland County's mission for diverse representation

By Dr. Tiffanie ThrBak, NJEA MLR Committee chair

Cumberland County, a rural county with fewer than 3,000 members, has a lot to boast about. In terms of population, the county is the fifth smallest in New Jersey. When you see the diverse leadership in Cumberland County, it should make you proud. Believe it when you see it—minority leadership and recruitment work.

Representation matters, and we are doing leadership and recruitment the “plain ole” grassroots way: one member at a time, one-to-one conversations, leading by example, and encouraging others to get involved! As chair of the statewide NJEA Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee, I want members to know that Cumberland County is growing leaders.

**Mildred Johnson** is the president of the Cumberland County Council of Educational Associations (CCCEA) is an administrative assistant in the Vineland School District. She is also an NJEA UniServ consultant.

*“One of the most important tasks in building any organization is fostering an atmosphere of unity,” Johnson says. “The MLR Committee is important because it engages what is often the most disenfranchised group within the union, recognizing leadership abilities that they themselves may not see. Recruiting minorities into leadership roles creates and maintains the skills, experiences and racial diversity needed for all aspects of union work to truly be effective.”*

**Ashanti Rankin** is an NEA Director for the ESP-at-large seat. He was reelected to that position in 2020 by NEA Representative Assembly delegates from across the nation. In CCCEA, he holds the office of 2nd vice president and is a paraprofessional in Millville.

Rankin believes minority leadership and recruitment is important for people of color and of culture for several reasons. Inclusion brings additional voices to the table to solve problems. He believes that diversity in association leadership reflects the community and serves as an example while inspiring hope of opportunities in education and for school communities and non-school communities.

*“It is important to have schools that are culturally and racially diverse that allow the opportunity to create an education profession that is attractive to authentic diversity,” Rankin says. “Together we can create pathways that are conducive to retaining diversity in staffing and leadership.”*



Believe it when you see it—minority leadership and recruitment work. Leaders in the Cumberland County Council of Educational Associations, from left: Ashanti Rankin, Mildred Johnson, Nicole Kinsey, Dr. Tiffanie ThrBak, and Damita White-Morris. ThrBak is holding a photo of Temika Langston-Myers.



The growing Cumberland County MLR Committee.

**Damita White-Morris** is the Cumberland County ESP of the Year. An attendance officer in Bridgeton, she is CCCEA's membership chair. She also represents Cumberland County as a Delegate Assembly-Alternate. She chairs the CCCEA Youth Services Committee and represents the county on the NJEA Youth Services, Congressional Contact, and NEA Resolutions committees.

*"It's important to have a seat at the table, a speaking point on the agenda, and a face in crowd," White-Morris says. "If we don't represent and speak for ourselves, then who else will effectively speak for us?"*

**Temika Langston-Myers**, a paraprofessional in the Bridgeton School District, was recently appointed by NEA President Becky Pringle to serve as an NEA Director in an ESP-at-large position. She is the CCCEA Government Relations chair and the Legislative Action Team chair for Bridgeton School Employees Association.

*"Our union leadership must have the potential to reflect the diversity within our union," Langston-Myers says. "Minority leadership and recruitment have created an environment where ethnic minorities can engage in union work and add their voices to the collective."*



**Michael Morton**, a teacher in Bridgeton, is a member of the NEA Resolutions Committee.

*"When identifying and mitigating matters that concern our membership, especially members who have been marginalized, it is imperative to activate all of our resources which includes minority leadership," Morton says. "We must continue to recruit members who may be empowered to take corrective actions to preserve the organization's integrity."*



**Leston Hall**, is the president of the Bridgeton School Employees Association, the largest ESP local association in Cumberland County.

*"I believe minority representation is important, more so for women of color," Hall says. "Take advantage of leadership opportunities. We're with you."*

There are many other persons of color holding leadership positions in CCCEA and on NJEA Committees, including: Nicole Kinsey, MLR county chair and co-chair; April Stevenson-Kinder, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity; Sherman Denby, Urban Education (former Bridgeton EA president); Lawrence Hickman, Professional Development; Ta'ja Board, NEA Activities; Shinese Harvey, Pension Policy; Debra Byrd, Technology; Romaine Street, Paul Dimitriadis Member Rights; Gerri Lane, retired rep to Urban Education; Adrian Garrett (posthumously), Worksite Safety and Health.

More active members of our newly formed Cumberland County MLR Committee include, but are not limited to, Elyse Bittner, Rosa Colon, Norma Castro, Shirley Santos, Maria Negron, Yolanda Day-Palmer, Jackie Gentry, Chantel Frazier, Cherie Douglas, Author Horn, Christine Nickle (Bridgeton EA President) and growing.

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*Dr. Tiffanie ThrBak is the chair of the NJEA Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee. Dr. ThrBak is a teacher of the handicapped at Cherry Street School in Bridgeton and an NJEA Professional Development consultant. She can be reached at [tthrbak@njea.org](mailto:tthrbak@njea.org).*

## Camden Education Association Minority Leadership and Retention Committee

During the fall of 2021, the Camden Education Association (CEA) revitalized its Minority Leadership and Retention Committee after several years of non-existence. Dr. Eva Diane Lyle-Smith became the chair of this local association committee after serving two terms as the chair of the Camden County Council of Education Associations (CCCEA) Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee. Lyle-Smith is a music teacher in Camden with 42 years of experience.

*"The CEA MLR Committee has grown from a committee of one to a committee of five since Sept. 2021," Lyle-Smith says. "We continue to invite Camden City members to join and became members of this important committee."*

Since its redevelopment, the CEA MLR Committee meets monthly virtually for one hour in the evening. The committee organized a workshop which included a CEA retiree as a presenter, Dr. George Akbar Cross. His workshop titled, "Leaders of The Future: Ask, Learn, Follow Up and Grow" was presented on Nov. 15, 2021

*"The CEA MLR Committee will continue with its quest in training, recruiting and retaining members," Lyle-Smith concludes.*

## Gloucester County Equity Committee

Joyce Farr, who previously represented the Gloucester County Education Association on the NJEA MLR Committee, spearheaded the inception of the Equity Committee in Gloucester County in 2021. The committee originally comprised the county chairs of the NJEA Equity Alliance.

*"September 2021 saw the launch of our inaugural Equity Versus Equality Workshop, which was open to all GCEA members," said Farr.*

Future GCEA Equity Committee professional development workshops include Disarming Discrimination, the New Jersey Law Against Discrimination (NJLAD), Introduction to Social Justice and Understanding LGBTQ+ Issues.



# The NJEA Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee seeks to ensure involvement of ALL members

## Franklin Township MLR Committee

The Franklin Township Education Association in Somerset County is a local association with its own MLR Committee. For the last three years, it has been co-chaired by Fawnya Gibson and Felicia Osley.

"Both Felicia and I were members of the MLR Committee in our district prior to becoming co-chairs," Gibson says. "The experience of being members, attending the NJEA Equity Alliance Conference, and networking with colleagues in and beyond our local has been an empowering opportunity. Every member should have the same opportunity and know that they are part of an organization, NJEA, that encourages ALL members to feel empowered and connect with one another."

The FTEA MLR committee created a scholarship for high school seniors wishing to pursue a career in education at a two- or four-year college. Last year the committee awarded its first \$250 scholarship in collaboration with the FTEA Philanthropic Committee.

"We are looking to increase this scholarship amount with fundraising activities throughout the year," Gibson says.

The FTEA MLR Committee also hosted a virtual Night of Movement using a grant from the NJEA Pride in Public Education program. The event celebrated the diversity of Franklin Township's students and staff with different types of dance such as Bollywood, Zumba, and Salsa. The committee solicited local businesses and was able to give away over \$1,000 in gift cards/certificates as well as provide four children with bikes, helmets, and locks. The event also had two virtual Escape Rooms for primary and secondary students.

"This year we would like to present a professional development offering to the staff on "Choosing and Using Diverse Literature in Our Classrooms," Gibson says.

The NJEA Minority Leadership and Recruitment (MLR) Committee has an important charge within the association, to encourage persons of color into the teaching profession as NJEA seeks to strengthen its role as a justice-centered union.

The charge of the MLR Committee is to:

- Encourage multi-ethnic members to become active in all levels of association work.
- Recruit multi-ethnic members for association involvement.
- Identify and recommend ways to attract multi-ethnic members to the school employees' professions.
- Develop and initiate training opportunities for school personnel.

The members of the committee represent their counties, higher education, NJEA Preservice and NJREA. In this article, you'll meet the members of the committee. Dr. Tiffanie ThrBak, a teacher of students with special needs in Bridgeton, is the chair of the committee. With the committee, she has worked for the formation of an MLR Committee within each county and local association, modeling after Essex, Burlington, Camden and Mercer, which have been thriving for years.

To contact your county's MLR representative, check with your county education association.



**Dr. Tiffanie ThrBak, chair  
NJEA MLR Committee  
Bridgeton Education Association  
Teacher of Students with Special Needs  
NJEA REAL co-founder**

I am passionate about ethnic-minority involvement in leadership on all levels of our association. With that and the charge of the MLR Committee in mind, I wanted one of our goals to be the creation of an MLR committee in every local and county. I was encouraged by a fellow association member

to chair MLR at the county level many years ago. Today, I feel it is my job to do the same for others like myself—help them find what they are passionate about and grow in leadership.

When our previous NJEA president, Marie Blistan, asked me to take the seat as the state chair of the NJEA MLR Committee, I was honored but knew the task ahead of me. I've had so many people to lead the way and encourage my leadership. I am grateful to those individuals. They showed me that minority leadership is about: growth, inspiring others to lead, and fighting for social and racial justice with my presence and with my leadership.

I'm not just here to lead the way for people that look like me, but I'm gathering my allies with me to show them what a "Love Warrior" looks like on this journey for peace and solidarity in the struggle.

**Tomeka Sanderlin**

Atlantic County MLR chair  
Atlantic City Education Association  
Eighth grade inclusion teacher

**Aaryenne S. White**

Mercer County MLR chair  
Trenton EA  
Middle School Science Teacher

**Michelle N. Hammond-Dudley**

Bergen County MLR chair  
Hackensack Education Association  
Third grade teacher

**Shan Byrd**

Middlesex County MLR chair  
New Brunswick Education Association  
Teacher on Assignment – Restorative Justice  
Practitioner Coordinator

**Sabrina Austin**

Burlington County MLR chair  
Willingboro Education Association  
Special education reading specialist

**Mary Scott**

Monmouth County MLR chair  
Neptune Township Education Association  
Teacher of special education

**Crystal G. Love**

Camden County MLR chair  
Voorhees School District  
Teacher of language arts literacy

**Vilmary Hernandez**

Morris County MLR chair  
Washington Township Education Association  
Spanish teacher

**David Farrow**

Cape May County MLR chair  
Middle Township Education Association  
Middle school math teacher

**Vires Simmons**

NJREA  
Camden County Council of Education Associations  
Camden Education Association  
Retired Special Needs Instructor

**Nicole Kinsey**

Cumberland County MLR chair  
Bridgeton Education Association  
Math teacher, fifth grade

**Maria R. de Venecia-McFarland**

Ocean County MLR chair  
Lakewood Education Association  
ESL teacher

**Evelyn Ayum**

Essex County MLR chair  
Newark Teachers' Association  
Teacher coach

**Aida Wahba**

Somerset County MLR chair  
Somerville Education Association  
Spanish teacher

**Chardae Ingram**

Gloucester County MLR chair  
Paulsboro Education Association  
Administrative assistant

**Michael L. Boyd**

Union County MLR chair  
Roselle Education Association  
Paraprofessional

**Katherine Chao**

Hudson County MLR chair  
West New York Education Association  
Special education teacher

**Kenneth L. Buck** of Salem County and **Bridget C. Gum** of NJEA Preservice also serve on the NJEA MLR Committee. **Gabriel Tanglao** is the NJEA staff contact to the MLR Committee. **Collen Lopez** is the associate staff contact.

# OVERCROWDED SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS

## A longstanding problem is even worse during COVID-19

By Debra Coyle

If you work in a New Jersey school, you've probably witnessed firsthand the problem of overcrowded classrooms. Students scrambling for desks, taking notes standing up, leaning on radiators or even laying on the floor to do their work.

"We all come in, all running because there's like 40 of us and we all want to get a seat," a sixth-grader named Valerie Ramirez from Palisades Park told WABC-TV Eyewitness News in February of 2020.

Since then, of course, our whole world has changed. In the face of a global pandemic, the chronic underinvestment in New Jersey public schools that has led to widespread overcrowding is now a potential life-threatening hazard to students, teachers and staff.

To be clear, an overcrowded classroom is never a good idea. In normal times, a hot, stuffy and overcrowded classroom is a serious safety hazard

and a poor learning environment. An orderly evacuation in an emergency is more difficult in an overcrowded room. And infectious diseases such as the flu—less deadly than COVID-19, but still dangerous—can spread more quickly.

But these are not normal times. We all have had to learn to live with COVID-19 in our homes, schools and communities. The science shows that this is a highly contagious and lethal disease that spreads mainly through the air, which makes good air quality and improved ventilation more important than ever. This is true for all classrooms, and especially for those operating at a higher than recommended occupancy rating.

### INSPECT YOUR SPACE

What can teachers, educational support professionals and other school staff do to reduce risk and keep classrooms as safe as possible?

First, inspect your classroom or workspace environment, as well as cafeterias, study halls and other common areas.

Here are some things to check:

#### **Occupancy rating**

Ask your principal or school administrator about the recommended occupancy for your classroom and common areas. The indoor air quality standard from the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) "recommends that schools should supply a minimum of 10 cubic feet per minute of fresh outdoor air per person" (emphasis added). That's a design standard, not an operating standard. Heating, cooling and other mechanisms designed for a room with a recommended occupancy of 25 people won't be sufficient if you've got 40 students.

#### **Windows**

If there are windows in your room, can they be opened and shut? Opening a window—even just a crack in bad weather—improves air flow and reduces viral risk.

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*Debra Coyle is the executive director of the NJ Work Environment Council (WEC). WEC is the state affiliate of the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health. Coyle can be reached at [dcoyle@njwec.org](mailto:dcoyle@njwec.org).*





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**Heating, cooling and other mechanisms designed for a room with a recommended occupancy of 25 people won't be sufficient if you've got 40 students.**

#### **Heating and cooling systems**

Check any radiators or air conditioners in your room. Is there warm air flowing in the winter and cool air during hot weather? It's alarming how frequently school administrators neglect basic maintenance, such as changing air filters, lubrication or making sure that motors are operating properly. The New Jersey Public Employee Safety and Health (PEOSH) indoor air quality standard requires this maintenance in public buildings. Any public school that is not carrying out proper upkeep of heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems is in violation of state law.

#### **Are filters available?**

If you've got more people than recommended in your classroom, you need more than functioning windows and a properly maintained HVAC system. In this situation, portable filtration with a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) device can help remove the airborne materials that spread COVID-19 and other diseases. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, a properly installed HEPA unit, with a correct filter, “can theoretically remove at least 99.97% of dust, pollen, mold, bacteria, and any airborne particles with a size of 0.3 microns (µm).

#### **Is your building ventilation system running before and after school?**

Because of the dangers of COVID-19, the New Jersey Department of Public Health recommends that schools “[c]onsider running the HVAC system

at maximum outside airflow for two hours before and after the building is occupied.” This air flush at the beginning and end of the day can help remove airborne disease particles and make your building safer.

Once you've inspected your own classroom and common areas, the next step is to get together with your co-workers and union representatives. (See the sidebar for steps the local association can take.)

#### **FUNDING REPAIRS**

Funding is the main reason health and safety issues don't get fixed. Fortunately, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and other actions by Congress have provided billions of dollars to New Jersey and other states, specifically earmarked to reopen schools as safely as possible.

### **What local associations can do:**

- Work with the Health and Safety Committee, if you don't have one, form a committee, and take concerns to your principal or school administrator.
- Check your union contract to see if the safety concern is subject to filing a grievance.
- If you don't have language in your contract, work to negotiate health and safety language into the contract around temperature, ventilation and occupancy.
- Organize in your building and district and solicit community support.
- File a safety complaint with PEOSH. This should only be used as a last resort. The agency is chronically understaffed and generally responds to employee complaints with a letter to the employer, rather than an inspection.

In addition, this past fall, that state launched a program at the New Jersey Board of Public Utilities to address ventilation in schools, the School and Small Business Energy Efficiency Stimulus Program. The program provides grants for the repair, maintenance, upgrade, replacement, and installation of certain HVAC systems. More information on the BPU program here: [bit.ly/ssbeesp](https://bit.ly/ssbeesp). 🏠

## **For more information**

#### **American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers**

ASHRAE 62 Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality  
[bit.ly/ashrae-vent](https://bit.ly/ashrae-vent)

#### **NJ PEOSH IAQ Standard**

New Jersey Indoor Air Quality Standard (NJ IAQ)  
[bit.ly/njac-12-100](https://bit.ly/njac-12-100)

#### **NJ Department of Health**

Public Employers' Guide and Model Written Program for the Indoor Air Quality Standard  
[bit.ly/iaq-employer-guide](https://bit.ly/iaq-employer-guide)

#### **Tips to Improve Indoor Air Quality**

[bit.ly/iaq-tips](https://bit.ly/iaq-tips)

#### **PEOSH Complaint – Instructions and Forms**

[bit.ly/peosh-complaint](https://bit.ly/peosh-complaint)

#### **U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

What is a HEPA filter?  
[bit.ly/hepa-filter](https://bit.ly/hepa-filter)





# Taking Action

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events, such as parental separation, violence, abuse or neglect, that occur during childhood. Experiencing multiple or chronic ACEs may lead to toxic stress, in which the body's stress response system is activated for a prolonged period. This can profoundly affect the development of a child's brain architecture, causing lifelong harm to physical, mental, and emotional health.

As educators and school staff, we can help children heal and build resilience by taking simple actions to reduce the impact of trauma. In this monthly series, "Taking Action," I speak with educators and school staff about the things they are doing to help all children thrive.

## Dr. Barbara Prempeh, Psy.D.

Vice President, New Jersey chapter of the Association of Black Psychologists  
Psychologist at Newark Beth Israel Medical Center  
Clinical Specialist at Montclair State University

*By Amanda Adams*

I recently spoke with Dr. Barbara Prempeh, a clinical psychologist known for her expertise in helping children heal through the juvenile justice system, trauma-informed care, crisis intervention, racial/cultural issues, and resilience. Dr. Prempeh also teaches college-level psychology courses.

She ardently presses educators, parents and law enforcement to go beyond simply acknowledging childhood trauma and do more to prevent it or—when it's too late—help those who've experienced it to heal.

**Q. Over the past academic year, you were a consulting counselor at a Pre-K through Grade 12 school in New York State. What did you learn about the challenges facing students, particularly students of color?**

Over the past year and a half, while we've been in this pandemic, there's been a lot of talk about the need to understand that this is an emotionally challenging time for students, and also to understand the prevalence of social injustice and how we all got a firsthand view. We had no distractions while we were in the pandemic and had no choice but to see what was happening on our screens and social media sites. Students saw it with their own eyes as well, and we saw students protesting and marching alongside their parents.

There's been a lot of talk about it, but I want to see action now that schools are opening. Where is the action? My concern is that we can do a great deal of talking and acknowledging but then we stop there. It's great to acknowledge. I'm glad that a lot of places have acknowledged the racial trauma and the collective trauma that we're experiencing with the pandemic, but what's the action behind it? I really want to see schools emphasize their emotional support for students.

**Q: What should schools think about as they navigate another year affected by the pandemic?**

As we navigate this year, we need to be asking ourselves some hard questions such as how we will deal with grief and loss, given the high number of students we'll have in classrooms who lost a parent, a grandparent, an aunt or a community member to this COVID pandemic. What about the classrooms where teachers aren't there because they passed away from COVID-19? How are we addressing that?

This is in addition to the increased anxiety that students have experienced, maybe the lack of motivation, because during that year and a half things just weren't the same, they weren't able to interact with their friends as much, or they missed out on junior prom. What about kids who were in eighth grade when the pandemic started, entered a new high school last year, and now they're sophomores? Not only are they adjusting to being in a new building, they're also adjusting to this new group of students.

Are schools running emotional support groups? Are they providing some type of psychoeducation to parents to inform them on how to support their children at home? I get it that some schools just don't have the capacity, or don't want to add anything else to the school day, but we have to become creative in how we're supporting students.

**Q: Part of your career has been focused on juvenile justice and you've spoken out about how most children in the juvenile justice system have a history of trauma. Can you talk about this intersection?**

This is where my passion has been. I began my educational journey focused on juvenile justice and did my doctorate internship at a juvenile detention and probation center. I saw firsthand that statistic regarding the history of abuse with a lot of the kids for whom I did assessments. This shifted my focus and made me want to help kids in the juvenile justice system. I understood that to better help them I had to better understand the impact of trauma.

That intersection is very important because it helps us recognize the things that could be done earlier in children's lives to actually decrease the likelihood of someone ending up in the juvenile justice system. The work around ACEs makes the connection from these adverse childhood experiences to long-term medical impact, but there has to also be this second piece of connection relating to incarceration. Maybe there are variables, where a certain number of adverse childhood experiences increases the likelihood of incarceration. That's where we're seeing the two worlds come together. When you think back to the school-to-prison pipeline, you have to question if there are resources that kids with ACEs are getting or not getting? Are there certain disciplinary actions taken against kids with a history of ACEs? And do these things increase the likelihood of kids ending up in the juvenile justice system?

The shift in thinking needs to be that instead of handing out excessive suspensions and expulsions, what therapeutic resources are you putting in to stop that trajectory toward the juvenile justice system? Instead of a suspension because the kid is fighting, why not have them meet with a counselor or put them in some type of therapeutic program? This is what I'm hoping will happen as people become more trauma informed. They'll look beyond the observable behaviors to understand you're not just seeing a present moment, but you may be seeing a history of things being presented to you.

**Q: Why should educators get training on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)?**

Educators should get trained on ACEs because this training will help them become better teachers for the children who need more care and nurturing. By understanding how ACEs affect children, you gain insight into how a child's mind, brain and learning process can be altered when they experience a traumatic event.

There's a pronounced difference between a healthy brain and the brain of a child who has experienced trauma. A child who has been traumatized has difficulty sustaining attention and engaging in complex tasks. This is because

the child may be having flashbacks or may be anxious and vigilant, and those things invariably impair their ability to engage in the classroom. So ACEs training actually supports educators by helping them gain insight into the experiences of the children whom they serve and equipping them to create curricula or classroom activities that can be more supportive for all learners.

**Q: What can educators do to turn their schools (or their classrooms) into places of healing and connection?**

When we think about educators turning classrooms into places of healing and connection, we can't overlook the importance of supporting educators and ensuring that they feel emotionally healthy. Educators have gone through a lot during the pandemic, especially when you consider the lack of control they had over their classroom environment and the disconnect from their students because of remote learning. All of this has resulted in educator burnout.

We have to give educators the tools they need to support social and emotional learning. We need to teach them that it is okay to express emotions and talk about how it made them feel. By doing so, they can be the example for students and open the door to let students know it's OK to talk about feelings and emotions.

We also need to think about our allies within the school system—connecting with the school psychologist, connecting with the learning specialist, connecting with the school nurse, connecting with the parents to find additional support because it truly cannot all be on the shoulders of teachers. So, the approach to creating healing-centered classrooms really starts with supporting the teachers so they can better support the students.

**Q: Do you have any tips for educators—or other school staff—about how they can help kids build resilience?**

Often when we think of building resilience and helping kids who have had adverse or traumatic experiences, we feel like it's such a heavy task. In reality, it is the little things that can make kids feel connected to someone else. Something as simple as asking a child how their weekend was or what they did over the weekend can make a huge difference in a child's life by making them feel connected to someone.

Having one consistent adult whom they have a connection with makes a world of difference to a child because it communicates that there IS a connection and there's someone who cares about you. So, if something happens to the child, they know they can come to you and get help from you. 🏠

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Actions 4 ACEs is a statewide initiative to build awareness about adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and the role adults can play in reducing the impact of trauma and helping children heal. Actions 4 ACEs offers educators invaluable resources and materials to better inform, educate and activate.



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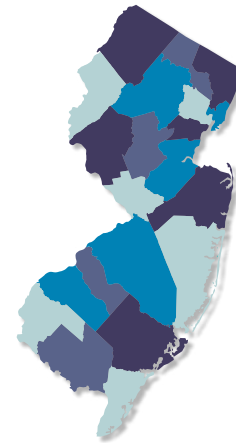
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## SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

### Workshop



### EARN MICROCREDENTIALS WITH NEA AND CITIZEN U

If you attended Eric Liu's keynote address at NJEA Convention, you may have heard him say that "every single [school staff member] is a civics teacher." He explained this idea further by saying that everyone who works with children, whether they are a teacher or an educational support professional, can help show students what it means to be a contributing member of our civic society. In fact, Liu's organization, Citizen U, works to help educators integrate civics education across curricula.

A new offering from Citizen U, in partnership with the National Education Association (NEA) and the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) Partner Program, is a series of 15-hour microcredentials on the following topics: Inquiry with Primary Sources, Culturally Relevant Pedagogy with Primary Sources, Multidisciplinary Civics with Primary Sources, and Universal Design for Learning with Primary Sources.

A microcredential is a digital "badge" that can be earned asynchronously over a period of six months. All microcredentials offered by NEA are free for NJEA members. They provide opportunities to receive high-quality professional development at your convenience. If you're not familiar with microcredentials, check out all that NEA has to offer!

Visit [nea.certificationbank.com/TPS](http://nea.certificationbank.com/TPS) to learn all about it.



# Help is on the way!

## Changes to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program

*By Kaitlyn Dunphy, Esq.*

It is no secret that with the ballooning cost of higher education in this country, many individuals find themselves burdened with the costs of student loans, including many NJEA members. According to recent statistics from the National Education Association (NEA), 45% of educators, including both teachers and educational support professionals, have taken out student loans to help pay for their education. Of that 45%, 53% currently have a remaining balance on their loans. The average remaining student loan balance is \$58,700, with 32% owing \$65,000 or more, and 14% owing \$105,000 or more.

In 2007, the federal government started the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program. The basic premise of the program was to induce citizens to, and reward them for, public service by forgiving their Direct Student Loans after 10 years of public service, provided they worked full time for a qualifying employer and made 120 full on-time payments under a qualifying repayment plan. In practice, the program has been plagued by mismanagement and has been notoriously difficult to navigate, with little accountability for the private lenders involved. This past summer, the Biden administration solicited and received over 48,000 comments on how to improve the PSLF system.

The U.S. Department of Education (USED) heard those comments and recently announced changes in an effort to restore the broken promises of the PSLF program. The USED is instituting a limited-time waiver, with a deadline of Oct. 31, 2022, where qualifying student borrowers can receive credit for past payments from all federal loan programs or repayment plans towards loan forgiveness, including some payments or loans that would not typically be eligible.

Typically, only Direct Loans are eligible for loan forgiveness. During the waiver period,

payments made on other loans, namely Family Federal Education Loans (FFEL) and Perkins Loans, as well as loans from older programs, such as Federally Insured Student Loans (FISL) and National Defense Student Loans (NDSL), will also be eligible for PSLF. To qualify, those loans will first have to be consolidated into the Direct Loan program.

During the temporary waiver period, prior payments will be credited toward loan forgiveness regardless of the loan program, repayment plan, or whether the payment was made in full or on time. This change applies to those with Direct Loans, those who have consolidated into Direct Loans already, or those who do so by the Oct. 31, 2022, deadline (including FFEL, Perkins, FISL, and NDSL loans). It only applies to student borrowers, not parent loans.

### ELIGIBILITY RULES AND APPLICATION PROCESS

Some of the original eligibility requirements remain in effect. The borrower must work full time for an eligible employer, which includes government employers and some not-for-profits (union employment is, unfortunately, not eligible), during the period of repayment. Multiple eligible part-time jobs can be combined to meet the full-time requirement. One hundred-twenty qualifying payments must be made in order for a borrower to be eligible for loan forgiveness. Periods of deferment, forbearance, and default still do not qualify. However, military service members whose loans were deferred or in forbearance during active military duty can now receive payment credit for the period of active duty. Payments suspended as part of COVID-19 emergency relief will also be credited if all other qualifications are met.

Borrowers will have to submit the PSLF form, which is the application used to review employer

certification, payment counts, and processing of forgiveness, on or before Oct. 31, 2022, if they have not done so already in order to have previously ineligible payments credited. For those that have already submitted PSLF forms for existing Direct Loans and loans already consolidated into the Direct Loan program, the USED will be automatically reviewing those accounts for additional payments that can be credited towards PSLF. Borrowers should ensure that their loan information and employer certification is up to date. Those with other types of loans will have to consolidate their loans into the Direct Loan program first and then submit the PSLF form. Consolidation of loans, submission of PSLF forms, and other information about the PSLF program can be found by visiting [studentaid.gov/pslf](https://studentaid.gov/pslf).

NEA has partnered with Savi to help members navigate their student loans. Savi offers webinars as well as an online tool where members can input their loan information, and Savi will help them determine their eligibility for credit towards loan forgiveness. You can login or register for a Savi account by visiting [app.bysavi.com/account/login](https://app.bysavi.com/account/login). You can register to attend a Savi webinar by visiting [bit.ly/savievents](https://bit.ly/savievents).

NJEA's Organizational Development consultant Andrew Lewis also offers monthly Degrees, Not Debt Webinars. You can register by visiting [njea.org/dndwebinars](https://njea.org/dndwebinars). These programs are free for NEA-NJEA members.

The USED predicts that over 550,000 borrowers will benefit from this waiver, with the average person receiving credit for 23 additional payments towards their loan forgiveness. Of those, the USED expects 22,000 borrowers to be immediately eligible for total loan forgiveness, and 27,000 borrowers to potentially qualify for \$2.82 billion in forgiveness if they certify additional periods of qualifying employment. Make sure to learn more about this temporary waiver and take any necessary action—you could be one of those borrowers! 🎓

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



# BUILDING CONNECTIONS WITH STUDENTS

BY MARGO GREENBAUM



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I believe that the majority of people who want to become teachers were inspired by teachers—either to be exactly like a certain teacher or to be the exact opposite. Many of us loved school and our teachers, administrators and coaches as they became our mentors, confidants and even friends. Many colleges highlight the connections that students have with their professors, especially in education programs.

I am a senior at my college, and have had a variety of professors, but one from my junior year stands out. She inspired me to continue my academics and achieve my goals. In that junior year, I sat down for my Clinical Practice 1 class. The professor walked in and captivated me from the start. Her positive energy, her love for education and her wealth of knowledge inspired me.

But more importantly, she cared about us. She didn't just know our names, she knew who we were, and she told us about herself. One day she got a haircut, and I concluded an email with, "P.S. I love your haircut." Soon enough, I was writing a P.S. in every email, updating her on my life, telling a joke, or giving another compliment.

I would have Zoom meetings and be nervous, but the good type of nervous, like when you're talking to a celebrity—at my school, she is a celebrity. Even though the conversations were short and to the point, her laughter and smile were welcoming, which is what I needed. I quickly changed her to my adviser and signed up for her fall class.

In September, we met in her office for the first time. We talked for two hours and a true connection formed. She became the adult at my college that I could lean on, laugh with, and talk to, the one who would support me but also give tough love. She quickly became that person and so much more.

We forget the importance of relationships for college students. We forget the need for connection, especially for education majors who are supposed to become those kinds of teachers for the students we will one day have in our own classrooms. These are challenging times, transitioning from the student to the teacher and for almost a year, playing both roles.

“

*We are told to keep in mind what our students are going through, the emotions that that they are having, and that they need a champion, but so many of us do not have our own champion.*

We are told to keep in mind what our students are going through, the emotions that that they are having, and that they need a champion, but so many of us do not have our own champion. I am lucky enough to have an adviser who is my champion.

As education majors or as students with a concentration in education, we need someone who will share their good and bad experiences in the classroom, someone who will push us through the hard times—and stop to ask us where we are from or if there is something we want them to know. Education majors need someone who will not just teach them, but guide them, support them, and look out for them.

I urge college professors to remember the importance of connections. Students are human; professors are human. There are studies that show connections in the classroom have positive effects. We should focus on what type of teacher we want to be and how we can ignite our best version for our students.

My Clinical Practice 1 professor, who later became my adviser for my entire senior year, modeled that for us. She is the type of professor and more importantly the type of person, more colleges need, and the champion more education majors would benefit from. 🐲

*Margo Greenbaum is a student at Stockton University and a member of NJEA Preservice.*

# Rainbow Connection features

## NJEA member Micah Gary-Fryer

By Kate Okeson with Amy Moran, Ph.D.



In this month's "Rainbow Connection," Amy spent time with Essex County's representative to the NJEA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee, Micah Gary-Fryer, discussing how he brings many facets of his identity to his pedagogy. Because there is so much more than can fit in this column, we invite you to spend a little more time with Gary-Fryer and check out companion artifacts and resources on this month's QR code.

### WHO IS MICAH GARY-FRYER?

He arrived in Willingboro as a 10-year-old boy in the summer of 1970 after having lived in Texas, Massachusetts, and Germany (twice!) with his military family. No longer on a military base, Gary-Fryer attended public school where he was bullied—by some students and even by teachers—for what they perceived as his femininity.

Unlike today, where we understand and affirm the range of gender identities and expressions of our students and colleagues, in the same state that now has some of the strongest laws against harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB) in the nation, no intervention was done to eliminate or curb the bullies' behaviors. Instead, to his great

shock and crushing disappointment, Gary-Fryer was transferred out of the class in which students were bullying him and placed in a class with a more experienced teacher with better behavior management skills.

This betrayal by his school community—and the rearrangement of the victim's circumstances, rather than the extinguishing of the bullies' behaviors—stays with Gary-Fryer to this day, informing him about schools as sites for social justice work.

Gary-Fryer's education in New Jersey didn't stop with his unfair treatment in fifth grade. Earning a bachelor's degree in sociology from Rutgers in 1984 where he was a fraternity member and a cheerleader, the course "Social Inequality" helped Gary-Fryer understand power dynamics among social groups in our nation and helped him understand possibilities for queer people. His Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in dance (1990), would launch the next phases of his career and would be the time in life when Gary-Fryer—then Michael David Gary—came out to himself as a gay man.

Later that year, Gary-Fryer formed his dance company, Acrodanse Theatre, which won the McDonald's Gospel Fest (also twice!) and joined the New Jersey Gay Men's Chorus, in which he sang for over a decade. His 1998 HIV+ diagnosis was a crushing blow, but he continued running his dance company until 2005. The next year, everything changed. *Use the QR code to read the rest!*

### BLACK HISTORY MONTH

For Gary-Fryer, the significance of Black History Month has changed over the years. Black History Month wasn't celebrated when he was in high school—which he reminds his students of—and it didn't make sense to him until the 1990s "when Afrocentrism finally became posh. Before that, it was considered radical."

As a child of the '60s, Micah remembers the rebellious fashions of a 'hippie nation'—the dashikis and bell bottoms—but didn't understand that when his dad returned from Vietnam and they were listening to Jimi Hendrix, the Supremes, and The

Jackson 5, that "we were living Black history!"

Certainly, Black power was there, but it seemed to be on the fringes of American culture. There were famous Black public figures such as Sydney Poitier and Diane Carroll, but it wasn't until the '90s that African garb was seen in churches, there were events centered on African American culture and heritage, and Kwanzaa became mainstream.

In the last five years or so, Gary-Fryer felt something telling him to rekindle the spirit of those who fell from HIV/AIDS. That was Black history that he was feeling called to portray. So in February of 2019, Gary-Fryer created a presentation for Essex County Education Association (ECEA) in which he presented himself as an HIV survivor, he paid homage to those who were lost, and he described how the Black community suffered—straight, cisgender and LGBTQIA+—from lack of support, medication, and other life-sustaining interventions. *See QR code for more!*

### INTERSECTIONS OF BLACK HISTORY AND QUEER VISIBILITY IN SCHOOLS

Once, Gary-Fryer recalls, only white, straight, cisgender culture determined what media was available. In the past, queers were always the joke. The role of "Geraldine" played by Flip Wilson, for example, gave audience members the excuse to laugh at queer culture. Queer culture was there, at that time, but not through a positive framing. What was shown on TV—mockery of femininity in people assigned male at birth—was played out in Gary-Fryer's life as a fifth-grader when his feminine-seeming mannerisms were considered to be out of line, but his tormentors' bullying wasn't.

Gary-Fryer feels—at this particular time in history—that the queer community is more adept at integrating its Black community members than the Black community is at integrating its queer members. Many groups are reaching to queer

**Black History = American History =  
LGBTQIA+ History!**

Use the QR code to see this month's listed resources!



## Yearbook Tips!

Are you involved in your school's GSA? Now is the time to **get queer content to your school's yearbook editors** to be included in this year's 2021-22 yearbook! Use the QR code for a how-to!

culture to learn from it and support its expansion. Black queer culture's history, theater, songs, and artists are bringing that intersection to the forefront—which Gary-Fryer relishes—but it needs to be intentionally manifested, he says. Fortunately, web-based and multimedia streaming allows us to take it into classrooms easily.

"The Laramie Project," though about the murder of a young white gay man in Wyoming, is ever-relevant, Gary-Fryer says. The people who murdered Matthew Shepard continue serving their consecutive life sentences. He seeks to teach students that doing harmful, stupid stuff will forever alter kids' lives, and that working to keep queer people safe and LGBTQIA+ liberation helps all of society.

## JUSTICE-CENTERED, INTERDISCIPLINARY CURRICULUM: SYNTHESIZING VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

In 2018, the third year of Trump's presidency and at a time when the Movement for Black Lives was coalescing around George Floyd's murder, Gary-Fryer perceived our culture as having elements of a ticking timebomb. Along with the theater teacher at his school, Brenda Pepper, (whom he considers his "work wife"), Gary-Fryer co-developed a course called "Integrated Arts for Social Justice" which took the best parts of their separate curricula and rewrote them to infuse a social justice lens.

Using lessons learned from participation in Poetry Out Loud (a national arts/poetry program that offers free educational materials and a dynamic recitation competition—in which Gary-Fryer's students frequently participate with rave reviews!) and NJPAC's "City Verses" (a program of workshops and performances that synthesize poetry and jazz), Gary-Fryer and Pepper asked students what they stand for. From there, students were asked to identify a movie based on that theme, which ranged from the Black experience, the Latinx experience, the LGBTQIA+ experience, women's issues, concerns that center on religion, and more. *Continued on QR code.*

## VISION FOR LGBTQIA+ PROGRESS IN NJ PUBLIC SCHOOLS

His generation, Gary-Fryer says, needs to leave young people something that empowers them to deepen and expand their potential for liberation. We need to lift young people by supporting them as they find their voices and provide them a platform for amplifying their messages.

Thanks to the LGBT curriculum inclusion mandate, teachers across content areas are charged with supporting queer youth by reflecting queer culture in their classes and giving queer students and their straight/cisgender peers the platform to try out new ideas.

Gary-Fryer also finds that the support of administrators in this work is invaluable. His own superintendent, James Pedersen, has been supportive of Gary-Fryer in crucial ways that also set the tone for school administrators and colleagues to share the queer-positive diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives that Gary-Fryer's pedagogy embodies. While the state's HIB laws are important for delineating what is (and is not) acceptable in schools, Gary-Fryer reiterates that local administration needs to recognize the nonnegotiable importance of supporting queer teachers and students. 🏳️‍🌈

## Visibility Matters - In Media!

See QR code for this month's book recommendations!



"Family is a part of my life, my queerness, my evolution." Gary-Fryer has been married to his husband John Gary-Fryer since 2015—the same year he earned his master's degree in divinity and queer theology at Drew Theological School in Madison, N.J.—and they are the adoptive parents of Malik, 24, whom they met in 2016. Micah and his family attend Green Pond United Methodist Church in Easton, Pennsylvania where he is an associate pastor.



Find additional resources and book titles through this "Rainbow Connection" QR code resource link.







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# CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE TEACHING IN OUR CLASSROOMS

BY DR. ANGELLO VILLARREAL



## Early Career Network

According to *US News & World Report*, in both 2020 and 2021, the state of New Jersey ranked number one in the public education system. But how can we support our students even more as our state is becoming more racially, ethnically and culturally diverse? How can New Jersey become a role model to other states in its

approaches to diversity and social justice?

As our classrooms become more diverse, we must acknowledge and embrace the rich cultural backgrounds of our students. Culturally responsive teaching encourages teachers to celebrate students' cultural and linguistic diversity (Barrett-Zahn, 2021) and can be applied across disciplines in the school (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

So, how can you use a culturally responsive approach in your school?

### BACKGROUND

As an educator, it is crucial to know your students' cultural background practices to better understand how a student may behave in the classroom. Issues may range from students not looking into someone's eyes out of respect to acknowledging that some students may have multiple generations of family members living with them at home, making it more challenging to do homework.

### COMMUNITY

Parents from different countries may see education differently from what teachers in U.S. typically expect. As Diane Staehr Fenner writes in *Advocating for English Learners: A Guide for Educators under the heading Educación vs. Educación*:

"For some Latino families, in particular, the idea of educación focuses more on a child's personal and moral development than on academics. These parents may see the direct impact of educación on the child's academic development. They may believe that raising their children with good manners and providing them with solid guidance results in good classroom behaviors, promoting higher academic achievement. However, some U.S. teachers might perceive Latino parents' focus more on the moral aspect as a lack of interest in their children's academic development." (Fenner, D.S., 2014.)

Acknowledging that some parents from different backgrounds may see education differently is critical. Working with the parents and their communities creates a better environment where students learn, prosper and feel safe.

### SAFETY

A safe environment must be one of the top priorities for any educator or leader who works with children. But being physically safe should not be the only aspect in which a child feels safe at school, for their mental health is also essential. Every student must feel safe in our schools regardless of gender, religion, skin color or language spoken at home.

### DIVERSITY

Just as we educators are not all the same, neither are all children. It should also be understood that

there are differences among students whose first language is not English. Considering just Hispanic/Latin cultures, you'll find that students from South America, the Hispanic Caribbean, and Central America are all different from one another, have different background knowledge, and perhaps do not even speak Spanish. The same goes for all students from different regions of the world: Asia, Africa, and Europe.

As an early career educator, you may be thinking how difficult it can be to learn about each of your students' backgrounds while trying to teach lessons, assess progress, keep students engaged and more. Just like working with any other student, it takes time and willingness to reach your students. Spending some time within the class to learn about their abilities, strengths, and interests creates a connection with students. Learning what they are passionate about can help create new content where students can make more connections and understand material better.

Be there for them, advocate for your students, and most importantly never measure their "intelligence" based upon the lack of English fluency. Recognize their bilingualism, or in many cases multilingualism, as an asset not a liability. 🌟

## More to learn

In preparing this article, I referenced these resources. I encourage you to read their work directly.

"Culturally responsive teaching," by Elizabeth Barrett-Zahn. *Science and Children*, March/April 2021. [bit.ly/3spl6fX](https://bit.ly/3spl6fX)

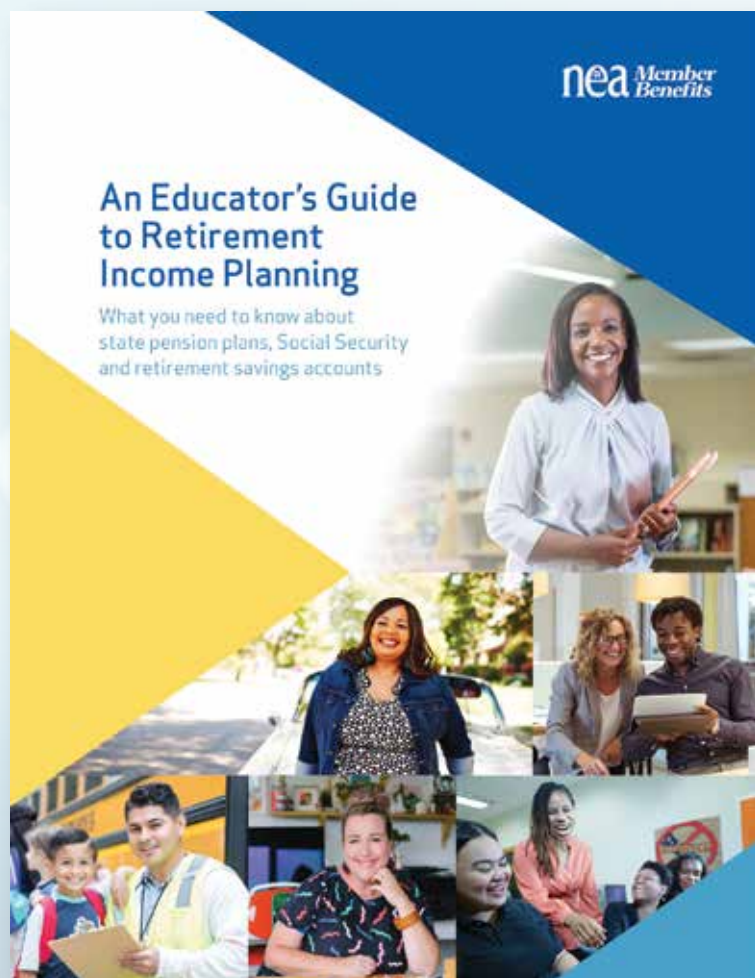
*Advocating for English Learners: A Guide for Educators*, by Diane Staehr Fenner. Corwin (2014). [bit.ly/30MRAFB](https://bit.ly/30MRAFB)

Raymond J. Wlodkowski and Margery B. Ginsberg, "A Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching," ASCD (1995). [bit.ly/3eeuH0V](https://bit.ly/3eeuH0V)

*Dr. Angello Villarreal is a teacher at Freehold Township High School and an adjunct professor at Monmouth University. Born and raised in Peru, Villarreal focuses his research and teaching on culturally responsive practices, culturalization, language acquisition and providing more equitable opportunities for all students. Villarreal is co-adviser to the Spanish Club and is implementing the project "Hidden Treasures" as part of a minigrant from the Social Justice Academy from Monmouth University. Villarreal earned his B.A. in Spanish from Montclair State University and is a Monmouth University graduate with an M.A.T. in Spanish, ESL, Bilingual/Bicultural Education and an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership. He can be found on Twitter using @AngelloVillarre.*

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4. You should now be on the ACCESS site.
5. First-time users will need to register with an email address and password.
6. If you are having trouble logging in, check that you have an email address on your NJEA Profile, which can be found on **njea.org**.
7. For other questions, call 866-245-5292.

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- M.A. in Curriculum and Instruction
  - ESL Certificate, Principal, Supervisor and TOSD Endorsement Options
- M.A. in Educational Administration  
(on campus and online)
  - Principal and Supervisor Certification
- M.A. in Higher Education (online)
- M.A. in Literacy Instruction  
(Reading Specialist Certificate)
- M.A. in Special Education (TOSD Endorsement, LDT-C Certification and ABA Course Option)
- Post-Baccalaureate Teacher Certification
- Post-Master LDT-C Certification
- Post-Master Principal Certification  
(on campus and online)
- Post-Master Reading Specialist Certification
- Post-Master School Administrator  
(on campus and online)
- Post-Master Supervisor Certification  
(on campus and online)
- English as a Second Language (ESL) Certification  
(online)
- Special Education Certification

**INFORMATION SESSION**  
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Home Security Sys.	888 995-2661	Solar Electricity	800-558-1920
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PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

## NJREA CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF SERVICE, ACTIVISM, EXCELLENCE

The New Jersey Retirees' Education Association (NJREA) has long been called the "daytime face of NJEA." NJREA members are available to take on tasks and responsibilities during the workday while actively employed NJEA members are occupied educating the next generation of New Jersey's public school success stories.

On Jan. 13, 2020, NJREA marked its 100th anniversary of advocating for retired, preservice, and currently employed NJEA members (also known as future retirees), as well as the students they serve. However, the pandemic changed everyone's plans, consequently, NJREA members will be celebrating this coming May.

On May 1, 2022, we expect more than 400 people will join NJREA's 100th Anniversary Celebration at the Grand Marquis in Old Bridge. There will be

food, live entertainment, and NJREA will honor as many as 80 members who are 100 years old or older. For more information, go to [njea.org/njrea](http://njea.org/njrea). Please note that attendees must show proof of vaccination and wear a mask.

### JOIN NJREA AS A LIFE MEMBER BEFORE RETIREMENT

Any actively employed certificated or educational support professional staff member who is eligible for a New Jersey state pension may join NJREA prior to retirement at the current lifetime dues rate. The active employee becomes a preretired lifetime member of NJREA, NEA-R, and a county retirees' education association (CREA) and begins to receive publications and information about retirement issues.

### GIVE THE GIFT OF NJREA MEMBERSHIP

Some local associations or friends of the retiree purchase memberships for retiring NJEA members. Gifting an NJREA membership is a huge thing! Local associations can do this to honor their retiring staff instead of giving them a plaque or clock. Children, grandchildren, friends can "gift" a membership for a relative, a colleague, a retired educator—especially for an elderly retiree on a fixed income who doesn't really need another sweater or flannel shirt.

For more details about this opportunity, and payment information, call the NJEA Membership Division at 609-599-4594, ext. 4123.

## HELP PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR LOVED ONES

### WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOUR PAYCHECK SUDDENLY STOPPED?

From your paycheck to your savings, NJEA wants you to help protect what's important to you.

Enroll in the only NJEA-endorsed Disability Insurance and Critical Illness Insurance plans, issued by **The Prudential Insurance Company of America (Prudential)**.



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To enroll, call your EIS account executive at 800-727-3414, Option 3, or visit [www.educators-insurance.com](http://www.educators-insurance.com).



For more information scan:



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.

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## THE BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP

When you join NJREA, you belong to one of the largest retired public school employee organizations in the nation as well as maintaining your membership with NJEA, NEA-Retired, and your county retired EA, which can be in the county in which you worked or in which you reside.

In addition, you will receive the *NJREA Newsletter*, an award winning quarterly publication with information that keeps you informed about your pension, medical benefits, and more. You will also receive the *NJEA Review*, which has a section on retiree issues every month, as well as the *NEA Today*, retired edition.

Most importantly, you will receive assistance from NJEA professional staff on pension and medical benefits questions, in addition to assistance on all retirement concerns. This service is only available to dues-paying NJREA members.

Members also receive:

- Personal Legal Services – free consultation and 30% discount on services
- Buyer's Edge, Inc. – guaranteed best prices negotiated on your behalf on major purchases
- NEA Members Insurance Trust – term life insurance
- Association sponsored auto and home insurance
- NJEA Member Discount Program
- Access Discounts – more than 315,000 discounts and counting
- Lowest prices on eyewear
- NJEA travel discounts
- NEA financial programs

## RESOURCES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS!

NJREA's webpage provides a multitude of valuable information for retired public school employees, from information about Medicare to tips on benefits coverage while traveling to assistance for survivors after the death of a member. One of the most frequently asked questions concerns the rules governing retired public school employees who would like to work or volunteer in New Jersey's public schools. The information in Working After Retirement provides many answers on post-retirement employment.

NJREA has compiled all the information you will need to make the right decisions to protect yourself and your pension.



## HOME BUYING HELPERS WEBINAR

Attend our NJEA Homebuying Helpers Webinar on March 9 and learn what to expect in your journey to homeownership. Use NJEA/NEA Member Benefits to make smart choices and save you money along the way!

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

## Around the counties

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

**CUMBERLAND COUNTY REA** will hold its winter meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, March 9 at the Greenview Inn at Eastlyn Golf Course in Vineland. Cost is \$35. To attend, call Irene Savicky at 856-863-8424 by Feb. 18.

**MIDDLESEX COUNTY REA** will hold a Member Benefits Fair on Thursday, March 10 at the Grand Marquis in Old Bridge. Cost is \$35. To attend, call Anne Chomko at [achomko@gmail.com](mailto:achomko@gmail.com).

**MONMOUTH COUNTY REA** will hold its spring meeting/luncheon on Tuesday, April 12 at Our House Restaurant in Farmingdale. Cost is \$34. RSVP to Sue Schrott at 732-995-7754 by April 1.

**MORRIS COUNTY REA** will hold its winter meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, March 9 will be held at the Birchwood Manor in Whippany. Steve Eugene from NEA Member Benefits will discuss Cyber Security. Cost is \$40 and \$45 for guest. To attend, call John Beekman at 973-514-1080 by March 1.

**OCEAN COUNTY REA** will hold its winter meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, March 10 at the Clarion Hotel in Toms River, celebrating the "Almost 65th Anniversary." Cost is \$28. To attend, call Janice Sovinee at 732-477-1711 by March 2.

**PASSAIC COUNTY REA** will hold its meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, March 23 at The Brownstone in Paterson. Meeting will include officer elections. Cost is \$35. To attend, call Kitty Sausa at 201-445-7577 by March 18.

The **SALEM COUNTY REA** will hold its winter meeting/luncheon on Monday, Feb. 28 at St. John's Episcopal Church in Salem. Member benefits will be the topic. The cost is \$17. To attend, call Rosemma Ward at 856-467-0782.

**SUSSEX COUNTY REA** will hold its spring meeting/luncheon on April 4. Topic and location to be determined, pending COVID-19 status. More information will follow.

**WARREN COUNTY REA** will hold its spring meeting/luncheon on April 6 at Hawk Pointe in Washington Township. Cost is \$35. To attend, email Deb Polhemus at [DPolhemus4@gmail.com](mailto:DPolhemus4@gmail.com) by March 26.



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UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE STUDIES

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- Student Affairs & College Counseling

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- Initial Teaching Certification (M.A.T.)
- Literacy
- Master of Education (M.Ed.)

### 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

- Supervisor
- Principal/Supervisor
- Principal/Supervisor/School Administrator
- Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

### Speech-Language Pathology

*Many online program options available.*

**LEARN MORE: [MONMOUTH.EDU/ED-INFO](https://monmouth.edu/ed-info)**



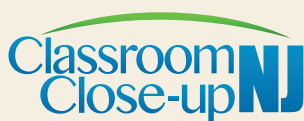


CLASSROOM CLOSE-UP



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

Fords Middle School students in Woodbridge Township learn best by doing, tinkering, and playing. The Nature-Based Resource Center combines in-class instruction with hands-on learning outside the classroom. A team of teachers were awarded a \$10,000 NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Grant to engage all members of the community by providing a learning environment that fosters interdependence, embraces change, and values diversity. You can view the segment at [classroomcloseup.org/falcons-forest](http://classroomcloseup.org/falcons-forest).



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

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





## STAFF NEWS

## HIRES AND PROMOTIONS



NJEA welcomes **NINA GARRETT**, who joined association staff on Nov. 16 as a secretary in the Region 1 office in Galloway Township. She previously worked for Atlantic City Public Schools for 20 years: 15 years as the Title I Parent Resource Center liaison and five years as an administrative assistant to the principal at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. School Complex. As an active member in her local, ACEA, Garrett was a FAST coordinator, served as the corresponding secretary, vice president of non-certified staff and sat on the Negotiations Committee. She is a 2013 recipient of the MLR Image Award, 2014 graduate of the NJEA Bolivar L. Graham Practicing Apprentice Program, 2015 Atlantic County ESP of the Year, and a 2015 graduate of NJEA's Union School program. Garrett is a proud graduate of Atlantic City High School. She lives in Egg Harbor Township with her husband, Jelani. They have four daughters, a son and two grandchildren.



NJEA welcomes **DAWN VITELLA**, who joined association staff on Nov. 16 as a secretary in the Region 8 office in Trenton. Since 2011, she had been employed by the Mercer County Clerk's Office, performing administrative and support duties in the Land Records/Elections/Passports Division. A graduate of Stei- nert-Hamilton High School East, Vitella lives in Trenton with her husband, Jim. They are the proud parents of daughter Krista and son-in-law Roberto, and grandchildren Alyssa, Luciano and Liliana.



NJEA welcomes **LISA LOGAN-LEACH**, who joined association staff on Jan. 3 as a secretary in the Communications Division. An NJEA member since 2012, Logan-Leach was previously employed as a paraprofessional, first in the Plainfield School District and later in Montclair. In both the Plainfield and Montclair education associations she served in many capacities, such as building rep, chairperson of the Candidate Screening Committee, chairperson of Pride/FAST, and others. Representing NJEA, Logan-Leach has served as an NEA RA delegate, attended the NEA Northeast Leadership Conference, and is active in the NJEA Members of Color Network. She was also elected to the Plainfield Board of Education for several terms and had served as board president for one of those terms. Prior to her career in education, Lisa worked in corporate administrative roles, including as chief of staff-executive administrative assistant for former state Sen. Byron Baer and Assemblyman Jerry Green. Logan-Leach earned a Bachelor of Arts in Broadcast Communication from St. Augustine's University. She is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and Eastern Star.



NJEA welcomes **CHRISTOPHER AIKIN**, who joined association staff on Jan. 3 as a field organizing specialist assigned to the UniServ Central zone. Aikin brings many years of union experience in organizing, political and legislative work. He was previously employed by the Writers Guild of America, East, as a senior field representative/lead organizer. Aikin earned his Bachelor of Arts in American Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. He did graduate work in public policy and nonprofit management at New York University-Wagner School and in labor studies and political economy from City University of New York. Aikin lives in Asbury Park with his wife, Christine.



NJEA welcomes **FATIMAH HAYES**, who joined association staff on Jan. 3 as a UniServ field rep in the Region 2 office in Mullica Hill. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Hayes was a teacher in Pennsauken. She was first a middle school history teacher and, for the last two years, had worked in the district's alternative education program. She is the immediate past president of the Pennsauken Education Association and served as chair if the NJEA Women in Education Committee. Hayes had been a UniServ consultant assigned to the Region 3 office in Voorhees since 2019. She holds a master's degree in in school counseling from Wilmington University and a bachelor's degree in history education from Rutgers University-Camden. Hayes lives in Lawnside with her fiancé, Sha'ronn Baker. Fatimah is the mother of a 27-year-old daughter, Nadirah, and bonus mom to two sons, Sha'ronn Jr., 9, and Za'Kye, 15.



NJEA welcomes **MARIO MONTANERO**, who joined association staff on Jan. 3 as a UniServ field rep in the Region 1 office in Galloway. Montanero has spent 30 years in the classroom. For the last 20 years, he was employed by the Somers Point School District as a technology, STEAM, financial literacy, and gifted and talented teacher. Prior to that, he was a technology teacher for six years in North Wildwood Public Schools and a math, science, and business teacher for four years at Holy Spirit High School. At Somers Point, Montanero served as a local president, LAT chairperson and negotiations team member and chairperson. He was also a union representative and served on the negotiating teams of the North Wildwood Education Association and the Holy Spirit High School's Catholic Teachers Union. Montanero had served as a UniServ consultant since 2017. He holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from Temple University and master's degree in instructional technology from Richard Stockton University. He lives in Villas.

# FEBRUARY & *beyond*

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

<b>FEB</b> <b>02</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY</b> Executive Committee meeting	<b>MAR</b> <b>18</b>	<b>FRIDAY</b> Executive Committee County Presidents Council meetings	<b>APR</b> <b>08/09</b>	<b>FRI &amp; SAT</b> Higher Education Conference
<b>FEB</b> <b>25/26</b>	<b>FRI &amp; SAT</b> Winter Leadership Conference-North	<b>MAR</b> <b>19</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b> Delegate Assembly meeting	<b>APR</b> <b>09/10</b>	<b>SAT &amp; SUN</b> Higher Education Collective Bargaining Summit
<b>MAR</b> <b>04/05</b>	<b>FRI &amp; SAT</b> NJEA Northwest Organizing Institute	<b>APR</b> <b>01/02</b>	<b>FRI &amp; SAT</b> Winter Leadership Conference-Central	<b>APR</b> <b>30</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b> NJEA Preservice Conference

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

## DEADLINES

**2/11** Winter Leadership Conference-Central  
Event date: April 1-2

### Employment Opportunities at NJEA

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

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



## Save the Dates

**Higher Education Conference**  
April 8-9

**Higher Education Collective Bargaining Summit**  
April 9-10

Both events will be held at the same venue in Princeton, N.J.

See Page 8 and the March 2022  
NJEA Review for more information.



# Students deserve the truth

“

*If we can't come together and agree that truth exists, we're doomed to repeat the tragedy that happened in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election.*

At the time of this writing, the nation is remembering—and arguing over—how to recognize the horrific insurrection that took place at United States Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021. Thousands of angry citizens sought to overthrow the rule of law and throw out fair and honest election results by storming the U.S. Capitol, breaking through windows and doors, leaving people wounded and dead in their wake. They did so in the name of former President Donald Trump, whose words incited the deadly riot.

And while it should have ended there, it hasn't.

Now, as a nation, we're left trying to navigate how to deal with the events of that notorious day, and more pressingly, how we teach students about those events and their implications for our collective future. Perhaps most alarming, the partisan divide has worsened since the attack.

That's where we come in.

As educators, we must commit to one simple yet profoundly important task when remembering and learning from the events of Jan. 6, 2021: we must teach the truth.

At age-appropriate levels throughout the curricula, we need to work with students to understand and process the events of the day within the proper context. Without imposing personal political beliefs, we must educate our children about the objective, nondebtable happenings of that day. We must explain that the people who attacked the Capitol that day were doing so with the hopes of overturning the results of the election because the sitting president of the United States encouraged them to do so. We must ensure they understand that the election was fair and honest, and that there have been no credible cases of widespread voter fraud, as many have claimed.

We must further educate our students on the bedrock principles that have kept our nation moving forward since its founding in 1776. Chief among those principles that have guided our nation through its many faults and imperfections

is the right to free and fair elections.

So much of the work to prevent future events that resemble Jan. 6, 2021, relies on a greater emphasis on civics education in our public schools.

Through our votes, we, as citizens, elect people whom we believe will carry our nation in the direction that aligns most with our views. But when elections don't go our way, we are on the same team as our political opposites at the end of the day. We must not let our students fall into the trap of believing our elections are fraudulent or invalid because they didn't go our way. We must not let our students view their political opposites as enemies.

Even when it's challenging, we must teach our students to accept the results of elections. This isn't to suggest we should teach our students to passively accept the status quo, for there are many problems within our nation's policies, laws and bureaucracies that perpetuate inequities and must be addressed. Instead, it suggests that ways to address these problems are through intentional participation in democracy.

We must work to ensure our students understand that democracy is participatory. And

to be engaged citizens, we must vote. Voting is the bedrock of our democracy. And when a few bad apples try to overturn the results of our votes, it threatens to erode our students' faith in the system and, with it, their willingness to participate in our democracy through the act of voting.

We can't let this happen.

And it's not just the burden of social studies teachers, either. All educators bear a responsibility to talk about the events of that fateful day—as well as many other topics that are often wrongfully painted as “uncomfortable”—in truthful and meaningful ways. However unpleasant it makes some feel, students deserve access to our nation's real and honest history.

And we must speak up for our colleagues when they provide access to that history. School libraries and school librarians have come under attack as guardians of the truth. It is everyone's responsibility to protect our libraries from censorship and protect our librarians from personal attacks for doing their jobs well.

We can build a better, brighter, and more inclusive future through a deep and singular understanding of our collective past. This is not a time for educators, or anyone, to be casting blame on any individual for any thing that's happened. We must look past blame; we must look toward understanding.

Because if we can't come together and agree that truth exists, we're doomed to repeat the tragedy that happened in the aftermath of the 2020 presidential election. The very nature of elections means that someone will win, and someone will lose. If we can't, or if we're unable to, come together and agree that the results are the results even when we don't like them, then we're doomed to fade into an unrecognizable nation who values political power over democracy and reality. We can't let this happen. Our students deserve better, and to ensure they have better, our students deserve the truth. 🌟

# Exceptional Children Conference 2022

Creating Learning Environments for ALL Students

**Saturday**

April 30, 2022

**Hyatt Regency New Brunswick**

2 Albany Street,  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901

## Keynote: LeDerick Horne

*Artist of the Spoken Word, Advocate for People with Disabilities, Ambassador to All*

Diagnosed with a learning disability in the third grade, LeDerick Horne defies all labels. He's a dynamic spoken-word poet, a tireless advocate for all people with disabilities, an inspiring motivational speaker, and a bridge-builder between learners and leaders across the U.S. and around the world who serves as a role model for all races, genders, and generations.

In addition to students and educators, he regularly addresses an array of academic, government, social, and business groups, including appearances at the White House, the United Nations, Harvard University, Mercedes-Benz Fashion Week, the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, and departments of education in states across the nation.

### COST:

**Early-bird special (register by March 11):**

\$30 for NJEA members

\$15 for NJEA Preservice members

**Regular registration (deadline is April 15):**

\$60 for NJEA members

\$30 for NJEA Preservice members

*Registration fee includes program, continental breakfast and lunch.*

*The conference provides five hours of professional learning credit.*

### PREREGISTRATION IS REQUIRED:

Register online **ONLY\*** at [njea.org/ecc2022](https://njea.org/ecc2022)

\*NJEA Preservice, purchase order, and non-NJEA member registrations are not available online and must be placed with the conference registrar.

Nonmember registrations, if available, will be at the full conference cost.

Registrations are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. No on-site registration.

If you have a special physical, communication, dietary, or other disability-related need that may require assistance or accommodations to permit or facilitate your attendance/participation in the conference please contact the conference registrar.

We will ensure the health and safety of participants by applying protocols consistent with CDC recommendations at the time of the event.

**Conference registrar:** Brielle Allison, [ballison@njea.org](mailto:ballison@njea.org) or 609-310-4259

## Conference Schedule:

**7:30 – 9 a.m.**

Registration and  
continental breakfast

**9 – 10:30 a.m.**

Welcome and keynote  
presentation

**10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

Breakout Session I

**12:30 – 1:15 p.m.**

Lunch / Member Networking

**1:15 – 3:15 p.m.**

Breakout Session II



Bring your innovative ideas to life with an

# NJEA HIPPI GRANT

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Frederick L. Hipp  
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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](https://njea.org/Hipp) for a grant application and tips for applying.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE IS MARCH 1, 2022.**