Maurice “Maury” Koffman has joined NJEA as a UniServ higher education field representative in the Region 29 office.

Since 2008, Maury served as the full-time release local president of the 2,900-member Michigan State University APA. While at MSU, Maury was the chief negotiator, contract administrator, and chief grievance officer. He developed a local organizing program to sign up new hires, mobilize activists, and enhance member recruitment and retention. He also co-chaired a wage and health care agreement representing 5,400 members in eight unions.

In the Michigan Education Association, Maury assisted universities and community college locals to increase member political action, develop labor coalitions, and create higher ed specific trainings.

Nationally, Maury served on the NEA Executive Committee as a strong voice for higher ed, assisted higher ed locals across the country, and testified as a higher ed expert in the Maryland General Assembly. Encouraging greater inclusion and diversity, Maury chaired the NEA’s women and minorities leadership training programs from 2014 to 2017.

A licensed attorney, Maury holds a Juris Doctor in public law and regulation and a bachelor’s degree in international relations from Michigan State University.

Do your students enjoy the research/writing process? Do they feel challenged, or merely confused? Do they seem to enjoy the three-proof method of arguing a point? If you answered “no,” then here’s another approach – one that keeps everyone intrigued and results in readable, interesting papers where the students’ opinions and thoughts share equal space with hard evidence.

Using a periodical database, (in my classes the focus is on The New York Times, but you could use any reliable source) the students begin by searching and finding a particular news item, letter-to-the-editor, editorial, or OP-ED column that I have chosen. Once found, they read the item through carefully, then go back and identify three or four parts they wish to comment on.

After fully naming the writer, the students quote some part of the source-item, then reacts to it by agreeing, disagreeing, asking questions – whatever. I encourage an equal balance between the excerpt and the reaction. Then another excerpt is shown, and again reacted to. In each case, the name of the writer is repeated (last name only, now, after the first mention of it).

These interactions result in a page or two for that one source-article. Then on to another item, where the finding/reading/reacting process is repeated, keeping the author’s name in the reader’s eye. The students stay on one article at a time – there is no “sauntering” among various source-items.

After the first two assigned source-items, students try a keyword search to find mainly opinion pieces, where columnists discuss the issue or problem that is the focus of the assigned topic. Again, excerpt and react.

Once the required number of sources has been evaluated this way, students edit their entire output. Removing individual headers, the parts link together like a string of pearls. They write transition sentences to logically connect the various reactions.

They next compose an opening page, beginning with a one-paragraph description of something happening that illustrates what the paper is about – a bit of creative writing – ideally ending with a question that frames the issue. The answer to that question becomes the thesis of the paper, often stated as a call to action. “We must do more to reduce the influence of our addiction to screens.”

A paragraph or two may follow this, providing background information that any reader might need to fully understand the thrust of the argument. The excerpting/reacting comes next, beginning with any...

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When was the last time you reflected on the specifics that brought you into your union? Could it have been getting a raise, receiving a promotion, achieving tenure or an award? Or was it the great work of your dean, the provost, the chancellor or department chair? Or were you denied tenure, treated differently, reassigned, bullied, or not feeling respected? Or was your first introduction to your union when colleagues stopped by to introduce themselves and invite you to a meeting or asked how the association can support you and your career and make sure you knew you had a place to be? All of these are some of the many ways we enter into a public relationship with our associations – ultimately, one person likely made a difference in how you encountered NJEA.

My name is Nilka Julio, an organizer with NEA on assignment to NEA’s Human and Civil Rights department. I have been working with NJEA on a strategic initiative to manifest racial, social, and economic justice. In order to understand the work and to facilitate the conversation, I spoke with many people to hear their stories. One of them is Mecheline Farhat, Professor of Criminal Justice at Bergen Community College. Her story below is why it is important to create the infrastructure where everyone can belong. This is her story.

“In 2014, when I was in my fourth year as a tenure-track Professor of Criminal Justice at Bergen Community College, I became pregnant with my second child. I was surprised and excited to be pregnant again but that quickly turned into fear and anxiety. When I gave birth to my first daughter in 2013, I had been able to continue working. This afforded me the ability to provide for my family. In 2014, the college had a change of leadership. While I was excited to be able to once again fulfill duties to the college and care for my growing family, I learned that the new administration, led by a woman president, was going to deny female faculty the ability to arrange and choose how and when they constructed their leave. I was scared and panicked and did not know what to do. I was not involved with my local, and like, many did not quite fully understand, nor appreciate, what they did.

My association leadership put me in contact with NJEA UniServ Field Rep Ron Topham. Ron explained to me my rights, my options, and how “maternity” (which is really disability) and family leave work in New Jersey. I decided in the end to not divulge to anyone that I was pregnant and worked with my division dean to have a teaching schedule of online courses. When I had my daughter, the administration insisted that I obtain a physician’s note stating that I was fit for duty. My local leadership supported me and my rights were affirmed. If it was not for my local and NJEA I would not have known my rights and how to advocate for myself. It was this experience, among others, that showed me the value of unions. At that point, I decided to become involved in order to assist and advocate for others who may not be able or prepared to do so themselves.”

History shows that, to win, we have to know our purpose – why we exist and why our association matters in different points of our lives. We have to understand the connective tissues of labor and racial justice. We have to understand that a seminal event happened in 2018 – the Supreme Court’s Janus decision, which was a 100-year-plus goal of Vance Muse that came true. As Vance Muse expressly stated, the intent of “Right-to-Work” (RTW) laws was racist and designed to maintain the color lines. RTW is here; now what? We have to renew and revisit our direction, our purpose, our mission, and our why. We have to spend the time to reclaim and respond to the new external conditions.

It is that simple… be-long. BE in it now and work for the LONG game. That is your mission, your now, your vision, and your future. As leaders, you do not want to and you do not need to do it alone.

What does it look like when our faculty and staff workforce can interact in ways where we see one another and all that we bring, so we can establish a shared purpose that could possibly outweigh the systems and structures that are set up to keep us apart? Can you co-create the space within your association, with our members and potential members, with your students – from young adults to lifelong learners?

There is no doubt that higher education members and staff are poised to play a critical role in the lives of people; you can count on it.

Sharing our values as union members & educators
by Sean M. Spiller, NJEA VP

Last fall, NJEA received a $270,000 NEA media grant to promote both community colleges and teacher diversity. For NJEA, these two priorities go hand-in-hand. We have an exceptional amount of talent in this state, and our community colleges are excellent incubators for that talent. In addition, studies have shown that educators in New Jersey are primarily white and female, and that we have a teacher shortage. This is the perfect opportunity to expand our outreach to talented students of color and encourage them to consider pursuing a career in education. What better way to start on that path than at their local community college?

NJEA’s commitment to social, racial, economic, and educational justice is longstanding. But it has been reinvigorated by an organizational effort to address inequality more thoughtfully and deliberately. To that end, NJEA has been working with NEA Organizing Specialist Nilka Julio on these issues. You may have seen Julio speak at the NJEA Higher Education luncheon at the 2019 Convention and her column appears in this newsletter.

Through this work, NJEA is committed to sharing our values and our mission as educators and union members: to advance and protect the rights, benefits, and interests of members, and promote a quality system of public education for all students. Thank you for all that you do to advance that mission every day.
The next time you’re in the car turn up the radio and be on the lookout for roadside digital billboards. You don’t want to miss NJEA’s latest radio advertisements and statewide billboard campaign promoting the quality and value of our community colleges.

Last fall, NJEA received a $270,000 NEA Media grant to promote both community colleges and teacher diversity. The grant program is intended “to advance the cause of public education and publicize the role of the Association and its affiliates in improving the quality of public education.”

“The state’s community colleges offer robust, high quality course offerings that equal those offered at many of our four-year institutions,” noted NJEA Director of Communications Steve Baker. “With the astronomical costs of four-year colleges, directing students to begin their higher education at our community colleges makes perfect sense both academically and financially. This also ties in well to our teacher diversity campaign. Community colleges reach a wide range of students and give them an opportunity to explore a wide array of career options, including teaching.”

Radio advertisements began in December and the statewide digital billboard campaign launched soon after. The billboard message reads “NJ’s Community Colleges: Start your Success Story” and directs viewers to njea.org/highered. This section of the website includes community college resources, helps users to find their local college, and features videos spotlighting community college success stories.

In November, NJEA interviewed several teachers and educational support professionals who are community college graduates. They were asked about their educational journey and how community college helped them achieve their career goals. They were also asked to share their thoughts and experiences as educators to recruit high quality students, particularly those of color, to teaching careers. According to a 2017 Brookings Institute report, fewer than 20 percent of teachers are minorities nationwide, compared with more than half of students.

These interviews are being used to create web videos and ads that will be shared through social media and a web advertising campaign. The interviews may also be used in a future next round of radio ads. The web advertising campaign will target these community college ads to parents and high school students.

Another Way to Teach
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source the students choose to present first. A brief closing paragraph ends the argument by restating the thesis and reminding the reader what has been proven. A “Works Cited” page ends the paper, giving complete long-form citations for all sources used.

What about internal cites? None is needed, as in each case the students have named the writer, which is all the reader needs to find that item in the works cited page.

So we write the body of the paper as we go along, week by week, not worrying about the thesis until the end, when the students are well informed on the issue and can easily answer the question “What can you argue that all your evidence will support?” That assertion of the student’s own point of view becomes the paper’s thesis.

I’ve been teaching our Research & Writing course at Brookdale Community College for many years. The difficulty I always encountered was that students often didn’t see the need to read anything all the way through, but rather went cherry-picking data and quotes from sources they found. It was then difficult to organize since the information had been gleaned so randomly.

The beauty of the approach I am advocating is that it solves that problem. Students read each item carefully, since they know they will have to select some parts of it to excerpt and react to. When you have to react, it helps to know what you are talking about.

Another advantage to this approach is that everybody can do it. Whether a weak writer or one who writes beautifully, if students can read and comprehend the reporting, they can produce a wonderful document that is informative, persuasive, interesting, and which satisfies the requirements of MLA citation style. As one student told me in his end-of-term feedback, if the students meet weekly deadlines for a couple of reactions due at each session, the paper almost seems to write itself.

What more could I want?
If you would like to submit an article for the Fall 2020 issue of the HE News, submission deadline is August 1, 2020 to reg29_Higher_Ed@njea.org

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NJREA: Investing in your future
by Judy Perkins, president, New Jersey Retirees’ Education Assn.

For active higher education members considering retirement, make sure you join the New Jersey Retirees’ Education Association (NJREA), the only organization that represents retired NJEA members. NJREA’s power is in the advocacy of its members, and it’s that collective power which helped the organization celebrate its 100th anniversary this past January.

Standing up for ourselves – In today’s economic climate, there are those who feel your hard-earned pension and health benefits are entitlements that should be reduced. In 2018, NJEA/NJREA successfully lobbied and advocated to keep higher education employees in the School Employees’ Health Benefits Plan (SEHBP). Talking to legislators about the impact of increased medical insurance and the loss of the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) is an activity NJREA members regularly conduct.

Benefits of membership – As an NJREA member, you also belong to NJEA, NEA-Retired, and a retiree association in the county from which you retired (CREA). CREA meetings include up-to-date information on our pension and medical insurance and the opportunity to speak to an NJEA staff person who can answer specific concerns. NJREA members continue to receive the monthly NJEA Review, the quarterly NJREA Newsletter, the bi-annual NJEA Higher Education Newsletter and a CREA newsletter – all of which feature articles on Medicare and Social Security and how they impact retired New Jersey public employees. Additionally, NJREA and CREA are involved in philanthropic activities including food and clothing collections, assistance to students with medical needs, and, of course, awarding community college and university scholarships. Plus, in addition to retaining any NEA insurance purchases, you’re eligible for the same NJEA member benefits you now enjoy.

Membership dues – The NJREA membership year runs from September 1 to August 31. A retiree may be an annual or lifetime member. Based on the county of retirement, 2019-2020 annual dues are $91-$100. Lifetime dues are $1,250-$1,375 and can be paid in five installments after retirement. Like to plan ahead? Pre-retirement lifetime membership is also an option and can be paid in 10 installments prior to retirement.

Invest in your security – Most importantly, as an NJREA member, you can phone NJEA headquarters to get immediate assistance should you have problems with your pension or health benefits. Questions about working after retirement and assistance to surviving spouses/partners is always available to NJREA members.

How to join – Call NJEA Membership at 609-599-4561, ext. 4123, and join today.

SAVE THE DATE
• Nov. 5-6, 2020 – Higher Education at NJEA Convention