

# REVIEW

JUNE  
2022  
njea.org



*an education and advocacy resource*



## *Triumph over trauma and ACEs*

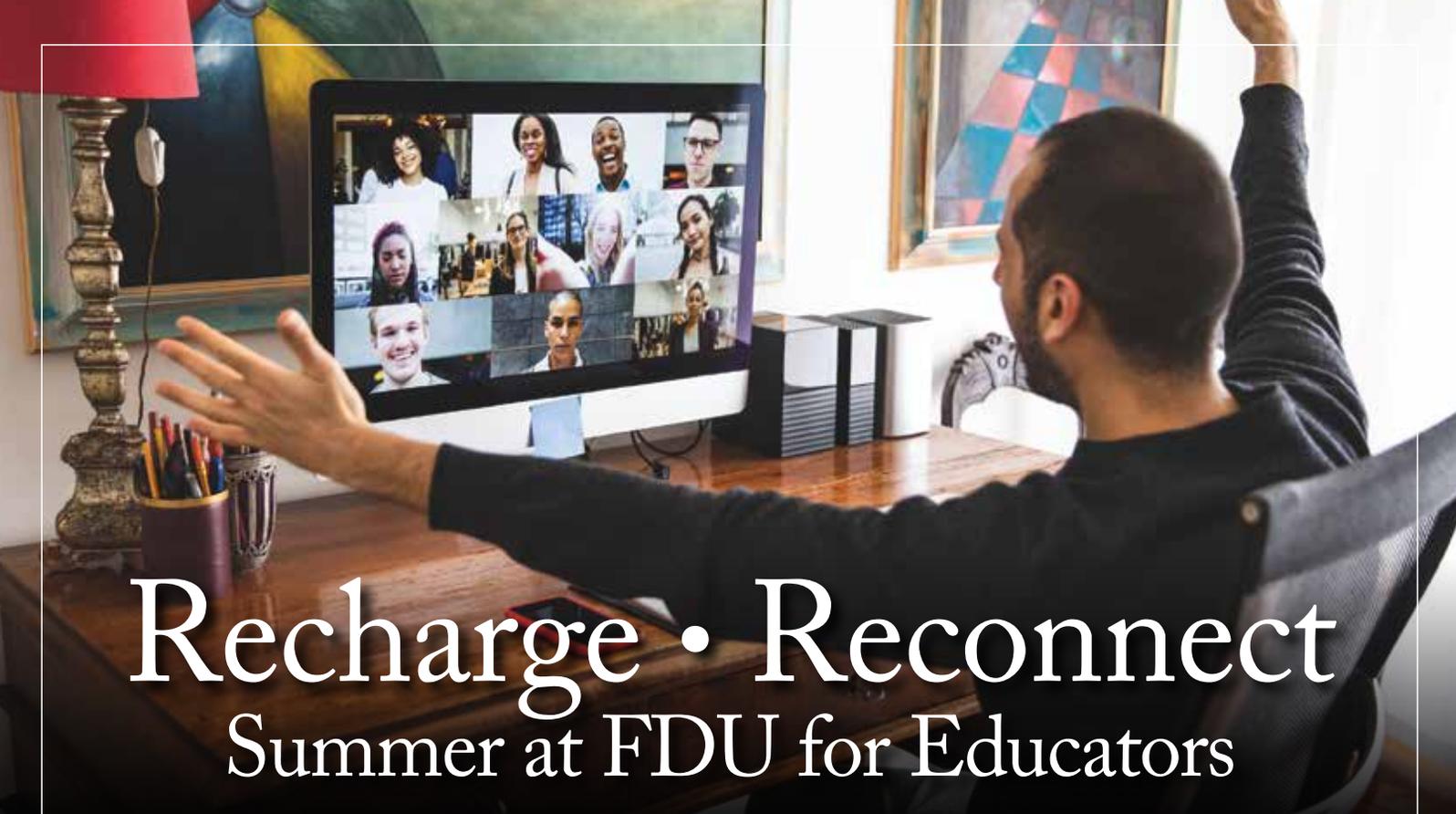
**24** TRIUMPH OVER TRAUMA  
AND ACES

**28** WHEN THE TRUTH  
MATTERS

**30** TALES OF A (THIRD &)  
FOURTH GRADE READER

**34** THE INTERSECTION OF  
ART AND BUSINESS

**38** PREJUDICE & PRIDE  
PODCAST



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## Walkkill Valley “passes it along” to help Ukraine

Students in special education teacher Karen Carter’s language learning disability (LLD) class joined “Pass it Along,” a volunteer group at Walkkill Valley Regional High School in Hamburg to gather items for a humanitarian effort to aid Ukraine. Pass It Along is affiliated with Project Self-Sufficiency, a nonprofit organization serving individuals and families in the Sussex, Hunterdon, Warren and Morris counties.

Through early April, students accepted donations such as hygiene products, first-aid kits, baby wipes and diapers, and other supplies. Members of Pass It Along and the LLD class organized the collected items, then packed and labeled the boxes to be donated.

The items collected were delivered to the Ukrainian Cultural Center in Whippany, from where they were taken to a shipping center. The supplies will ultimately arrive in Poland to help with the humanitarian effort.

# FEATURES



## 24 | TRIUMPH OVER TRAUMA AND ACES

The effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and the behaviors that come from traumas can be reversed and improved through healing-centered engagement strategies. A statewide program, initiated in 2021, to introduce a healing centered-engagement model to address ACEs and trauma-informed practices was piloted in 26 schools. This year, the program has expanded to 60 New Jersey schools that are currently undergoing training.

BY DANIEL HIGGINS



## 30 | TALES OF A (THIRD AND) FOURTH GRADE READER

Sparking a love of reading at any age is valuable, but navigating a pandemic, technology issues, economic disadvantages and a return to in-person instruction that left students struggling, Barnegat third-grade teacher Kerinn Ruthven and fourth grade teacher Kimberly Cote knew they needed to be creative, innovative and consistent if they were going to get their students on the right page.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



## 28 | WHEN THE TRUTH MATTERS

With the arrival of a new superintendent in 2019, staff in the Lopatcong School District in Warren County endured countless incidents of unprofessional behavior and administrative abuse. The members of the Lopatcong Education Association, led by their courageous president, Sonnie Hall, and vice president, Amy Harmon, spoke their truth to a board of education that initially did not want to hear it. Working with parents and the community, LEA stood strong to protect its members.

BY CHRISTY KANABY



## 34 | THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND BUSINESS

The Bridging the Gap program at Hunterdon County Polytech Career and Technical High School links art students with mentors from area Rotary clubs. Through that partnership, students learn the practical skills they need to take themselves seriously as artists and business owners.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



## 38 | PREJUDICE & PRIDE PODCAST

Students at Hillsborough High School are demonstrating for their classmates how to discuss race and ethnicity and break the cycle of racism. Through a semimonthly podcast named Prejudice & Pride, they discuss a broad range of issues and present a diversity of viewpoints.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY

# COLUMNS

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 7**

*Transition and change*

**THE ADVOCATE 8**

*Know. Lead. Act.*

**THE BULLETIN BOARD 11**

*Cool stuff to check out*

**THE NJEA REPORT 12**

*Education in the news*

**THE LAW AND YOU 23**

*50th anniversary of Title IX*

**HEALTH AND SAFETY 42**

*Document, analyze, prevent*

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 44**

*Your summer reading list*

**TOOLBOX 46**

*A daily digital check-in*

**EARLY CAREER 47**

*First five years podcast*

**RAINBOW CONNECTION 48**

*LGBTQIA+ issues in our schools*

**SPEAK OUT 50**

*edTPA and student teaching*

**SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY 52**

*Workshops and conferences*

**MEMBER BENEFITS 55**

*Get your money's worth*

**RETIRED MEMBERS 57**

*News and events*

**STAFF NEWS 58**

*Hires and promotions*

**CLASSROOM CLOSE-UP 59**

*Relationships beyond classroom*

**COMING UP 61**

*What's next at NJEA*

**FINAL EXAM 62**

*Using your voice*

# The number \$54,620

New Jersey maintains the highest average starting teacher salary among the 50 states. Nine of every 10 New Jersey school districts pay a starting salary of at least \$50,000.



Source: NEA's Rankings & Estimates report ([NEA.org/educatorpay](http://NEA.org/educatorpay)) and NJEA Research and Economic Services Division.



## GOOD NEWS

**New Jersey maintains one of the highest graduation rates.**

Ours is one of the top two states in the nation in the percentage of students graduating high school.

Source: Education Week. Quality Counts 2021: Chances for Success. January 2021.



## On the cover



Jennifer Ayling and her students at Carroll Robbins Elementary School in Trenton check out their school garden. A statewide program to introduce a healing centered-engagement model to address ACEs and trauma-informed practices is being piloted in more than 60 New Jersey schools. Robbins Elementary is one of those schools.

PHOTO BY  
Jennifer Cohn Marsh

# REVIEW



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# PRESIDENT'S *Message*

## *Another year of transition and change*

June is a unique month for educators; as we complete another school year, we celebrate our students as they embark on new chapters in their lives. Some of them are advancing to new grade levels or new school buildings, and some are graduating and moving on to new challenges in life. We carry our students with us in our memories and our hearts, just as they remember us and the impact that we have had on them.

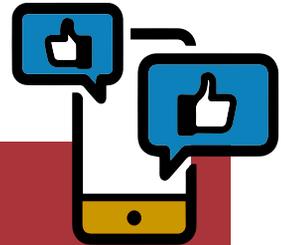
Fundamentally, the work that we do as public school employees matters in ways that cannot be measured, and the past three years have demonstrated that time and time again. I am so proud of the work that our members do each and every day, and the stories that our members have to tell of how they have helped to make our students' lives better in countless ways.

In June, we look forward to a slower pace, a chance to catch our breath and reinvigorate ourselves and our passion for the work we do. We look forward to setting new goals for ourselves, undertaking a new skill that we can bring back to our students, or networking with colleagues to increase our reach as advocates and professionals.

I hope you will also take a moment, in the midst of the end-of-the year hustle and bustle, to think about this year's success stories: the students who are succeeding because of the work you have done to help their day run more smoothly, their schools run more efficiently, and their mornings shine a little brighter.

Everything comes back to our students, and I am proud to be part of the NJEA team that is advocating for New Jersey's public school employees and students.

Thank you for all that you do for our students and our schools, and thank you for making New Jersey's public schools the best in the nation three years in a row. I look forward to continuing that streak and hearing many more success stories from you.



### SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

@SpillerforNJEA: Our annual NJEA Exceptional Children's Conference, which took place this past weekend, was as inspirational and transformative as ever! I was honored to spend the day learning with hundreds of dedicated NJEA members from around the state! #WEareNJEA #AlwaysLearning

On May 3, NJEA President Sean M. Spiller shared photos from NJEA's first in-person Exceptional Children's Conference in over two years. Spiller spoke at the event and later shared his thoughts on the inspirational conference.

### STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@Steve BeattyNJEA: Celebrating three years' worth of dedicated members who finally receive their due at the Atlantic City Education Association Annual Spring Recognition Dinner. So wonderful to be able to share and recognize so many outstanding colleagues for their work and be together for the event. Thank you to outgoing president PJ Dollard and congratulations to incoming president Tim Mancuso, as well as past president Cassandra Montague and all the reps and members.

On May 3, NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty joined members of the Atlantic City Education Association for their annual Spring Recognition Dinner. He praised all those who had earned awards during the dinner, and he gave special congratulations to the past and incoming presidents of the ACEA.

### PETAL ROBERTSON

Facebook

@PetalForNJEA: We are overflowing with wonderful educators to celebrate so I'm going to sneak a couple more in. Please help me celebrate Sheldon Morris! Sheldon is currently an in-school suspension teacher, and here's what he had to say about the importance of being in a union, working in a school, and other advice for his fellow NJEA members: "Working at my school is very important to me, because I know I impact on a young person's life every day. As a union member you're not working alone. I got into education because of my high school football coach. And I want my peers to know that they should always make it a win-win situation with you and your students." #ThankATeacher #ThankAnEducator

On May 7, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson shared a special NJEA member highlight as part of week-long celebration of NJEA members during Teacher Appreciation Week. For this post, Robertson highlighted NJEA member Sheldon Morris, and she shared a photo of him along with his inspirational words for her followers on social media.

OFFICERS ONLINE

# KNOW. LEAD. ACT.

## YOUR JOB AND THE RECREATIONAL USE OF CANNABIS

On Feb. 22, Gov. Phil Murphy signed the authorizing legislation that allows adults who are over 21 years old to use and possess cannabis. And for those younger than 21, marijuana is now decriminalized. On April 21, the first state-authorized dispensaries opened for business. While some regulations have been promulgated, we are still awaiting others to be issued. In the meantime, NJEA members should be aware of the information below.

### Off-duty use

In general, employers can no longer penalize, suspend or terminate employees for off-duty cannabis use. However, see the section below concerning school bus drivers and others whose positions require a federal license. Note that cannabis must be purchased legally from a dispensary authorized by the state to sell cannabis for the use or possession to be legal.

### On-duty use

Employers still have the right to enforce zero-tolerance drug policies in the workplace, on school grounds and during work hours. All employer prohibitions on use, possession and impairment remain lawful when limited to employees in the workplace and during work hours.

### Special considerations for bus drivers

Federal law still criminalizes the use of marijuana. Certain employees in “safety-sensitive” positions, including school bus drivers and other job positions overseen by the U.S. Department of Transportation or requiring a federal license, are subject to random drug-testing under federal law. These individuals can be subject to discipline, including loss of license, for a drug test that is positive for marijuana.

### Workplace drug testing

The drug tests administered must be scientifically reliable. Because marijuana may be present in an individual’s system for up to a month, an employer is required to couple a positive test for marijuana with another factor, such as safety concerns or an observable impairment, to impose discipline on an employee for that positive test.

The employer must employ or retain a certified “impairment expert” to conduct a physical evaluation of the employee if on-duty use or impairment is suspected. An employer’s or supervisor’s lay observation of suspected impairment is insufficient. A licensure procedure will be created to train and certify such impairment experts. Preemployment drug screenings are still permissible.

## NOMINATE A LOCAL ASSOCIATION FOR BARGAINING EXCELLENCE

A local association that has demonstrated excellence in negotiations will be honored at the Jim George Collective Bargaining Summit with the 2022 Jim George Collective Bargaining Award. Those nominated will also be recognized. The summit will take place on Oct. 21-22 at the Doubletree Hotel and Conference Center in Somerset.

### Criteria

A local qualifies for nomination by meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- Bargained one or more new contractual provisions not already found in another affiliate’s contract.
- Conducted an extraordinary community-organizing effort that resulted in a settled agreement.
- Used the bargaining process to propel new members into association involvement and leadership positions.
- Achieved a particularly good settlement, in comparison to state averages, in salary increases, benefits, professional development, and/or member protection, and follows best practices for salary guides.

### Nomination

Local associations can be nominated by any NJEA member or NJEA staff member.

To nominate a local, visit [njea.org/cbaward](http://njea.org/cbaward).

To be considered for the 2022 Jim George Collective Bargaining Award, settlements must be ratified by both parties between July 1, 2021 and June 30, 2022.

Nominations are due Sept. 9, 2022.

## SISP CORNER

For the 2021-22 school year, Sheila 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.

## WRITE TO THE REVIEW

Have a response to something you’ve read in the *Review*? Respond to content that has appeared in the *Review* by submitting a letter to the editor that is about 250 words or less. Letters may be emailed to [njeareview@njea.org](mailto:njeareview@njea.org).

## NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR AWARDS TO BE CONFERRED AT NJEA EQUITY ALLIANCE WEEKEND

Nominations are now open for four awards that will recognize advocacy and achievement in equity and justice. The awards will be presented at NJEA's Equity Alliance Weekend to be held on Jan. 13-14, 2023.

The weekend will feature training on social justice issues and social justice activism, recognizing the intersection of diverse identities and circumstances among NJEA members and the communities they serve. With roots in the annual NJEA Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Human Rights Celebration and the Minority Leadership and Recruitment Conference, the event is a collaboration of these NJEA committees: Exceptional Children, Human and Civil Rights, Minority Leadership and Recruitment, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, Urban Education and Women in Education.

Five of NJEA's highest awards will be presented during the NJEA Dr. Martin Luther King Human and Civil Rights Celebration, held at the conclusion of the Equity Alliance Weekend.

- **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Human and Civil Rights Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Human and Civil Rights Committee. Nominees may be an individual, group or organization working in the area of civil rights, and if eligible, NJEA members.
- **Equality Champion Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee. This award honors a member who has been a champion of human and civil rights, and who has had a significant impact on education and the achievement of equal opportunity for those facing discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Elizabeth A. Allen Women in Education Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Women in Education Committee. Named for NJEA's first female president, the award honors a member or an individual living or working in New Jersey who promotes women's rights and equality for all persons, particularly in education.
- **Judith Owens Spirit Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee. Named for Judith Owens, the first African American president of NJEA, this award honors a member who has been a champion of ethnic minority rights and issues and who has had a significant impact on education and the achievement of equal opportunity for those facing discrimination because of their ethnicity.
- **Urban Educator Activist Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Urban Education Committee. The award honors active and retired members who have been champions for urban education and who and champion the well-being of all stakeholders in urban communities.

Nomination forms and documentation for any of these four awards are due Oct. 31, 2022.

For awards criteria and to make a nomination, visit [njea.org/equitynominations](http://njea.org/equitynominations).

For more information, contact Colleen Lopez at [clopez@njea.org](mailto:clopez@njea.org) or 609-599-4561, ext. 2290.

## STATE OFFICER PETITIONS AVAILABLE

Elections for NJEA state officer positions (president, vice president, and secretary-treasurer) will be held during the upcoming school year for the 2023-25 term.

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

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

Below are the anticipated deadlines and procedures for acquiring and returning petitions. Please note that the dates and procedures are subject to change because of the ongoing global pandemic. Changes, if any, will be posted at [njea.org/NJEAelections](http://njea.org/NJEAelections).

Petitions will be available on **Sept. 1, 2022**. They may be obtained from NJEA Headquarters in Trenton, or from a county or unit representative on the NJEA Elections Committee.

All signed petitions must reach NJEA Headquarters at 180 W. State St., Trenton, or an NJEA-NEA UniServ office no later than 5 p.m. on **Oct. 17, 2022**.

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

Balloting for contested positions will take place in the regular 2023 NJEA spring elections

## YOUR TURN

### Teachers need to be esteemed, respected, and honored

Today's teachers are the target of unhappy parents, a disgruntled public, and uninvolved administrators. It makes the job of teaching next to impossible. No small wonder there is a shortage of young people entering the profession.

In addition, our higher education institutions and the state of New Jersey make the process of becoming a certified teacher both cumbersome and expensive.

Starting salaries are not competitive with other professions and movement to the top of the guide frequently takes too many years for an eager wage earner.

Ms. Sarah Adamo's article regarding the shortage of aspiring teachers is precisely on target. Why would any young person graduating from college choose to enter a profession so poorly regarded by the public? A prospective teacher who hears the phrase "You are too smart to be a teacher" feels devalued before entering a classroom! What does this say about the public's view of professional educators? What do your family, friends and neighbors feel about your career choice? They don't value what you want to do. They don't value what you believe is important. They don't value your vision for the future.

We need to change that perception. Once, long ago, teachers were valued and respected members of our society. They were revered as pillars of the local social structure. We have lost that view. Our teachers need to be esteemed, respected, and honored. Teachers are the backbone of our society, second only to parents. They are the individuals to whom our children turn in times of crisis when parents are unavailable. They are the role models we hope our youngsters to become. It is time to put teachers back on the pedestal where they belong.

miriam reichenbach, NJREA  
35 years in the classroom

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# COOL STUFF



Photo credit:  
Brian Price

## A+ EFFORT

### BUGG FOUNDATION HONORS NJEA MEMBER SHAN BYRD

NJEA member and New Brunswick teacher Shan Byrd received the Ella Baker Award from the Bugg Foundation at its Amistad Gala on Feb. 20 for her dedication to educating and serving the community. NJEA was a sponsor of the gala, which featured Lt. Gov. Sheila Oliver as its keynote speaker.

Byrd was among 12 individuals honored. Each Bugg Foundation award

is named for a leader in African American and civil rights history to retain the memory of individuals beyond Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. According to the Ella Baker Center for Civil Rights, Baker was activist who worked with some of the most noted civil rights leaders of the 20th century, but she encouraged grassroots movements over professional leadership. In 1960, she organized a meeting at Shaw University of the students who were engaged in lunch-counter protests. From that meeting the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed. Learn more about Baker at [ellabakercenter.org](http://ellabakercenter.org).

Byrd represents Middlesex County on the NJEA Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee. She is an NJEA Professional Development Consultant and a graduate of the NJEA Bolivar L. Graham Practicing Apprentice Program. She is a leader in the NJEA REAL Movement. Recently, Byrd organized an Earth Day program at McKinley Community School in

New Brunswick that is featured on Page 15 of this edition of the *NJEA Review*.

The Bugg Foundation, among its many goals, is working to create community interest to support the implementation of the Amistad Curriculum in schools.

Founder Jeanette Bugg lost her granddaughter to gun violence in Paterson. Inspired to have no more grandparents mourn grandchildren because of violence, she founded the Bugg Foundation to make the city's parks havens of nonviolence. According to Sharrieff Bugg, Ms. Bugg's son, five parks have been beautified by volunteers with the Bugg Foundation. The foundation reaches out to gang members to let them know that these parks are to be safe spaces for children to play. Gang members have even participated in park cleanup and plantings.

One of the five parks, previously named Vreeland Triangle, has been renamed Amistad Park, partly through the work of the Bugg Foundation.

The foundation is current raising money for projects that will advance the Amistad Curriculum. This includes a New Jersey Black History wall. This movable project can be set up in neighborhood parks. People can walk through it and learn about African American history in Paterson, in New Jersey, in the U.S., and about the Amistad. Another project, the Amistad Center will be a permanent space where visitors can learn about the Amistad and African American history.

To learn more, email the Bugg Foundation at [buggfoundation1@gmail.com](mailto:buggfoundation1@gmail.com).



## RECYCLE INK, FUNDRAISE FOR HIPPI!

The NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation has partnered with Planet Green Recycle to recycle ink cartridges, reducing waste in landfills and raising funds for a worthy cause.

By using the Hipp Foundation's unique program code, 31808, you'll help to support its efforts to fund innovative educational projects. The only foundation of its kind in New Jersey, the Hipp Foundation has disbursed more than \$2.3 million in grants for projects that represent a bold, fresh approach by public school employees.

It's simple to do!

1. Gather four or more ink cartridges.
2. Go to [planetgreenrecycle.com](http://planetgreenrecycle.com) to print out free USPS labels
3. Use the Hipp Foundation's Program ID Code 31808 to ensure the foundation receives the credit for your donations.
4. Use any box to mail the ink cartridges to Planet Green Recycle for free.
5. Ask friends, family, and businesses to participate, as well.

Learn more about the Hipp Foundation at [njea.org/hipp](http://njea.org/hipp).



## CCCEA TO HOST PRE-JUNETEENTH FREEDOM RIDE AND WALK

The Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee of Cumberland County will be hosting its 2nd annual Pre-Juneteenth Freedom Ride and Walk on Friday, June 17. Educators, their families, students and the community will come together for an evening of togetherness biking and walking along a 2.5-mile route. The event is open to all.

Beginning at the Bridgeton High School parking lot, we will travel in collaboration with law enforcement assistance to celebrate together, socialize, educate, honor and recount the historical day in June 1865 when enslaved persons in Galveston, Texas were made aware of their freedom—nearly 2.5 years after the Emancipation Proclamation. Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. Juneteenth commemorates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement.

This CCCEA PRIDE event will end at the Bridgeton Amphitheater near Sunset Lake where songs and recognitions will end the evening along with vendors, food and beverages. For more information visit [CumberlandCountyEA.org](http://CumberlandCountyEA.org).

Register at [bit.ly/cccea-juneteenth2022](http://bit.ly/cccea-juneteenth2022).

# NJEA Report

## NJREA celebrates a century of advocacy

By Stephanie L. Natera

On May 1, the New Jersey Retirees' Education Association (NJREA) held its 100th Anniversary Celebration where members celebrated a century of service, activism and excellence. This joyous occasion was slated to be held in 2020 but was delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Two years later, the planning committee remained steadfast in making this an event to remember for the 350 people in attendance.

Since its founding on Jan. 13, 1920, NJREA, formerly known as the New Jersey Teachers' Society of Annuity and Pensioners, has represented retired school employees and has been a beacon of service to public educators and public education.

The program honored several trailblazers including Elizabeth Allen who founded NJREA, the 83 retired NJREA members who are 100 years old or older, and many others.

As guests arrived, they were welcomed with a walk down memory lane composed of historical photos and excerpts of various writings reproduced on tall panels. This allowed guests to recall their own journeys with employee rights, worker health and safety, and historical events that have shaped education.

The event opened with a welcome from NJREA President Joan Wright and NJREA First Vice President Kitty Sausa. They presented video messages from Gov. Phil Murphy and NEA President Becky Pringle, who were unable to attend.

"New Jersey's reputation for academic excellence is rooted in the work of the members of this organization," Murphy said. "Although you all are retired from your positions, educators never retire from their professions."

"Life's most persistent and urgent question is 'What are you doing for others?'" Pringle said. "If there is anyone who can provide a substantive answer to the question posed decades ago by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, it is you, the passionate, powerful and purposeful NJREA."

The event was hosted by Arlene Pepe, an NJREA member from Morris County. During her opening remarks Pepe shared "Rules for Teachers -1915," which were included in the event's program. Those apocryphal rules included, "You must be home between the hours of 8 p.m. and 6 a.m. unless attending a school function," and "You may under no circumstances dye your hair." Pepe joked that she would be "OK" with the latter.

Members from near and far attended the celebration, including Carol Kadi who traveled from South Dakota to deliver the afternoon's invocation. Kadi is a former NJREA treasurer, former Middlesex CREA president, former NJEA delegate, and former member of the Sayreville Education Association. Kadi mentioned how great it is to be back in New Jersey.

Throughout the celebration, in between meals and speakers, a few moments were taken to acknowledge and introduce attendees whom Pepe called "some very special people, some who we haven't seen for a while."

Guests had the honor to have three past NJREA presidents and its current



NJREA President Joan Wright and NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson



From left: John Zurka, Tamara Beatty, Sue Maurer, Linda Calandra, Edwinta Rhue (seated), Deborah Eddy, and Amal Hussein

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president in one room celebrating the accomplishments of the organization: Rosemarie Jankowski, Patricia Provnick, Judith Perkins and Joan Wright.

“Roe” Jankowski was the first to be introduced. She thanked NJREA members for their support throughout her tenure and beyond.

Richard Gray, former NJEA assistant executive director, said, “Congratulations NJREA for this wonderful turnout celebrating one of the most important organizations in NJEA or related to NJEA.”

“Of course, I want to congratulate all the members of the NJREA and its leadership for the terrific job you’ve always done,” said Vince Giordano, former NJEA executive director. “I said it then and I say it now, if there was a group of people in the organization that you can always count on, whatever the need was, the NJREA was the first team you that you knew you could count on.”

Edithe “Edie” Fulton, NJEA president from 1981 to 1985 and from 2001 to 2005, said, “I must tell you, as a member of both NJEA and NJREA, I have loved this organization for as many years as I have been a part of it, and I want our members today to feel the same way.”

NJEA’s officers shared remarks with the guests.

“Here I am speaking to people who are committed to their profession, but you also fundamentally understood that it was the advocacy—the advocacy after those hours in our schools that really helped make a difference for our students as well,” NJEA President Sean M. Spiller said. He also noted that NJREA members are as committed now as they were before they retired to help those who have come to the profession after them.

“It is the love that we have for ourselves, each other, our profession, and the public good that makes us collectively strong,” said NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty. “When I enter a room with a legislator or policy maker, I know that they see the tens of thousands of active retirees who have our back, and that is why we are here to celebrate you.”

“It has been the joy of my work to be the liaison to the NJREA,” said NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson. “There truly is no better example of what it means to be union than people who are still willing to serve, to protect and to honor those students, classrooms and educators in ways that may not directly affect them. You have been a gift to our union.”

NJREA Membership Chair Fran Davis and NJREA Affiliations Chair Barbra Toczko, with the assistance of NJEA staff members Nello Ciccone and Chris Curto produced a video that gave guests what they called a “blast from the past, from a galaxy far far away.” Various NJREA members shared facts about successive decades in the association’s history starting with the 1920s. After each scene, Toczko asked the guests trivia questions about each succeeding era and handed out prizes when questions were answered correctly.

Two unexpected years in the making, the celebration provided moments of fellowship and reconnection. Throughout the afternoon, laughter and tears reverberated through the room as distant memories were recalled and “battle scars” remembered.

“One of the most special aspects of this event has been the ability to come together,” Spiller said. “But those two years allowed us, if nothing else, to appreciate that it is not a given that we get to come together.”

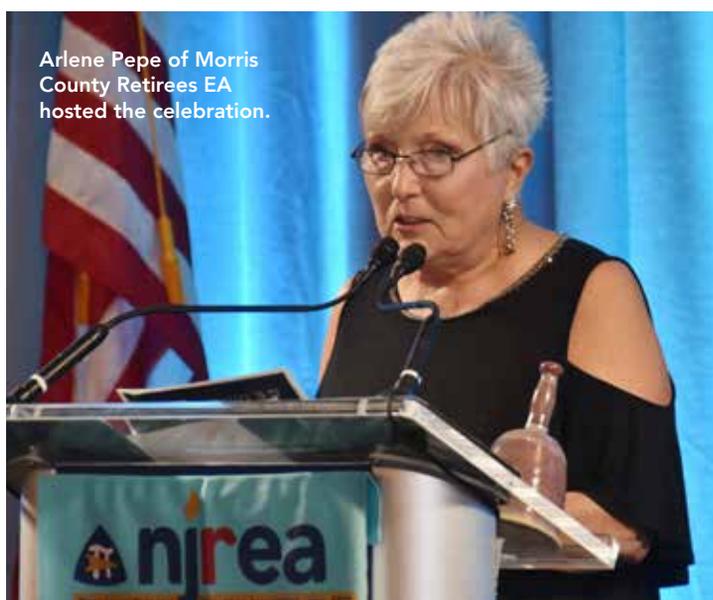
Judy Perkins, NJREA president from 2017 to 2021, shared remarks from former NJEA President Michael Johnson, who was unable to attend in person. Johnson, who served as NJEA President from 1997 to 2001, noted in his remarks that when he was NJEA’s secretary-treasurer, he was the first NJEA officer liaison to NJREA.

“Today we applaud you, the backbone, the heart, and the soul of NJREA,” Perkins shared on behalf of Johnson. “NJEA relies so much upon you and your strength to undertake issues important to both organizations.”

Perkins concluded the program with a familiar Irish blessing: “May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face; the rains fall soft upon your fields and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of his or her hand.”



NJREA Past President Judy Perkins



Arlene Pepe of Morris County Retirees EA hosted the celebration.



NJREA Membership Chair Fran Davis

For more photos, visit [njea.org/njrea100](http://njea.org/njrea100).

# Announcing the NJEA Consortium

## Creating connections, community, curriculum

By *Lizandaa Alburg*

New Jersey has a variety of representative curricula: Amistad, Holocaust, LGBTQIA+, Persons with Disabilities, and effective as of September 2022, Asian American and Pacific Islanders. Yet the efforts to teach these curricula are typically confined to their respective “monthly celebrations” or reduced to “heroes and holidays” rather than exploring the beautiful diversity of New Jersey and the valued inclusion of all voices.

Execution of representative curricula is, in many districts, at best inconsistent and at worst nonexistent. Members express a desire to learn more, yet are unsure of where to turn for high-quality, vetted, representative materials that teach students and celebrate our shared experiences.

The NJEA Consortium, with funding from a National Education Association (NEA) Great Public Schools grant, is poised to change all of that.

### WHAT IS THE NJEA CONSORTIUM?

On April 1, 2022, NEA awarded NJEA a three-year grant: Cultivating Community, Action, Justice, and Understanding through the NJEA Consortium: Connections. Community. Curriculum.

The consortium is composed of NJEA staff members and three cohorts of member design-teams. It is partnered with more than 25 colleges and universities, museums and historical commissions, and social and racial justice advocacy organizations. The consortium will lead an innovative initiative that intends to infuse historically marginalized identities into K-12 teaching and learning. Curriculum alone is not enough; the consortium will also focus on developing high-quality professional learning for members and foster meaningful community conversations that will prepare all stakeholders to understand, embrace and celebrate New Jersey’s diversity.

### WHY IS THE CONSORTIUM NEEDED?

According to the Education Law Center, New Jersey’s schools serve a student population that is among the most diverse in the nation.

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Without curricula that speak to this diversity, we risk alienating a huge segment of our student population and misinforming the rest, perhaps with dire consequences.

Representative curricula help create schools where children feel valued, safe, and engaged. Such environments have been shown to promote student well-being, increase academic achievement, and close opportunity gaps. Valuing the diversity of classmates prepares all students for a future where they will interact with a multiplicity of communities throughout their lives.

### THE NJEA CONSORTIUM: CONNECTIONS. COMMUNITY. CURRICULUM.

Over three years, the consortium, in partnership with NJEA members, content scholars and community stakeholders, will identify thematic connections and create integrated curriculum resources, collaborate to foster instructional practices that teach and affirm our humanity and that of others, and unite communities by providing all stakeholders the opportunity to see themselves reflected in teaching and learning using a three-pronged approach:

- **Connections via professional learning:** opportunities for immersive professional learning experiences as well as sustained learning journeys at conferences. These experiences may include travel to historical sites, lectures and workshops given by subject-matter experts, and training in the facilitation of a project-based, problem-solving World Peace Game.
- **Community engagement via collaborative partnerships:** engage and amplify stakeholder voices through community-based discussions and projects that aim to increase partnerships, identify locally based allies and leaders, and enhance community awareness of our connected humanity.

- **Curriculum via representative curricular resources:** curation, design and distribution of high-quality, representative curricular resources, enhancing educator awareness of these resources, and increasing educators’ content knowledge. Professional learning experiences and journeys will be partnered with facilitated artifact collection and representative curriculum design sessions for maximum impact.

“The PDII team is committed to bringing our long-standing vision of representative curricula to life throughout New Jersey and beyond,” said Dr. Chrissi Miles, the director of the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues (PDII) Division. “With the financial support of the National Education Association, we will approach and address this challenge from the ground up—immersing educators in professional learning experiences, partnering this learning with facilitated curriculum design, and working closely to elevate and amplify the diverse voices and perspectives in all of our communities. Throughout the journey, we aim to cultivate leaders who can continually spread education, awareness and support for representative curriculum efforts and the power of the association to impact the common good.”

This a great opportunity for members to develop leadership, build understanding and take action to ensure all our students see themselves reflected in the curriculum.

Contact [consortium@njea.org](mailto:consortium@njea.org) for more information.

# An Earth Day extravaganza for the New Brunswick Community

## NBEA leverages FAST grant for environmental activities

By Angel Boose



Part of the day included cleaning up the koi pond.



Rock painting was one of many activity stations students enjoyed.

The McKinley Community School in New Brunswick hosted an extraordinary Earth Day Event April 22. The theme of the event was McKinley Cares: Caring for the Earth, the Community and Ourselves!

Students, families, and teachers took part in making the Earth Day Event a huge success. It was sponsored by the New Brunswick Education Association FAST program and organized by Shan Byrd and members of the school's Environmental Club. FAST is NJEA's Families and Schools Together program.

It had been Principal Janene Rodriguez's dream to get the school's greenhouse up and running, so she enthusiastically gave Byrd much latitude to lead the Earth Day Event. Rodriguez had the foresight to request that McKinley be themed an environmental school. The Earth Day Event was a major step in making the greenhouse a functional learning space.

"This Earth Day Event is a demonstration of what restorative justice practices look like in real time," said Byrd. "It portrays the finer elements

of community building; the amplification of the gifts of the collective, and shared leadership amongst students, staff members and parents."

Volunteers who led activities were asked what they wanted to do to support Earth Day and organized activities around their hobbies and interests. The activities were organized into stations and included the cleanup of Koi Pond, classes on nutrition, a poetry slam, mural design, greenhouse seeding, rock painting, plant propagation, recycled sculpture presentations, composting, building raised flower beds, planting wildflower seeds in the garden and an opportunity to get moving with environmental cleanup led by the physical education department.

Students from grades K-4 took part in scheduled activities from 9 to 11 a.m. while students from grades 5-8 engaged in the activities from 1:15 to 3:15 p.m. Grade 4 classes also engage in an Environmental Sustainability workshop presented by Junior Achievement from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Throughout the day, not only were their activities organized for the entire school, but

classroom teachers were engaging in activities on their own with their students. One example is Marta Parris' class, who engaged in a craft, building a model of the Earth. Students added accordion legs and a face to give it human like characteristics. Toward the end of the school day many students were holding potted seeds or plants, and wearing or holding things they made in honor of Earth Day.

The McKinley Community School hosted an outstanding event on what turned out to be a beautiful day. The collaboration among stakeholders of the school community and larger community provided the social and emotional learning (SEL) critical to the needs of students and staff.

Despite the unpredictability of COVID-19, the Earth Day event allowed for necessary collaboration while enforcing safety protocols. Byrd, the event organizer, emphasized "This event is important to showing how the community and schools can come together to make great things happen." She encourages everyone to utilize funding through FAST to continue to provide opportunities for the community and the schools to collaborate.

*This is a condensed version of a longer article. For more information about the FAST-funded Earth Day Event activities and its organizers visit [njea.org/NBEA-earth](http://njea.org/NBEA-earth) for the full story.*

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*Angel Boose is a third-grade teacher at the Benjamin Banneker Academy in the East Orange School District. She is the vice president of the East Orange Education Association and an NJEA Communications Consultant. Boose represents Essex County on the NJEA Women in Education Committee.*



Photo credit:  
James Estrin,  
The New York Times

# Nikole Hannah-Jones to keynote NJEA Convention

Nikole Hannah-Jones, the Pulitzer Prize-winning creator of the 1619 Project and a staff writer at *The New York Times Magazine*, will appear at the NJEA Convention on Friday, Nov. 11. She is part of growing list of exciting speakers, including LeVar Burton whose convention appearance on Thursday, Nov. 10 was announced in the May 2022 edition of the *NJEA Review*.

Hannah-Jones has spent her career investigating racial inequality and injustice, and her reporting has earned her the MacArthur Fellowship, known as the Genius grant, a Peabody Award, two George Polk Awards and the National Magazine Award three times. Hannah-Jones also earned the John Chancellor Award for Distinguished Journalism and was named Journalist of the Year by the National Association of Black Journalists

and the Newswomen's Club of New York.

In 2020 she was inducted into the Society of American Historians and in 2021 she was named a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. She also serves as the Knight Chair of Race and Journalism at Howard University, where she is founding the Center for Journalism & Democracy.

In 2016, Hannah-Jones co-founded the Ida B. Wells Society for Investigative Reporting, which seeks to increase the number of reporters and editors of color. She holds a Master of Arts in Mass Communication from the University of North Carolina and earned her bachelor's degree in history and African-American studies from the University of Notre Dame.

## Stay overnight at the NJEA Convention

Want to reserve a room in Atlantic City for the NJEA Convention at a great rate? Take a look at these discount rates available at Borgata, Caesars, Golden Nugget, Hard Rock, Harrah's, Resorts and Tropicana. To make reservation, go to [njeaconvention.org](http://njeaconvention.org). To access the room reservation tool, you'll need to log in as a member. For your PIN, use either the email address you've previously given NJEA or the PIN that is found on your membership card. Your password is the last four digits of your Social Security number unless you have changed it.

Shuttle service to the Atlantic City Convention Center is available from the hotels listed here.

Hotel	Wed-Thurs rate	Friday rate	Deadline	Group code
Borgata	\$115	\$115	Oct. 10	GBNJE22
Caesars	\$110	N/A	Oct. 16	SC11FBM
Golden Nugget	\$64	\$129	Oct. 25	ANJEA22
Hard Rock	\$89	\$179	Oct. 10	GNJEA22
Harrah's	\$79	\$169	Oct. 16	SH11FB2
Resorts	\$67	\$149	Oct. 30	VNJEA22
Tropicana	\$75	\$150	Oct. 16	ST11FB2

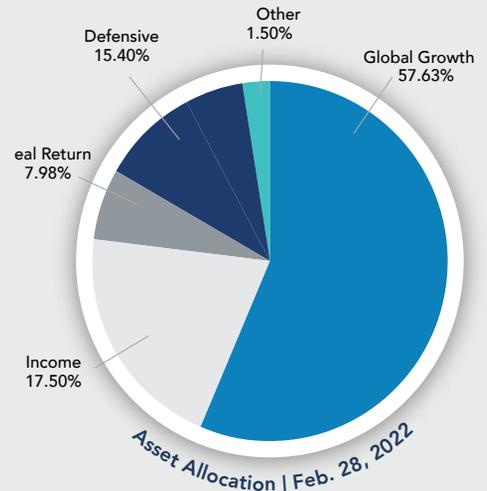
Quoted room rates do not reflect taxes and other resort fees.

## PENSION UPDATE TOTAL PENSION FUND: \$95.23 BILLION

The totals below reflect market values as of Feb. 28, 2022, and for comparison, Nov. 30, 2021. The figures, which are rounded, may not reflect the current market values of some alternative investments through the period noted, because of lags in reporting under industry standards.

All reports and financial statements are posted on the Division of Investments' website at [nj.gov/treasury/doinvest/index.shtml](http://nj.gov/treasury/doinvest/index.shtml).

	Feb. 28, 2022		Nov. 30, 2021	
	Market Value (\$ billions)	Asset Allocation	Market Value (\$ billions)	Asset Allocation
Global Growth	\$54.88	57.63%	\$57.07	57.58%
Income	\$16.66	17.50%	\$18.04	18.20%
Real Return	\$7.60	7.98%	\$7.57	7.64%
Defensive	\$14.67	15.40%	\$14.38	14.51%
Other	\$1.42	1.50%	\$2.04	2.06%
Total	\$95.23	100%	\$99.12	100%



# Child care to be provided at NJEA Convention



## CAMP NJEA RETURNS

While you enjoy the 2022 NJEA Convention, your children can join the KiddieCorp party with a wide variety of games, crafts, and other activities geared toward fostering friendships new and old at “Camp NJEA.”

KiddieCorp, now in its 33rd year of providing excellent child and youth services nationwide, will provide a comprehensive menu of activities for children ages 3-14. The KiddieCorp team is committed to the motto of “safety first, but fun a close second!”

## ACTIVITIES

Camp NJEA activities include exciting themes, arts and crafts, group games, music and movement, board games, story time, dramatic play, and

more. Activities are appropriate for each age group, using safe and sturdy equipment. Children make their own choices within KiddieCorp’s program.

## WHERE, WHEN AND FOR WHOM?

Camp NJEA is for children ages 3-14. Children must be toilet trained to be admitted.

Parents and guardians must provide lunch upon checking their children into the program or provide meals during the day. KiddieCorp will provide only snacks and beverages.

Camp NJEA is housed in the Atlantic City Convention Center.

Its hours are:

- Thursday, Nov. 10 – 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
- Friday, Nov. 11 – 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

## REGISTRATION

The cost for the children’s program is \$20 per day, per child. Visit [njea-convention.org/child-care](http://njea-convention.org/child-care) to register.

All registrations must be completed online. The advance registration deadline is Oct. 20. Register early as availability is limited and handled on a first-come, first-served basis. KiddieCorp must receive both the registration/consent form and payment in full to hold any advance reservations.

You may also be able to register on-site, however, there is no guarantee space will be available, and on-site registration is not recommended.

## NEED MORE INFORMATION?

KiddieCorp is always available to answer any questions.

Feel free to contact KiddieCorp at 858-455-1718 or at [info@kiddiecorp.com](mailto:info@kiddiecorp.com).

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- Effective metacognitive learning strategies
- Self-advocacy on the college level
- Using assistive technology
- Writing instruction
- Transition essentials

### WORKSHOPS (OPTIONAL) • 1:45 – 3 P.M.

- Multisensory math remediation **OR**
- Orton-Gillingham reading remediation



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# NBC10 spotlights Cape May County educator for Teacher Appreciation Week



NBC10 anchors and reporters Erin Coleman and Keith Jones with Nicole DelCorio's class.

"We visit a lot of classrooms," said Philadelphia's NBC10 morning anchor Erin Coleman. "But we've never come across a teacher who prepared for our visit as much as Nicole DelCorio!"

Co-anchor Keith Jones agreed as he and Coleman chatted briefly with an NJEA staff member as the anchors prepared to host a televised broadcast of Philadelphia's iconic Broad Street Run.

Nicole DelCorio is a third grade teacher at Middle Township School #2 in Cape May County. No stranger to television, DelCorio was one of many participants in NJTV's Learning Live that broadcast lessons for New Jersey students as they sheltered in their homes during the first year of the COVID pandemic.

While DelCorio's students were all back in school for the 2021-22 school year, she was one of many people nationwide who caught COVID just before the 2021 holiday break. As a result, her

entire class was required to quarantine at home.

"I was devastated," DelCorio recalled. "I was in urgent care crying—I had 23 eight-year-olds that I felt I was letting down. We were on Zoom again for everything."

An early riser, DelCorio watched the 4 to 7 a.m. broadcast of "NBC10 News Today" anchored by Coleman and Jones. The co-anchors announced a contest called, "A Morning Brew with You," where residents in the news affiliates viewing area could chat virtually about the news with the anchors while sipping from a coffee mug shipped from NBC10.

"But when I said, 'My class watches you,' they sent mugs for me and my class," DelCorio said.

Back in person by the time the virtual chat would have occurred, and after many of the COVID restrictions for schools had been lifted in New Jersey, Coleman and Jones asked to visit

the school in person. Now they sent mugs for all of the students and staff in the school along with handwritten notes and headshots signed by the anchors.

## THIRD-GRADE INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISTS

Prior to their visit, DelCorio prepared her students by having them research the work of reporters and news anchors. The students then prepared questions to ask Coleman and Jones.

"They had to research either Keith or Erin and find out when they started in the news business," DelCorio. "My one student saw online one of Erin's interviews when she was at college, and they called her 'DJ E Little.'"

Even her co-anchor had not known that nickname.

"They really dug into their pasts," DelCorio said.



From left: Teacher Nicole DelCorio and NBC10's Erin Coleman and Keith Jones.

"I was so proud of them. It was a text-to-real-world world connection. One of my students said, 'I am star-struck right now!' And my girls did their hair; my boys had comb-overs. They were all excited."

The students pitched the idea of writing and performing a song for Coleman and Jones. They rewrote the lyrics to "We've Been Working on the Railroad," with lyrics such as "Everyday with Keith and Erin, we learn something new!" In a later news broadcast, the anchors presented the song.

#### A SPECIAL VISIT FOR STUDENTS AND NEWSCASTERS

DelCorio noted that Coleman and Jones' visit to the school was the first since COVID began. For many of her students, this was the first of any such visits they may have remembered from anyone outside the school. They were in first grade when the pandemic hit.

The visit also turned out to be a particularly poignant one for Jones. When DelCorio shared with him photos from a 2013 visit from Cara McCollum, who was at the time Miss New Jersey, he was stunned. McCollum, who later died in car accident, had been his girlfriend.

"Erin and I were shocked when we visited third graders in South Jersey in the same classroom in which my late girlfriend, Cara McCollum, years earlier read to students and promoted literacy," Jones wrote in an Instagram post. "This was a trip I'll never forget—for so many reasons."

#### TEACHER APPRECIATION WEEK

NBC10 broadcast footage from the visit on April 25, just prior to Teacher Appreciation Week. During Teacher Appreciation Week, a 30-second segment of the longer news story spotlighting the visit aired daily and was a featured Instagram reel.

That full segment can be viewed on the website version of this story at [njea.org/delcorio](http://njea.org/delcorio).

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# Exceptional Children Conference features LeDerick Horne

Held in person for the first time since 2018, the usually biennial NJEA Exceptional Children Conference featured keynote speaker LeDerick Horne. Horne is a graduate of New Jersey public schools who had been diagnosed with a learning disability in the third grade. While he has nothing but praise for his teachers, it was primarily his own determination, intelligence and creativity that ultimately led him to go on to Middlesex Community College and later graduate from New Jersey City University with a degree in mathematics and a minor in fine arts.

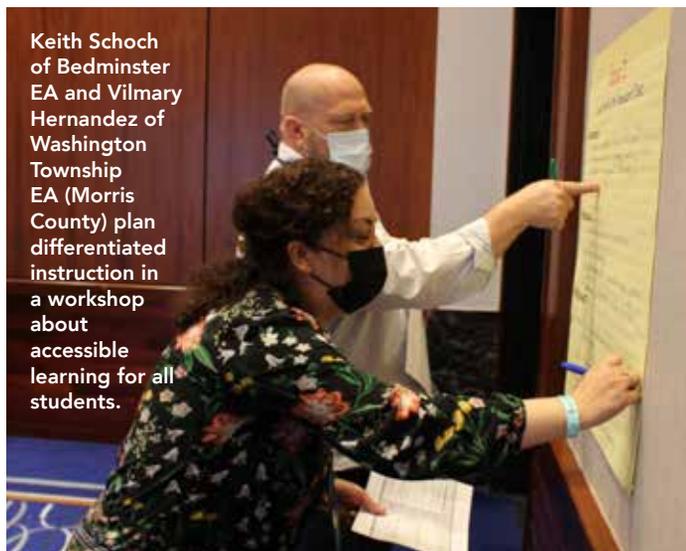
When he was still struggling academically in the 11th grade, he told his IEP team that he was going to go to college. He challenged the team to help him make it happen.

Today, as an author, artist of the spoken word, and an advocate for people with disabilities, Horne 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 state departments of education across the U.S.

On April 30, he addressed the NJEA Exceptional Children Conference, where he had been originally slated to speak in 2020. He also presented a workshop titled “Supports for Success: Seven Tips to Empower Students.” His was among 15 workshops presented at the conference, addressing the full range of issues and abilities to meet the goal implied in the conference theme: Creating Learning Environments for ALL Students.



Keynote speaker LeDerick Horne signs a copy of his book, *Empowering Students with Hidden Disabilities*, for Sharonda Tanner of the Orange Education Association.



Keith Schoch of Bedminster EA and Vilmary Hernandez of Washington Township EA (Morris County) plan differentiated instruction in a workshop about accessible learning for all students.



Michelle Falanga, a teacher resource specialist for gifted and talented in West Windsor-Plainsboro, presents a workshop about collaborative and proactive approaches for gifted education.

# NJEA Higher Education Conference empowers leaders



Christine Petersen of Hudson County is recognized by NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty for completing training with the Higher Education Local Leadership Institute.

The weekend of April 8 through 10 was focused on NJEA's higher education members who were able to hold their first in-person conference in over two years. The weekend included two conferences: the annual Higher Education Conference and the Higher Education Collective Bargaining Summit.

The conference featured workshops that enhanced the skills of local association members and leaders at New Jersey's community colleges. The summit was an interactive program that addressed the current issues facing negotiations teams.

At an evening dinner, David Bordelon of the Faculty Association of Ocean County College, was honored as the Higher Education Faculty Member of the Year. Several other members were recognized for earning certification from the Higher Education Local Leadership Institute. NJEA Higher Education Committee Chair Mecheline Farhat and NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty addressed members.

Assemblywoman Linda Carter (D-Union) delivered the keynote address. Carter is the vice-chair of the Assembly Higher Education Committee. She is also an NJEA member and teacher in Passaic City.



Kimberly Henderson of the Rowan College of Gloucester County Faculty Association in the Building Local Power workshop.



Assemblywoman Linda Carter (D-Union), vice chair of the Assembly Higher Education Committee, addresses the conference.



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# CELEBRATING THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF TITLE IX

By Kaitlyn Dunphy, Esq.

This summer marks the 50th anniversary of the enactment of Title IX, signed into law on June 23, 1972. In the past 50 years, Title IX has had a positive effect on equity in education, and is particularly noted for its impact on sports, admission to higher education, protections for LGBTQIA+ students and procedures for addressing sexual harassment on campuses.

Title IX was introduced in Congress to address a gap in the existing civil rights laws. At the time, civil rights laws such as Title VII prohibited discrimination in the workplace but did not preclude sex bias in education. The proponents of the law pointed out that in order to remedy inequality in economic opportunities, inequity in education had to be addressed. Without equal access to education, women lacked access to career opportunities and financial stability.

Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs. It applies to all educational programs receiving federal financial assistance, whether they receive that assistance directly or indirectly through students who are recipients of federal grants. If an institution does not comply with Title IX, the federal government can terminate its financial assistance to the institution.

## TITLE IX AND SPORTS

After Title IX was enacted, opponents of Title IX focused their energies on limiting its scope, including attempts to exempt sports, especially collegiate sports, from Title IX's reach. Those attempts failed, and Title IX is perhaps best known for its impact on women's and girls' sports. According to the New York Times, there are more than 3 million women participating in high school and college sports today, up from 300,000 in 1972.

Many observers attribute the increased participation in sports to Title IX, which requires educational institutions to meet athletic equality requirements set by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights. Those standards look at the rates of participation as well as require equity not just in athletic opportunity, but also in resources provided to men's and women's teams.

## TITLE IX AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is also a barrier to equal access to education. In a case decided in 1980—one of the first of its kind—plaintiffs alleged that they were subject to sexual harassment by faculty members at Yale. They sued the institution for failure to have a grievance procedure where students could report sexual harassment. While the case was dismissed by the court, the plaintiffs accomplished their goals. Credibility was lent to the then-new legal theory that sexual harassment was a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX and, because of the lawsuit, Yale decided to implement a grievance procedure. Many institutions of higher education followed Yale's lead.

The U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights published its first Title IX investigation manual in 1990. That office also promulgates regulations that require institutions of higher education to

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*Without equal access to education, women lacked access to career opportunities and financial stability.*

implement sexual harassment reporting and investigation procedures. Most recently, revisions were made to those regulations by the Trump administration that have been widely criticized as discouraging the reporting and investigation of these complaints. As a result, the Biden administration has undertaken a review of the regulations. Revisions were expected to be announced last month, but were not yet available by the time of the Review's publication in mid-May.

## TITLE IX AND LGBTQIA+ STUDENTS

A more recent application of Title IX has extended the law's protections to LGBTQIA+ students. Under the Obama administration, guidance was released that stated that Title IX's prohibitions on discrimination based on sex also prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. That guidance was rolled back under the Trump administration but reinstated under the current administration.

The Supreme Court's landmark decision in June of 2020, *Bostock v. Clayton County*, found that Title VII, the law that protects against sex-based discrimination in the workplace, also prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. This finding supports the position that Title IX also prohibits discrimination against LGBTQIA+ students.

Title IX is instrumental in eradicating the vestiges of sex discrimination in education. While there will always be more work to be done, Title IX lays the foundational groundwork for addressing sex discrimination in education. 

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# ENGAGING STUDENTS TO TRIUMPH OVER TRAUMA AND ACES

*By Daniel Higgins*

You don't know what happened; you just know that something is wrong. The student is suddenly "acting out," causing disruptions in class, fighting with other students, or, conversely, shutting down and becoming completely withdrawn. Suspending the student does not help, and ignoring the behavior is unacceptable. To identify and compassionately address the root cause of some of these behaviors, educational communities throughout New Jersey need training to help students who are enduring adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). ACEs are stressful or traumatic events, including abuse, neglect, household substance use or parental separation. ACEs can also include exposure to chronic, toxic stress from historical and ongoing traumas due to systemic racism and poverty.

ACEs affect children's brain architecture and can have negative, lifelong effects on health and well-being. ACEs and trauma can inhibit a child's ability to learn, develop language skills, create healthy attachments and form relationships. The good news is, if properly addressed, the effects of ACEs and the behaviors that come from traumas can be reversed and improved through healing-centered engagement strategies.

A statewide program was initiated in 2021 to introduce a healing-centered engagement (HCE) model to address ACEs and trauma-informed practices

in 26 pilot schools in New Jersey. It is spearheaded by lead partners NJEA, NJPSA/FEA (New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association/Foundation for Educational Administration), and the MHANJ (Mental Health Association in New Jersey).

Dr. Mary Reece, NJPSA/FEA's director of special projects, secured more than \$1 million in grant funding for this project from the Burke Foundation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Princeton Area Community Foundation, and the New Jersey Pandemic Relief Fund. The diverse cohort, which first included the Ninth Grade Academy, Hedgepeth-Williams Middle School of the Arts, and Carroll Robbins Elementary School in Trenton, has expanded to 60 New Jersey schools that are currently undergoing this training for Year 2, including nearly all Trenton schools.

## TRAINING FOR EDUCATORS

The model includes six hours of virtual training—two hours on ACE interface, which is provided by Amanda Adams, NJEA associate director for professional development and instructional issues, two hours on trauma-informed practices, and two hours on healing-centered engagement.

In the first year of the program, the schools work with their coaches to



Robbins Elementary School teacher Jennifer Ayling leads students in mindfulness exercises.

“

***“The main thing that caught my eye was changing the mindset from ‘What’s wrong with you?’ to ‘What happened to you?’ and then ‘What is right about you?’”***

develop a plan to address a particular problem as it relates to trauma. The plan is implemented in Year 2 with the help of a team made up of teachers, community partners and trusted messengers, such as a guidance counselor, vice principal or parent. The trusted messenger acts as a liaison between the coach and the school.

Each school is given a coach who has been trained in both coaching techniques and in program content. They help teachers, administrators, staff, families and community groups work with students who are dealing with ACEs. The school must then develop a plan for moving forward with this information. In addition, selected educators receive training in Youth Mental Health First Aid through the partnership with MHANJ.

The success of the first year of the program and the need for healing-centered engagement in Trenton Public Schools led Assistant Superintendent Dr. Channing Conway to expand the initiative throughout the district for the 2021-22 school year.

“Everybody agreed that there was a need for this work. The pandemic only helped to expose some of the trauma that our students were already dealing with pre-pandemic,” Conway said. “Our kids coming back from the pandemic have experienced loss, potential food insecurity, shelter insecurity, as well as violence in the community or violence in the homes. So we wanted to make sure that we were equipped for dealing with those types of issues that our kids might be coming back to school with after being in isolation for 18 months.”

The first part of the HCE initiative involves ACEs and their contribution to long-term and toxic trauma that can impact a child’s ability to be ready to learn and receive new information. The second part deals with trauma-informed practices, which focus on ways that schools can address the known traumas that are experienced by individual students or groups of children. The third part addresses healing-centered engagement, which involves the community understanding that the trauma that children experience can stem from issues that are inside or outside the home. The training helps all involved to mitigate the trauma that children are exposed to.

### **CHANGING THE MINDSET**

Jennifer Ayling, a teacher at Carroll Robbins Elementary School, which is now in its second year of the HCE program, says that the training has made a substantial difference in how the teachers approach students who are dealing with these issues.

“The main thing that caught my eye was changing the mindset from ‘What’s wrong with you?’ to ‘What happened to you?’ and then ‘What is right about you?’” Ayling said. “We encourage each other and our students publicly so that everyone sees that school is a special place where the first priority is that you are safe and you are seen. Most times, children in crisis do not feel heard, so they get louder and they get more aggressive or they shut down.”

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**Top:** Students plant a new garden at Robbins Elementary School.  
**Middle:** From left: Robbins teacher Jaimie Sabadics, Principal Zebbie Belton, and teacher Jennifer Ayling.  
**Bottom:** Robbins teacher Jaimie Sabadics assists students during a reading lesson.

The ACEs team at Parker Elementary School. From left: Counselor Miriam Maldonado, Vice Principal Nadia Ramcharan, Asst. Superintendent Dr. Channing Conway, Principal Lorcha Lewis, NJPSA HCE Coach Denise King, and School Nurse Jacqueline Denton.



“ He had not shared that with anyone, so, in that moment, because of this program, I was aware of how to handle it. ”

“We are always going to be working toward allowing the children to address the feeling, and if the feeling is OK, they learn to regulate it so that they can get to a healing place,” Ayling said. “We want them to be OK with who they are, because they don’t like themselves when they are upset. Self-harm and harm to others will never be acceptable, but when you identify and address how you feel, self-calming strategies, whether it is a breathing technique or a talking-down technique, can be applied. We can let them go to a peaceful place with the support of our counselors to redirect their emotions so they can express themselves and feel heard.”

#### **BUILDING A CULTURE OF TRUST**

The HCE process can change the culture throughout a school and help to build and develop a trust between students and teachers that can allow a student to better manage a trauma.

“We had a student who lost his father about two years ago, and it really wasn’t shared with the school. He was not comfortable speaking about it, so he would shut down,” recalled Jaimie Sabadics, a Robbins Elementary teacher. “He would get very upset, so I started to pull him aside to what we call our peaceful place.”

Sabadics said that the student was not comfortable at first to talk to her

about something so personal. But as the weeks progressed, he began to open up.

“I said, ‘I see that you are upset. Is it something you want to talk about? Or is it something that you want to take a moment on and then decide how you want to proceed?’” Sabadics recalled. “He told me he wanted to talk to me, and this was the first time we had made that progress. He just broke down crying and said, ‘I just miss my dad so much. My dad died, and I miss him so much.’”

“He had not shared that with anyone, so, in that moment, because of this program, I was aware of how to handle it,” Sabadics said. “Yes, I’m seeing behaviors that we would not want to see in the classroom. Yes, it is interrupting instruction, and I might have handled that differently prior to HCE, but now I’m seeing the child as a whole. I see that he is having this emotional breakdown, and while it is coming out as aggression, there is something deeper behind that.”

Sabadics notes that it was because they had a relationship—because she was taking that time to focus on him, even if only in a limited way—he was able to share something that he wouldn’t ordinarily share.

“I’ve seen major progress since that day, and I know that this is thanks to the approaches that we learned with HCE,” Sabadics said.

## ADDRESSING TRAUMA IMMEDIATELY AND FOR THE LONG TERM

The healing-centered engagement program is also helping the entire community of Parker Elementary School deal with the recent tragic death of one of its students, a 9-year old girl senselessly shot and killed in downtown Trenton in March.

“The fact that we had a coach and the fact that our school was trained in dealing with something like that, the impact was huge,” Conway said.

Dr. Denise King, associate director of retirement services at NJPSA, who serves as the HCE coach for Parker Elementary, has been helping Principal Lorcha Lewis and the entire Parker community.

“I reached out to our ACE trainers, our team, and soon they were able to provide a Padlet of resources that Parker could use immediately—resources for the community, resources for students, resources for the teachers, and resources for administrators,” King said. “I think that having that Padlet immediately and connecting with the Mercer Loss Coalition helped to support the needs of Parker school.”

Padlet is a cloud-based software that, among other capacities, enables users to upload, organize and share resources.

Lewis said that the resources were particularly helpful and that technology allowed her to share information with her entire community. As a result, people were able to make connections and get assistance. Still, the healing from such a tragedy is a long process and will affect different people in various ways.

“It’s a rollercoaster. We still have a lot of trauma that shows itself on different points of the rollercoaster ride,” Lewis said. “Some days it’s really good, and some days it is not. And everybody is in a different spot. Sometimes they are in their valley, and sometimes they are at their peak. So we need to continue to make sure that our supports are in place for those ‘unpredictables’ and try to have and maintain some normalcy in school.”

Lewis and King both praised the HCE program and stressed the importance of having this engagement in place so that a school is best able to handle such a devastating event.

“If I could recommend this specific program to every school I would absolutely do it,” King said. “I have already reached out to a couple of schools because they need it. They just need the training and the connections and the resources to build a foundation for improvement for themselves and for their school community.”

Lewis concurred.

“It is a necessary prerequisite for training your staff,” she said. “I think that we are in a time when we should not take anything for granted about who our students are or who our staff are. It is one of those foundational courses of learning that every educator should have.” 🏠



Top: Asst. Superintendent Dr. Channing Conway with Donshanique Kelley, a one-to-one aide and bus aide, and one of Conway's former students.

Middle: There is a joyful spirit at Parker Elementary. From left: NJPSA HCE Coach Denise King, Asst. Superintendent Dr. Channing Conway, Principal Lorcha Lewis and Vice Principal Nadia Ramcharan.

# WHEN THE *TRUTH* MATTERS

## Lopatcong EA breaks cycle of administrative abuse by standing up and speaking out

By Christy Kanaby

“In a time of deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”

Though at the time they weren’t thinking of these words, often attributed to George Orwell, it was the commitment to speak the truth that spurred a revolution within the Lopatcong Education Association (LEA), a 90-member local in Warren County. For years, these educators and educational support professionals (ESP) were subjected to the egregious behavior of their district superintendent until they courageously broke their silence last fall.

Since Dr. Debra Mercora’s arrival in 2019, LEA members have been victims of a hostile work environment because of her countless—and well-documented—unprofessional actions.

Her behavior caused dissension and instability among district employees and contributed to a dramatic turnover of staff, including administrators.

In fact, for the last several years, a significant number of teachers and other staff members, including administrators, voluntarily left the school district for other jobs or have retired prematurely. This, coupled with the myriad challenges educators continue to face as they navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, caused many LEA members to reach their breaking point and motivated them to organize.

“Our schools, students and staff deserve to be part of a district that follows best

practices, adheres to the laws and statutes governing our public schools, creates a climate of dignity and respect, and upholds the most basic tenets of character education. They also deserve a board of education and superintendent who share those sentiments,” said LEA President Sonnie Hall, who with LEA Vice President Amy Harmon courageously led their members to protect their schools and colleagues. “We refused to stand by and watch our students’ educational experience continue to be eroded or compromised in any way. We were determined to break the cycle of bad behavior and indicate—in no uncertain terms—that it won’t be tolerated any longer.”

Working with NJEA Field Representative John Ropars, NJEA network attorney Sanford Oxfeld, Esq., and NJEA Associate Director for Public Relations Christy Kanaby, the LEA first took their concerns to the Lopatcong Board of Education’s Liaison Council in September.

In those discussions, the LEA attempted to provide countless examples of times where Mercora routinely engaged in disrespectful behavior toward the current and former staff and demeaned and belittled employees—in front of other staff, students and parents—and retaliated against those who questioned her or exercised their rights under law. The board members refused to listen and shut down the conversation.

### BREAKING THEIR SILENCE

Unwilling to tolerate the mistreatment any longer, the LEA took its concerns directly to the community, publishing an open letter that detailed the issues within the district—the same issues brought to the Lopatcong Board’s Liaison Council months before. In response, the board issued its own public statement, claiming they were unaware of the problems and accusing the LEA of lying and committing “character assassination.”

“It’s shameful to hear the board blame those who’ve been victimized by our superintendent’s poor leadership instead of acknowledging their role in turning a blind eye to it,” said Hall. “It only strengthens our resolve to demand we return to the basics of integrity and respect and put an end to this unacceptable behavior, once and for all.”

Hall wasn’t the only one upset. Outraged by the board’s response, LEA members rolled up their sleeves and got to work. Networking with several parents and NJEA members who lived in the community, the LEA—and hundreds of their supporters from around the county and state—converged on the Dec. 14 board of education meeting to demand accountability and effectuate change.

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Lopatcong Education Association (LEA) President Sonnie Hall (right) and LEA Vice President Amy Harman at the Feb. 8 board of education meeting.



policy. The board promised to investigate the matter, but multiple weeks went by without any resolution—or even investigation—in sight.

After the holiday break, LEA members and community residents began displaying lawn signs, banners, bumper magnets and T-shirts, all emblazoned with the words, “Truth Matters.” Social media was awash with LEA supporters, and the district’s January board of education meeting was standing-room only. It soon became apparent that the board knew it had a problem, and they reached out to the LEA to ask for time to address the matter internally.

we were heard ... I am gratified that we finally can right the proverbial wrongs,” Hall told the board. “Though we know that some wounds take longer to heal than others, we also know that the validation of our concerns—and the recognition of the truth—sets us on the right path.”

Ropars praised the LEA members for their courage and tenacity to speak their truth throughout the ordeal. As a veteran NJEA staff member for the last 22 years, with over 45 years of union representative experience, he’s seen his share of bad administrators and the detrimental effect they have on public school employees and the students they serve.

“All too often, school employees feel powerless to fight against administrative mistreatment, like what occurred in Lopatcong,” said Ropars. “But to the credit of the local leaders and their members, as well as their allies in the community, they organized and implemented plans to bring attention to the abusive behavior—and they were successful. They just needed someone to point them in the right direction and spotlight the critical resources that NJEA can provide its affiliates.”

Hall echoed Ropars sentiment, citing the collective power union members can harness to get them through difficult times.

“Thanks to my union brothers and sisters, as well as the community members and parents who stood with us, we made a difference,” Hall concluded. “It’s a new day for Lopatcong; one full of promise and healing.” 🙏

**WITH COURAGE AND CONVICTION**

At the meeting, more than 200 members of the association, parents, the public, and other advocates for the teachers and staff attended to raise their concerns. Bolstered by the support they received, member after member spoke up to tell their horror stories of their experience with Mercora. Some people were in tears when telling their stories, with one educator emotionally recounting Mercora’s callousness upon the member’s return to work after burying her daughter.

“I was so impressed and so proud of those leaders and members,” said Ropars. “It takes a lot of courage for a member to stand up in front of the board and public and tell your story. But one after another, they did it and drew strength from each other.”

Additionally, the LEA provided evidence that Mercora had a pattern of this type of behavior in her previous position. Members cited many news articles and the minutes from Neptune City Board of Education meetings that outlined the same problems. That behavior in Neptune resulted in Mercora submitting her resignation only five months after signing a new five-year contract. Several Neptune City educators corroborated the claims, having traveled to Lopatcong that evening to stand with LEA members.

The association then demanded that the board hire an outside investigator to look into the allegations in accordance with their own board

**THE DAWN OF A NEW DAY**

The LEA kept up the pressure, and—at its Feb. 8 meeting—the board announced it had hired an interim superintendent while a separation agreement was being negotiated to officially release Dr. Mercora from Lopatcong. Hall took the opportunity to commend the board for heeding the community’s call for action.

“While it’s unfortunate that it took so much time, angst and upset, I am gratified to find that



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# TALES OF A (THIRD AND) FOURTH GRADE READER

By Kathryn Coulibaly

Sparking a love of reading at any age is valuable, but navigating a pandemic, technology issues, economic disadvantages and a return to in-person instruction that left students struggling, Barnegat third-grade teacher Kerinn Ruthven and fourth grade teacher Kimberly Cote knew they needed to be creative, innovative and consistent if they were going to get their students on the right page.

“When students aren’t proficient at reading, they shut down,” Cote said. “They doubt their abilities and think they’re not as smart as other students. Often, it leads to behavior issues, or just a disconnection from the rest of the class. It affects their self-esteem.”

Ruthven agreed.

“When students can read but can’t perform as well in math, it just doesn’t affect their confidence the same way,” Ruthven said. “We know that reading is the key to everything. If we can unlock that, we can address every other area.”

## STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP READING SKILLS

Cote and Ruthven are both veteran teachers, currently teaching at Joseph T. Donahue Elementary School in Barnegat. Ruthven has been teaching for 24 years and Cote is in her 16th year teaching. In the 2020-21 school year, Ruthven’s

third grade class had the most growth in English language arts (ELA) and math among all the third grade classes in the district. Together, Cote and Ruthven worked to develop strategies to help their students develop their reading skills knowing that every day was critical.

“We start with a read-aloud every day,” Ruthven said. “We go over focus skills and theme, discussing in general what the theme means, how to find what the theme is and what the main idea is. We read a little and then stop and talk about it as a whole group. That keeps everyone engaged. We might not read the full book in one sitting. Sometimes, we will divide the book up over a few days and leave them in a cliffhanger and talk about it. What do they think will happen? What do they think about the choices the characters are making? Have they ever been in a similar situation? Does this remind them of another book we have read or they have read? We really want the students to connect with what we are reading.”

“We try to hit multiple skills at the same time,” Cote said. “We go back and forth between fiction and nonfiction and talk about— ‘this is make-believe, this is real.’ We talk about reading as a writer, and I encourage the students to copy the style of writers they enjoy.”

Cote also uses writers’ notebooks and has them

write down verbs and other parts of speech.

One of the most popular ways for students to engage with reading are the hands-on projects. Both teachers enjoy getting students to do arts and crafts projects related to the texts they read.

“That stuff is very important,” Ruthven said. “We do interactive notebooks, flip books, foldables, vocabulary foldables, task cards and more.”

“When we read a story about snowy owls, we make snowy owls using cotton balls,” Cote said. “It gives the students a sense of accomplishment and gets them following directions. It’s creative and something they can show their parents and gets them engaged at home talking about the book and the lesson. We want parents to be involved and interested in what we’re doing in the classroom.”

Another popular activity is book tastings. The teachers arrange new books like menu selections. Students can watch book commercials and read small sections of each title. The goal is to explore many new titles to spark students’ interest.

“We also love to do ‘character walks,’” Cote said. “We pretend we are specific characters and

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Reading is an important part of building students' confidence.

use character trait skills to talk, think and act like that character. When we finish books, we often write an additional chapter or add ideas for how the book would go if it were a series.”

### LEARNING HOW TO BE TOGETHER AGAIN

Both teachers also incorporate a lot of group activities that give students opportunities to interact with each other. “Our kids really need to learn how to be with each other again, especially in a school setting,” Ruthven said.

“We’re taking a good look at each student as an individual and trying to figure out what they need,” Cote said. “We figure out where the gaps are in their learning. One of the areas that we wanted to work on with some students is phonemic awareness, so we used Rhyme Magic, and that made a big difference. We piloted that with some students and then tried it the next year with higher level students.”

Each teacher has created a classroom full of color and art and with an abundance of books and plenty of spaces to read them. Reading happens

everywhere—at the front of the room on a carpet as a group, individually at their desks, in small groups at tables working with the teachers or aides, if available, and in smaller groups of two or three.

When the teachers read to the class, they are animated and rely heavily on audience participation.

“We know that we have to put on a show every day,” Cote said. “We can’t be boring; we have to be spectacular.”

“The thinking used to be that students had about one minute of attention span equal to their age; so for third grade, you had about eight or nine minutes of attention span,” Ruthven said. “In fourth grade, you had nine or 10 minutes. In the pandemic era, we’re finding that to be even lower.”

### HELPING STUDENTS BELIEVE IN THEMSELVES

The two teachers find that breaking ELA up throughout the day helps to incorporate it while being realistic about what students are able to tolerate.

“We encourage students to pick up a book that we’ve already read with the class,” Ruthven

said. “Because we’ve already read it together, they know the story. They can reread it on their own and be more confident with it. Repetition helps them master words and boosts their confidence, and that’s what we need in order to get them to take the leap to the next level. We need them to believe that they can make that leap successfully.”

“People don’t understand what reading does for kids’ confidence,” Cote said. “It’s everything. It helps them with their peers. If they’re struggling to read, everyone in the classroom knows it, and they’re going to hear about it on the playground or at the bus stop. We need to build our students up in every way, and we need to help our other students build empathy. We spend a lot of time on that in our classrooms. Every child wants to feel like they belong, that they are accepted. They cannot do their best work if they are afraid to make a mistake or look foolish. So we have to build a classroom atmosphere that is supportive and kind.”

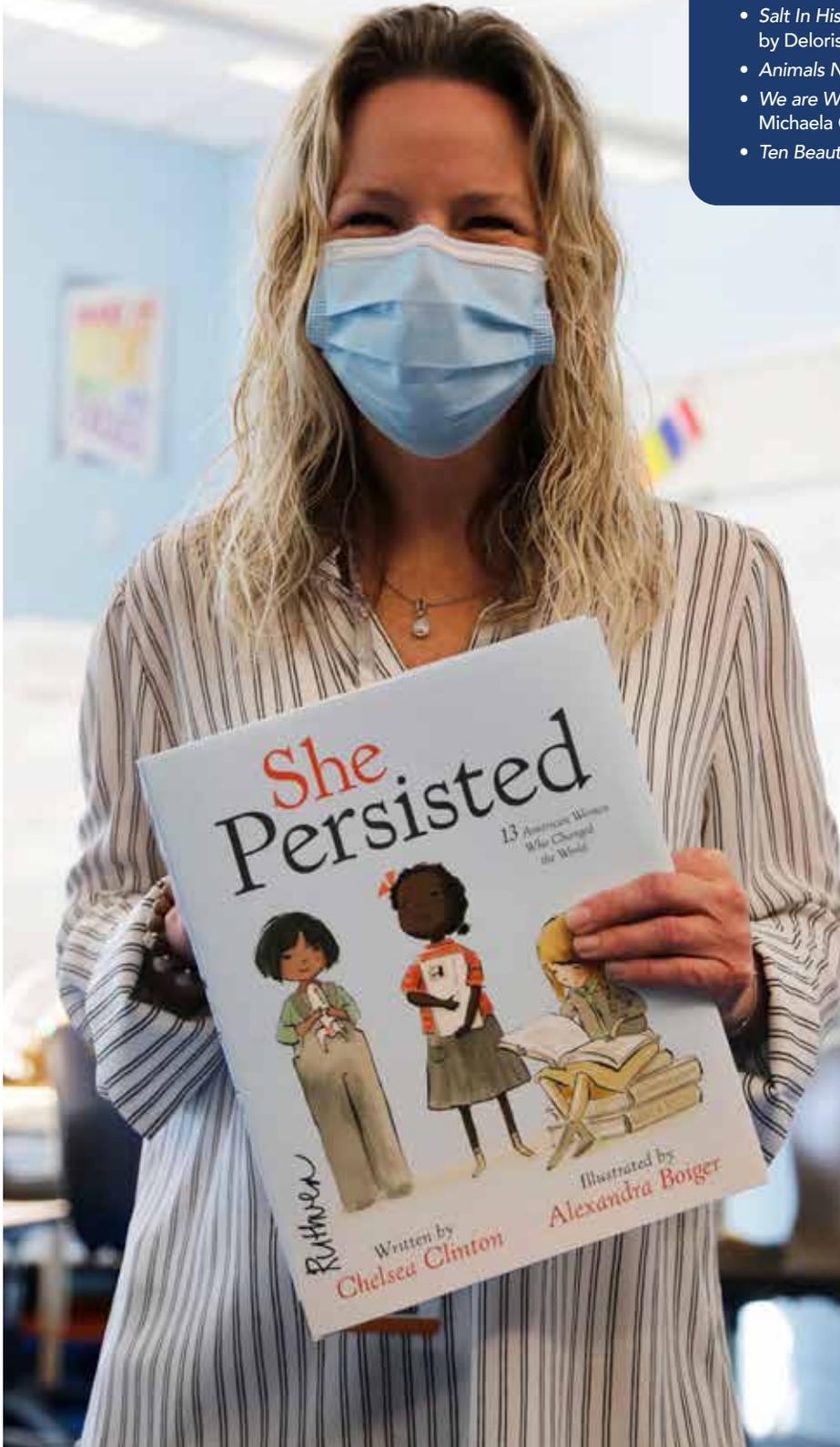
Both teachers have invested a lot of time and money selecting books that will entice and engage students. Students have ready access to plenty of books at their individual reading levels in the

Kerinn Ruthven holds one of the many books she recommends to students.



## Kerinn Ruthven's Favorite Books for 3rd graders

- *Maybe: A Story About the Endless Potential in All of Us* by Kobi Yamada and Gabriella Barouch
- *Salt In His Shoes: Michael Jordan in Pursuit of a Dream* by Deloris Jordan, Roslyn M. Jordan
- *Animals Nobody Loves* by Seymour Simon
- *We are Water Protectors* by Carole Lindstrom and Michaela Goade
- *Ten Beautiful Things* by Molly Griffin and Maribel Lechuga



classroom, although they might not have access at home.

“Many of our students are economically disadvantaged,” Ruthven said. “Officially, the number is about 35 percent, but even students who are technically not economically disadvantaged might not be growing up in homes that value reading.”

### READING FOR PLEASURE IN AN ELECTRONIC AGE

According to the National Endowment for the Arts, that decline in reading has been building for some time. In “Reading at Risk: A Survey of Literary Reading in America,” researchers found that fewer than half of adult Americans read for enjoyment in 2002, instead preferring electronic media, including television and video games. Knowing the explosion of social media and streaming and the portability of digital entertainment since this survey was conducted, it is likely that few children are being exposed to reading as entertainment at home, although some certainly are.

In a survey conducted by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) in 2019 and 2020, the number of American 9- and 13-year olds who are reading for fun on a daily basis are at the lowest levels since the 1980s. According to the report, 42% of 9-year old students reported they read for fun almost every day. Sixteen percent of 9-year olds say they never or hardly ever read for fun.

There is a huge difference between female students and male students on this question. According to NAEP, 46% of female 9-year old students said they read for fun almost every day. Thirty-eight percent of male 9-year old students reported reading for enjoyment almost every day.

Of course, NAEP also found a correlation between students who reported reading for fun

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*We want our time together in the classroom to be full of the joy of discovery and learning.*

and improved test scores. While test scores are an important indicator, they are not a goal in and of themselves. Focusing on testing can also ignore a crucial element, one that Cote and Ruthven are eager to see and include in their classrooms: joy.

“After everything our kids have been through, after the isolation of the past few years, after the challenges their families have faced, maybe losing a loved one or economic hardships, we want our students to be happy to be back here with us,” Cote said. “We want them to be as happy to be back in person with us as we are to be with them. We want our time together in the classroom to be full of the joy of discovery and learning. It’s about filling them up with light and love, not about testing and remediation.” 📖



## Kim Cote’s Favorite Books for 4th graders

- *Fish in a Tree* by Lynda Mullaly Hunt
- *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing* by Judy Blume
- *The Sandwich Swap* by Queen Rania of Jordan Al Abdullah
- *An A From Miss Keller* by Patricia Polacco
- *The Boy Who Grew a Forest: The True Story of Jadav Payeng* by Sophia Gholz and Kayla Harren



Top: Students are encouraged to read wherever they are comfortable in the classroom.  
Bottom: Kim Cote reads to students during group story time.

# THE INTERSECTION OF ART AND BUSINESS

Innovative program bridges the gap

By Kathryn Coulibaly

Teresa De Sapio Diaz has always been an artist. The commercial arts/advertising design and 3-D computer animation teacher grew up in Hunterdon County and was inspired to pursue a career in art out of college. She opened her own business, TADS – Art & Illustration, which she continues to run even as she enters her 24th year of teaching at Hunterdon County Polytech Career and Technical High School, raises four children, and teaches art at night to adults.

As an artist and a business owner, she knows the importance of teaching her students business skills. Thirteen years ago, she began a partnership with local Rotary clubs through the Bridging the Gap program. The program originated with a marketing teacher, but it eventually migrated to the art department, and Diaz has been running it ever since.

“We started this program as a way to help our

students learn how to start their own businesses as artists,” Diaz said. “We give them the practical skills they need to take themselves seriously as artists and business owners, and we introduce them to people who can make that dream a reality.”

The program is for first- and second-year commercial arts/advertising design students. During the first semester, Diaz introduces them to the various career possibilities they can pursue in art, such as mural painter, jewelry designer, graphic artist, and many others.

In January, the students decide what area they want to pursue, but it has to be a career they can pursue immediately with the skills they currently have to offer.

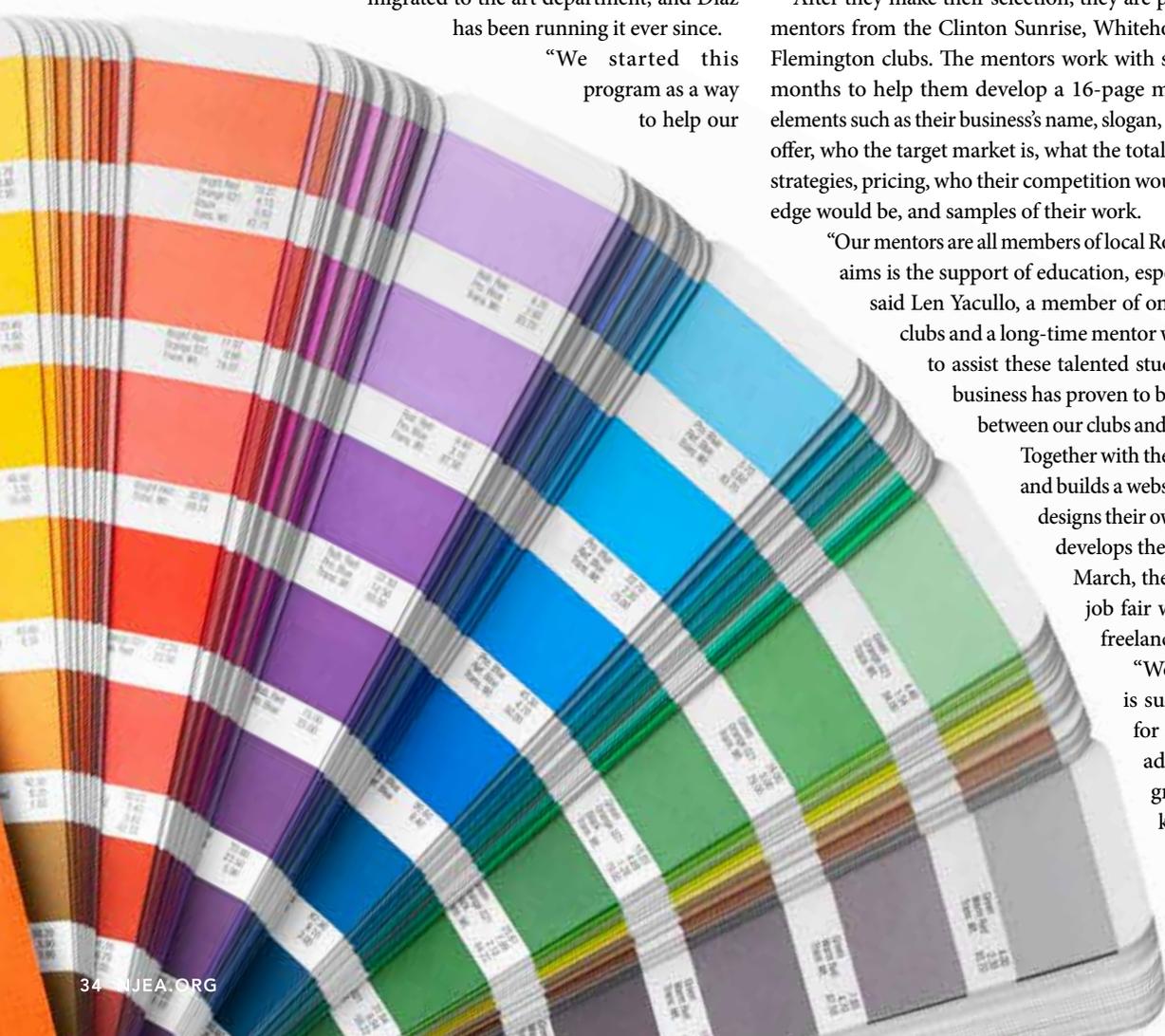
After they make their selection, they are paired with local Rotary Club mentors from the Clinton Sunrise, Whitehouse, North Hunterdon, and Flemington clubs. The mentors work with students one-on-one for two months to help them develop a 16-page marketing plan that includes elements such as their business’s name, slogan, what services the business will offer, who the target market is, what the total market would be, marketing strategies, pricing, who their competition would be, what their competitive edge would be, and samples of their work.

“Our mentors are all members of local Rotary clubs, and one of Rotary’s aims is the support of education, especially vocational education,”

said Len Yacullo, a member of one of the participating Rotary clubs and a long-time mentor with the program. “Being able to assist these talented students with our knowledge of business has proven to be an outstanding partnership between our clubs and Hunterdon County Polytech.”

Together with the Rotarian, the student designs and builds a website and social media accounts, designs their own logo and business card, and develops their resume. By the last week of March, they are ready for a community job fair where they will interview for freelance jobs.

“Working with the Rotarians is such an invaluable experience for our students,” Diaz said. “As adults, we sometimes take for granted all the things that we know. Even at that first mentor meeting, we have to prepare the students for how to dress





Mary K. Parente, owner of Honey Pot Art, interviews for freelance work with Michael Dimsey, owner of It's Koffee Time.

professionally, how to greet their mentor. I'll have the students show me outfit ideas on their phone to make sure it's appropriate before that initial meeting. We've had whole lessons on what is appropriate business attire."

After the first mentor meeting, Diaz works with the students to write a professional email thanking the mentors for their time and mentioning a specific piece of advice that was useful to them.

### LEARNING THE BUSINESS OF ART

Thirteen years into the program, the freelance job fair is well-known in the community, but the Rotary clubs and Hunterdon County Polytech Career and Technical High School do an excellent job promoting it to potential employers in the community. The job fair attracts a variety of businesses interested in a variety of design needs, such as website design, illustration, graphic design, social media marketing, art therapy products, pet portraits, fashion, jewelry, T-shirts, menus, brochures, banners and tattoo design.

"Each year, we never know who is going to come," Diaz said. "Sometimes, it's authors who need a book illustrated or hospitals that need a logo for an event. About a week before the event, we have a list of employers so the students can research them and be prepared."

The actual job fair is a lot like speed dating. Employers sit at a table and students sit across from them with their portfolios and discuss their work and the employers' design needs. Every student interviews for every job.

"Students are very, very nervous at first," Diaz said. "After a while, they say it gets easier. And they get better with each interview. They leave the employers with a copy of their resume, business card, and sample sheet with their artwork. The employers rank their top three candidates and call and offer them the job."

After the career fair, the students can accept one offer, so they learn how to

accept and how to reject a business opportunity. They also have to negotiate a price and write a legal contract, including deadlines and a deposit.

Their Rotary mentor and Diaz are available to them every step of the way. Diaz assists primarily with the art side of the equation, and the Rotarian assists with the business aspects.

"One of the biggest takeaways for students is time management," Diaz said. "But they also learn how to communicate effectively with the client about art, how to take a critique, and how to get on the same page. They learn that, ultimately, they have to satisfy the client's needs."

Diaz finds that when a student runs into problems, it's actually a great learning experience for them. They ultimately find that it's so rewarding for them to solve the issue and they learn perseverance.

"I love guiding them through that," Diaz said.

### ROTARY CLUB MENTORS GUIDE STUDENT-ARTISTS

At the end of the project timeline, which runs about six weeks, they hold an awards ceremony that the students, mentors and clients all attend. The students present the projects and the Rotarians determine which student has done the best and present them with a \$500 scholarship.

The mentors gain a lot of satisfaction from working with the students and can be quite competitive about whose student wins the scholarship.

"I love working with the students," said Megan Jones-Holt, a long-time mentor and a founding Rotary member. "They are so bright-eyed, but in one hour we turn their heads just by asking basic questions and getting them to understand that you have to make money. We really make them focus on the business side. I also love the competition between the students presenting their projects. For me, it's about my mentored student coming out on top—which I have to brag and say that over the 27 years I've been



Henry Cooper, owner of Coop's Kustoms, sets up samples of his pinstriping work and sticker designs for potential employers to view.

working as a mentor, my student has won 90% of the time!”

Whether they win the scholarship or not, many students decide to maintain their businesses, even after graduation. They find that it helps them pay for college, even as they continue in the field they love.

“One of my students is a jewelry design major in college running her ‘Bridging the Gap’ business in college and another alumna is a graphic design major running an online store designing wallpaper for iPads and phones,” Diaz said.

The portfolio they produce through the program also helps them when applying to college, and the confidence and skills in interviewing are an asset no matter what they decide to do.

### MAKING A LIVING THROUGH ART

The students are enthusiastic about the program and the skills it brings.

“The thing I enjoy the most about Bridging the Gap is getting to explore new career path plans,” said Mary K. Parente, a Bridging the Gap participant. “It helped me think about what I would enjoy doing in the future and what I can do about it now. During the process, I learned about how to market not just my products and company but myself as an artist. The program helped me prepare for my future by giving me real world experience as well as teaching me what I don’t want to do in the future in a space without real consequences.”

For student Henry Cooper, it gave him a practical argument for studying art, a subject he loved.

“I really enjoyed having the total creativity to make my own business the way I wanted. I learned how to contact and talk to clients. By doing Bridging the Gap and studying at Polytech, as a whole, I have changed my mind about college and decided to study art, as well as science. Bridging the Gap has allowed me to rekindle my love for art.”

For Diaz, helping students find a way to keep art in their lives is an added benefit.

“It’s so amazing to have a career as an artist,” Diaz said. “I’m always looking at life through an artist’s lens. Even after 23 years of teaching, I think that’s why I’m still so excited about teaching; I come to work happy every day because I’m still an artist and I come to school with that energy. The students know it and feel it.”

Diaz’s students and colleagues certainly feel it; in August 2021, she was named the Hunterdon County Teacher of the Year. She continues to bring energy and enthusiasm to her many roles in and outside of school. 🏡



Rotary member and Hunterdon County Vocational BOE Vice President Kevin Gilman sits with his mentees. From left: Maeve Eskind, Gilman, Katelyn Lucas, and Katherine Mastropaolo.



Margaret Conroy, owner of The Upcycling Castle, discusses her hand-painted clothing designs with employer Allison Purcell.



Many schools partner with local Rotary clubs and other community service organizations to benefit their students. Learn more about if there is a Rotary club in your area at [njrotary.org](http://njrotary.org).



# PREJUDICE & PRIDE

Students take the mic on Hillsborough High School's race and ethnicity podcast

*By Kathryn Coulibaly*

As Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s familiar voice intones, "That all men are created equal" more voices chime in, saying, "Our fates are linked," and "Race issues are controversial, but that's precisely the reason we need to talk about them." So begins the introductory episode of *Prejudice & Pride*, a podcast created and produced by Hillsborough High School students eager to discuss race and ethnicity in their own space, in their own way.

As junior Ray Fofana said on the introductory episode, "For so much of my life, conversations about race and ethnicity have been viewed as supplemental topics of discussions, not the crucial and urgent ones that they are. Growing up in an interracial and bi-religious family has forced me to confront frequent adversity in regard to my identity."

Fofana continued, "At times, the environment within our school has made me feel like my own existence was political or just completely invalidated. Oftentimes, in the classroom, conversations about race, diversity, and even acceptance are avoided because of the fear of controversy. By ignoring these topics, it has

been harder for me, and other students from marginalized groups, to feel supported in the classroom. This podcast has given me a space to share my experience, but without the obligation to make it more digestible."

Sophomore Izzy Volpe pointed out that she has spent more than a decade as a student in public education and participated in countless assemblies and lessons on bullying and the importance of practicing love, kindness, compassion, and empathy. Yet, she questioned, "How is it... that the topics of racism—both systemic and personal—have never come up? How authentic is the message of kindness, compassion and empathy when it does not even acknowledge one of the most prevalent injustices in our society and school system? It is important that we begin to expand that messaging to include anti-racism, and that is why I am so excited to be a part of this podcast."

Guided by Hillsborough High School social studies teacher Robert Fenster, the students are very much leading the conversation.

"Hillsborough High School is a suburban upper-middle-class community and the population of the school is fairly diverse," Fenster said. "Social

studies and English teachers are struggling to make sure that the curriculum is representative, and students sometimes feel we're lagging behind. I wanted to give students an opportunity to explore those issues and a way to tell their stories and explore the complexity of a variety of topics that we just aren't afforded during the school day."

The students have been working for months to identify topics, discuss how they want to break down the podcast and determine who will do what.

Fenster considers himself the showrunner for the podcast. He conceived the idea and approached students he thought would be interested. They immediately recruited others.

"This is truly student-driven," Fenster said. "We've met via Google Meet at night and regularly email ideas back and forth. The students break down topics and decide who will take on which subjects. They do the research, identify people to interview, conduct the interview, and eventually will edit the episode as well."

Fenster found support from Hillsborough High School administration and sought additional financial resources to implement the program.

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*This podcast has given me a space to share my experience, but without the obligation to make it more digestible.*

In 2020, he successfully applied for an NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Grant for Excellence in Education for \$3,833 to purchase a Macintosh computer and recording equipment, including microphones, boom microphone stands, and portable digital recorders. The grant also pays the fee for the platform that hosts the blog. The grant is for the 2021-22 school year.

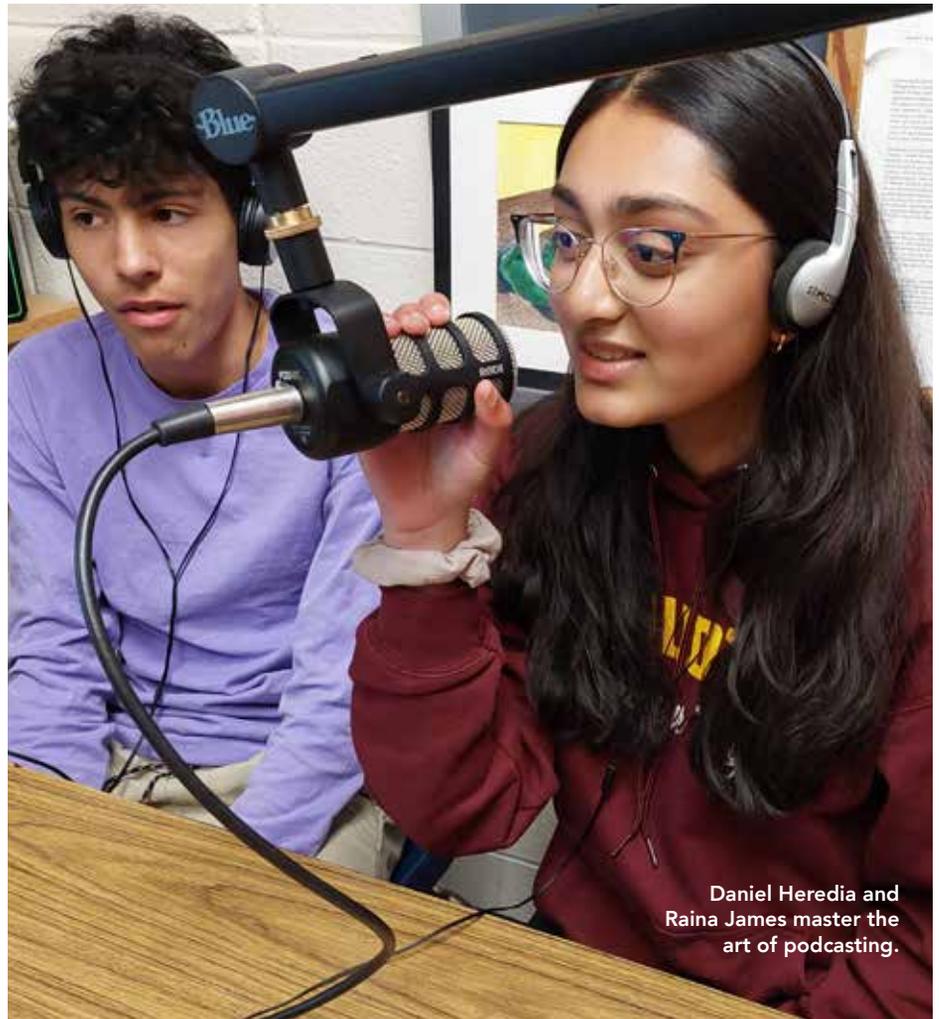
In January 2022, the students began posting their podcast with the goal of one podcast every two weeks. The topics covered have addressed a wide range of content. In “Science and the Myth of Race,” sophomore Raina James interviewed Dr. Daniel Fairbanks of Utah Valley University. In “Am I Racist?” senior Melanie Quesada and junior Alec Ruitter discussed implicit bias and the impossibility of being “colorblind.” In “Here First, Here Now,” junior Bella Moyacarneiro explores the Indigenous experience within the Hillsborough community.

“P&P Unfiltered Chat” is one of a planned series of periodic, unscripted episodes that allows members of the group to talk about a variety of topics off-the-cuff. “Female Artists of Color” focuses on student artists, their areas of focus, and the shared challenges of being taken seriously and nourished as creators as a result of their intersectionality.

“We’re also going to have a feature called ‘Ask Us Anything,’ and we’re hoping students will reach out to ask us questions they might not feel comfortable asking somewhere else,” Fenster said. “We want to educate people. One topic that keeps coming up in anti-racism work is that it’s not the responsibility of ethnic or racial minorities to educate white



Samarth Ramaswamy and Olivia Altidor record an episode of Prejudice & Pride.



Daniel Heredia and Raina James master the art of podcasting.

*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).*

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Students discuss racial issues in an unfiltered chat in the podcasting lab.



people about these things, but the students in this club want to have these conversations; they want to be a source for people. And, as they say, it's not like they have all the answers; they want to learn more and share their experiences and hopefully facilitate a better understanding and cooperation."

Senior Azinwi Numfor, who describes herself as quite chatty, said, "I think there is an underrated power that comes from civil discourse and engaging in meaningful conversations about current issues. Growing up Black in a predominantly white area has confronted me with many instances of ignorance. I think when it comes to race, there is too much silence about the multiple issues at hand... I hope that through this podcast, we can inspire discussions about the issues of race and hopefully people will stray from ignoring issues that make them uncomfortable."

Fofana sees immense value in having this space to confront challenging issues.

"I now have the opportunity to invite conversation without the fear of being penalized or labeled as an instigator," Fofana said. "Although I can't forget the microaggressions or overt racism I encounter 'on the daily,' being surrounded by a network of students who are eager and willing to explore these topics has given me a new sense of hope. I believe that this podcast will prompt the much-needed, hopefully ongoing discussions about race and ethnicity within our school community."

Raina James discussed the importance of talking to high school students about racism as they are the future parents and guardians of the next generation.

"If your parents or guardians use discriminatory language, chances are, you'll internalize their really damaging ideas," James said. "I really want to break this generational pattern... so they can bring up their children in a more inclusive society."

The New Jersey Council for the Social Studies recently recognized James for her work on "The Science and Myth of Race" episode.

As Fofana said in the introduction to the podcast, "Although these topics may, at times, be controversial and lead to emotional responses, we will not shy away from the conversation. We believe that open, candid conversation is the best way to develop tolerance, understanding, and acceptance, and we invite you to join us, roll up your sleeves, and do the work."

You can listen to the podcast on Apple, Google podcasts, Spotify, and anywhere podcasts are available. Learn more about the podcast at [hhspod.com/prejudiceandpride](https://hhspod.com/prejudiceandpride) and follow the Prejudice & Pride podcast on Instagram at [hhsprejudiceandpride](https://www.instagram.com/hhsprejudiceandpride). 📌

## Apply for an NJEA Hipp Grant

NJEA Frederick L. Hipp grants help educators bring creative ideas to life. The only foundation of its kind in New Jersey, the Hipp Foundation supports initiatives to promote excellence in education.

More than \$2.3 million in grants for innovative educational projects that represent a bold, fresh approach by public school employees has already been awarded. Apply for a Hipp grant and bring your innovative ideas to life. Grants range from \$500-\$10,000.

The annual deadline is March 1. Learn more at [njea.org/hipp](https://njea.org/hipp).

## Fenster named to National Teacher Hall of Fame

In April, Bob Fenster was surprised at Hillsborough High School as one of only five teachers in the country to be named in the Class of 2022 to the National Teacher Hall of Fame.

Fenster has been teaching for 29 years. He is a social studies teacher at Hillsborough High School.

In addition to the Prejudice & Pride podcast, Fenster is currently advising the Model Congress, Model United Nations, Mock Trial, Amnesty International, and podcasting clubs, and runs an annual alumni charity concert.

This year Fenster has also received the Educational Ambassador Award from the Pegasus Springs Education Collective and the Teaching Award from the New Jersey Studies Academic Alliance. In 2019, Fenster was named the Secondary Teacher of the Year by the New Jersey Council for the Social Studies. He has also been awarded the Law-Related Education Teacher of the Year from the American Lawyers Alliance, the Paul A. Gagnon Prize from the National Council for History Education, the Claes Nobel Top Ten Educator of the Year Award from the National Society of High School Scholars, the Teacher of the Year award from the Jewish Guild for the Blind, and the Phebe and Zephaniah Swift Moore Teaching Award from Amherst College, among other accolades.

Fenster has been a Reese Fellow at the Crystal Bridges Museum in Bentonville, Arkansas, and a Swensrud Fellow at the Massachusetts Historical Society, a Barringer Fellow at Monticello, and a fellow at the Robert H. Jackson Center. In all of these fellowships, he curated resources and developed lesson plans to share with his peers.

After visiting Sierra Leone with the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance and Abolition, he helped to fundraise nearly \$5,000 to pay for photocopying critical course materials and meals for students getting extra help at the Ahmadiyya Muslim Senior Secondary School in the city of Bo.

Four other New Jersey teachers have previously been named to the National Teacher Hall of Fame over its 30 years, including Tracey Fallon, Richard Ruffalo, James Quinlan, and Ronald Foresio, who was actually Fenster's teacher in his senior year at Parsippany High School in 1987.

The National Teacher Hall of Fame was founded in 1989 in Emporia, Kansas by Emporia State University, the ESU Alumni Association, the City of Emporia, Emporia Public Schools, and the Emporia Area Chamber of Commerce. It held its first induction of five teachers in 1992 and has since honored 150 educators. The mission of The National Teachers Hall of Fame is to recognize and honor exceptional career teachers, encourage excellence in teaching, and preserve the rich heritage of the teaching profession in the United States. In addition to the National Teachers Hall of Fame Museum, they are also home to a national memorial to fallen educators. Learn more at [nthf.org](https://nthf.org).

# DOCUMENT, ANALYZE, PREVENT

## Using incident report data

By Dorothy Wigmore

Trying to get a better handle on hazards in the school or make the case that people are getting sick or hurt in particular jobs or spaces?

Individuals can talk to co-workers, union/building representatives or health and safety committee members. Committees can do walk-throughs or surveys.

These surveillance tools—looking for health symptoms, injuries or hazards—are essential to identify hazards and prevent their effects. There's another option—job-related and reported injuries or illnesses can be found on the “300 log” and their 300A annual summary forms.

Districts must use these documents to track job-related sickness or injury needing more than first aid, one for each building. The New Jersey law is based on the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) Recording and Reporting Occupational Injuries and Illness Standard.

The log or list is based on an incident report (a PEOSH 301 form or a similar document) that employers must fill out within seven days of learning about a “recordable”—i.e., it meets the criteria—incident. The form, 300 log and 300A summary must be kept for at least five years.

“Job-related” refers to something that happens “in the work environment,” including exposure to a hazard, that causes or contributes to an injury or illness, or significantly aggravates a preexisting condition. (This isn't always straight-forward, especially for longer-term health effects.)

The 300 log lists the basics about an injury or illness incident, specifically the:

- Person's name and their job title.
- “Injury” date (can be hard to pinpoint if it's an illness).
- The injury/illness and body part affected.
- Classification by result—death, days off work, job transfer/restriction, other (based on the most serious result).
- Number of days off work or not doing the regular job.
- The type of injury or illness.

Rules clarify when someone's name must be kept confidential (e.g., sexual assault, needlestick injuries, mental illness) and what kinds of job-related illnesses/diseases must be reported (e.g., cancer, needlestick injuries, fractured/cracked bones, chronic irreversible disease). Only job-related deaths and the hospitalization of three or more people from one incident must be reported to PEOSH, within identified time limits. (See the resources.)

On the ground, the overall system varies from district to district. However it's done, information must end up on 300 log and annual summary. The latter must be posted in a visible spot in the workplace between Feb. 1 and April 30 each year.

### WORKERS AND THEIR UNIONS HAVE ACCESS

These records provide valuable information for union and joint health and safety committee members and building and other union representatives.

Whether it's the summary document or 300 logs, employers must give copies on request to

individual employees, former workers, and union or workers' personal representatives, e.g., a family member, friend, lawyer. These must be provided by the end of the next business day following the request. Other than specific privacy rules, names cannot be removed.

*Dorothy Wigmore is a long-time health and safety specialist and WEC consultant. She has worked in Canada, the U.S. and Mozambique, focusing on prevention and worker participation to solve job-related hazards. These days, she is writing *Transmission Truth?* a book about workers' experiences in the pandemic.*



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*School nurses play an important role in keeping track of who's been hurt or got sick at work.*

Employers also must provide copies of incident report forms to workers, former employees or their personal representatives, without removing personal information. The deadline also is the end of the next business day after a request. If a union representative asks for them, the employer has seven days to provide a copy, with personal information removed.

#### SCHOOL NURSES HAVE AN IMPORTANT ROLE

School nurses play an important role in keeping track of who's been hurt or got sick at work.

In Irvington, staff are expected to report injuries or illnesses to the long-time school nurse, Cynthia Samuel, within 24 hours. She fills out the 300 form, sending it on to the employee health department. She also fills out the 300A summary each year.

Sheila Caldwell's experiences as a Monmouth County school nurse is different. There, she sends incident reports to the human resources department, which decides what gets onto the 300 log.

Both emphasize that school nurses often see trends—the kinds of injuries or illnesses and where they're happening over time. Caldwell has done presentations for NJEA about how school nurses can help committees.

For example, after plexiglass forms went up around desks in the pandemic, Caldwell started seeing teachers and students with plastic cuts.

"I went to the administrator about it," Sheila recalls. "They had to have somebody come in to file or shave it. We're the people who see the trends, so why not include us?"

"We're the ones who know the building," Samuel adds. "We're able to communicate that information and submit addendums to those incident reports."

## What can health and safety committees do?

**Encourage reporting.** Not all injuries and illnesses are reported. Work with the school nurse to encourage co-workers to track when they feel ill (especially if they're better away from work) and report if there's a pattern over about two weeks. Support those reluctant to file reports. "Documentation makes a difference," Samuels says.

**Request data regularly.** Get 300 logs and incident reports every month or two, before meetings. Ask the school nurse for first aid information too.

**Supplement with surveys and inspections, for a more complete picture.** Studies and outside data (e.g., BLS) provide more links about hazards, jobs and injuries/illnesses.

**Analyze the information.** Work with math wizards, school nurses, building representatives to find patterns. Make body and workplace maps, color coding types of injuries and illnesses (reported and from surveys). Add categories besides ones on the 300 logs based on patterns and/or situations. Always consider gender, jobs, frequency. Add survey/inspection hazard information.

**Plan solutions and strategies to prevent injuries, illnesses and hazards.** Take them to the union and district. Follow-up.

## Resources

### Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS)

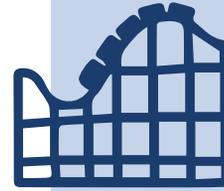
Survey of occupational injuries and illness data and other statistics  
[beautifultrouble.org](http://beautifultrouble.org)

### NJEA

Health and safety committees  
Knowledge + Action = Change  
[njea.org/hscomm-kac](http://njea.org/hscomm-kac)

### PEOSH

Recordkeeping Reporting Requirements – Guidelines/Forms:  
[nj.gov/labor/safetyandhealth/assets/PDFs/Forms/NJOSH300.pdf](http://nj.gov/labor/safetyandhealth/assets/PDFs/Forms/NJOSH300.pdf)



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# YOUR SUMMER READING LIST

## From the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division

Once again, we find ourselves in June realizing that “this was a year like none other.” It was the third straight year marked by interrupted learning while attempting to return to some sense of normalcy. Many educators are looking again to the summer as a time to recharge before facing whatever challenges might be around the corner in 2022-23.

If some of that recharge time includes exploring new ideas through text or other media, the staff members of the Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division once again have perused their proverbial bookshelves to make some recommendations for summer reading or listening.

One of the division’s newest staff members, Lizandaa Alburg suggests *The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together* by Heather McGee. She explains that

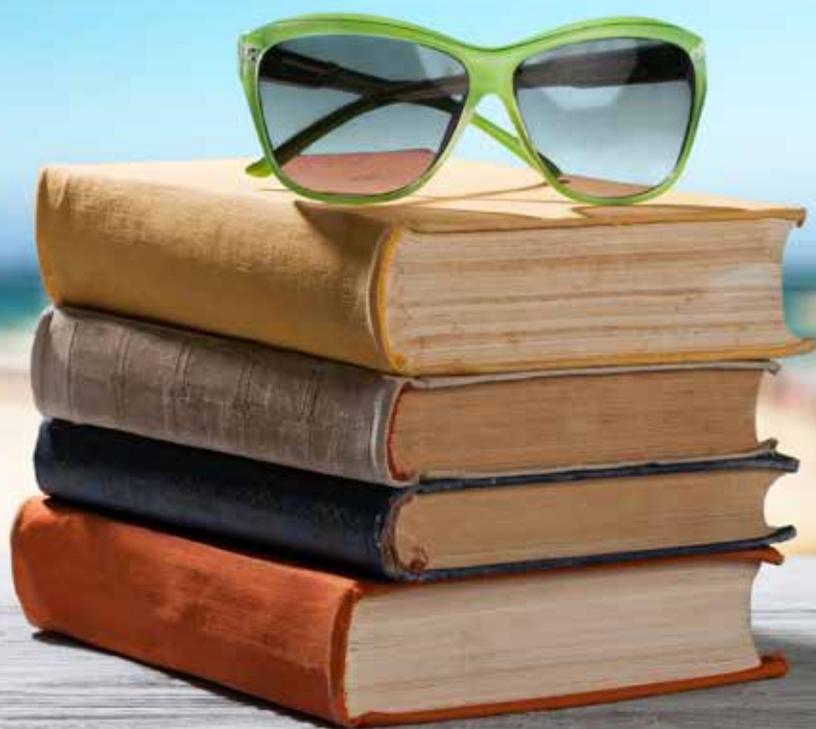
McGee masterfully uses analytics, sound research, historical events, statistics and anecdotes to challenge the zero-sum narrative—the idea that gains of one group comes at the losses of another. This thought-provoking book is a must read for social justice activists and every union member ready to change mindsets, host conversations and understand how we are all connected.

Because she is an avid gardener and loves the outdoors, administrative assistant Cindy Vannauker has enjoyed reading *The Old Farmer’s Almanac 2022: Trade Edition*. She finds the almanac to be a great resource with information that is useful on a multitude of topics. She also enjoys their gardening wall calendar and Night Sky Almanac, which she describes as great resources for people who don’t have time for much reading.

Associate Director Elisabeth Yucis was inspired for her choice from a conversation she recently

had with colleagues and members around the values driving our work. The value of belonging—accepting oneself and others is vital as we work to strengthen our union. With this motivation in mind, she will be rereading *Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone* by Brené Brown. Written in 2017, this book holds valuable lessons we can apply to reconnecting and rebuilding as we emerge from the COVID pandemic and try to heal our divided political landscape.

The new director of the division, Dr. Chrissi Miles, turns to a future keynote speaker and recommends two books by the same author: Nikole Hannah-Jones’s *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story* and *Born on the Water*. In both titles, Nikole Hannah-Jones’ writing paints a clear, powerful, and real history of the Black experience in America. In preparation for



Convention 2022, where Hannah-Jones will provide a keynote address, we invite members to immerse themselves in her work.

Associate Director Camy Kobylinski turned to the keynote speaker from this year's NJEA Exceptional Children Conference in reading *Empowering Students with Hidden Disabilities: A Path to Pride and Success* by Margo Vreeburg Izzo and LeDerick Horne. Through Horne's experience as a person with a learning disability, the book gives families and educators practical ideas on how to inspire students to find their passion and achieve their life goals.

In 2018, Gov. Phil Murphy signed the Transgender Student Bill of Rights. With students coming out at younger and younger ages and many schools finding themselves ill-equipped to support students in understanding their gender identities, Associate Director Rich Wilson suggests *Transgender Students in Elementary School* by Dr. Melinda Mangin. Using many real-life stories of success, Mangin provides practical strategies for educators to create gender-inclusive schools where all students can learn.

Amanda Adams, Associate Director and coordinator of ACCESS is recommending *Angela*

*Davis, An Autobiography* in which Davis describes her compelling journey from a childhood on Dynamite Hill in Birmingham, Alabama to one of the most significant political trials of the century. The reader is taken on a journey from her political activity in a New York high school to her work with the U.S. Communist Party, the Black Panther Party and the Soledad Brothers. And Davis' story continues as a faculty member in the Philosophy Department at UCLA to her appearance on the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted Fugitives" list.

A recommendation from a classic union organizing story is the recommendation of Janet Royal, Associate Director and NJEA Convention Coordinator. In *Holding the Line: Women in the Great Arizona Mine Strike of 1983*, author Barbara Kingsolver relates the compelling story of how women's lives were changed by a strike that lasted 18 months against the Phelps Dodge Copper Corporation. This is truly a story of hope, empowerment and strength.

Another new addition to the staff is Associate Director Dawn Howlen who recommends *Miseducated: A Memoir* by Brandon P. Fleming. The author takes us on an inspirational journey from his unsuccessful suicide attempt to Harvard

University, where he is an assistant debate coach. Through his lens, we learn about the importance of perseverance through adversity and how giving back to his community allowed his life to come full circle.

And if you are a true crime fan who prefers listening to reading the written word, Administrative Assistant Vicki Serreino suggests *Down the Hill: The Delphi Murders*, narrated by hosts, Andrew Iden and Barbara MacDonald. They weave together the story of two young girls who disappear during a hiking trip, only to be found dead the next day. In spite of video recordings and the voice of the alleged killer on one girl's cellphone, the murders remain unsolved to this day.

Whether you'll be on a beach, in a mountain cabin, or in the comfort of your own backyard, we hope this list inspires you to explore some new ideas and broaden your worldview before our schools are once again filled with the energy of learning that comes with the return of students in September. 📚

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# Closegap helps students understand emotions

By Cory Mueller and Dawn Reilly

*Hi, how are you?*

Let's think about the amount of times you are the expresser or recipient of that cordial greeting daily. Now take it a step further. How many times do you get or give honest accounts of true feelings? The typical and superficial response would be, "I'm good," but that is not necessarily the truth. In the educational setting, we really want to know how our students are feeling because we see a direct correlation between feelings and academic performance.

Looking from an emotional regulation standpoint, not all students will be entering the classroom in the green zone, meaning that they are ready to learn. Students may be in the blue zone (sad), yellow zone (anxious and worried), or the red zone (angry and frustrated).

Children's feelings fluctuate in a given day and over periods of time—all related to things in the imaginary suitcases that they wheel into our school buildings. Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) such as abuse, neglect and household dysfunction all contribute to this rollercoaster of emotions that impact academics and social performance in the educational setting.

*Dawn Reilly and Cory Mueller are school psychologists in the Haddon Heights School District in Camden County.*

Showing students that it is OK to express true feelings, and that others really want to know how they are feeling, is a life lesson that will lead to the development of healthy minds and provide improved access to coping strategies. So how can we do this in large classroom settings with academic demands and time constraints?

## AN EMOTIONAL DAILY CHECK-IN

One answer to this question that we have found successful in the Haddon Heights School District is Closegap. The Closegap program is a no-cost digital emotional wellness tool that provides students with a daily emotional check-in. The program walks students through identifying their feelings to utilize coping skills and provides them an avenue to communicate their needs to staff. It also provides teachers with real-time data and increased student insight.

Closegap can be used classwide or as a tiered social-emotional learning (SEL) support for students identified by their counselors and/or teachers. This program allows educators to take the daily emotional temperatures of their students to determine those who are in need of extra support. Closegap has an easy-to-use website and educator toolkit with all materials needed for successful implementation. Educator buy-in is easy with this

## Explore Closegap

Mental health matters, let's start changing the conversation in early childhood education and be proactive. Check out Closegap at [closegap.org](https://closegap.org) to support the emotional health of your students from kindergarten through 12th grade!

program because of its easy-to-navigate platform and positive student accounts.

Daily data is easily sorted into categories: urgent, could benefit from support, and good-to-go. It can be used by classroom teachers, guidance counselors, case managers and other educators who work with the students.

In these presorted categories, educators can quickly access individual data on student emotion, energy level, coping activity performed, and how the student felt after the check-in. During this emotional check-in, students are asked how they are feeling, how that feels in their body, what else is going on, and what activity they would like to complete for calming or energizing their bodies. This program uses visually appealing feeling planets coupled with words that teach students how to understand what they are feeling and why they are feeling a that way.

The teaching and reinforcement of positive coping strategies such as box breathing, the power pose, gratitude lists, journaling and progressive muscle relaxation allows students to understand that the actions they choose to take can improve their negative feelings. The goal is to generalize these techniques during situations that bring them out of the green zone. They learn that sometimes we just need to take some deep breaths before that big test or that we need remember the things that we are thankful for when we are bummed out and feeling like life isn't going our way.

Closegap is an incredible program that emphasizes early intervention, crisis intervention, creating relationships with trusted adults and emotional regulation skills. A quick check-in can make the difference in students' understanding of their feelings, in coping with adversity, and in promoting the mindset that it's OK to not be OK. 🌍



# THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

## THE EARLY CAREER NETWORK PODCAST

BY HANNAH PAWLAK



The NJEA Early Career Network has launched a podcast titled “The First Five Years,” which broadcasts content of interest to members in their early years working in public education and as association members. We just completed Season One, which features various NJEA and NEA Member Benefits programs and other resources including SAVI, California Casualty, Realty Executives, and Hipp grants.

### WITHIN THE EPISODES

The season kicked off with an episode on college debt featuring our NEA Member Benefits partner, SAVI, a loan consolidation tool run by experts in the field. Each year, SAVI helps many people save money on their college loans. We tackled tough questions such as how we got to where we are

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*Hannah Pawlak is the Local Evaluation Committee chair for the Highland Park Education Association, and a teacher at Highland Park High School. She represents Middlesex County on the NJEA Certification, Evaluation, and Tenure Committee. Pawlak is an NJEA organizing consultant. She can be reached at [hpawlak@njea.org](mailto:hpawlak@njea.org). To learn more about the NJEA Early Career Network, visit [njea.org/early-career](http://njea.org/early-career).*

with student loan debt. We also offered helpful terminology and outlined the steps to access forgiveness plans.

Within the podcast, listeners also learn how to apply for a Hipp grant. These are offered by the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education to fund educators’ ideas as they embark on grassroots innovative projects. All members, regardless of job category, are eligible to apply for a grant. The episode offered tips and tricks for getting an application accepted.

An episode on the housing market was informative and timely as real estate is currently booming. On this episode our experts from Realty Executives, a full-service real estate brokerage, and California Casualty, an auto and home insurance provider for public school employees, detailed the home buying process while breaking down mystifying aspects that often confuse first-time homebuyers.

The podcast also features an episode on NJEA Preservice, the NJEA membership category open to those studying to be an educator at a New Jersey college or university.

The season ended with a “what I wish I knew” episode featuring Elisabeth Yucis, an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. She gave advice to those starting their careers.

These episodes not only answer members’ questions, they give actionable resources to help members utilize the discounts and savings plans that come with their NJEA membership. The First Five Years is in an “ask the expert” style, so listeners are provided with reliable information.

### GOOD VIBES FRIDAY

Between the episodes, early career members from across the state end the week with a mindfulness practice or guided meditation to harbor positivity leading into the weekend. In these segments an early-career member leads the

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**You can access the podcast—and all previous episodes—at [smarturl.it/First5Years](http://smarturl.it/First5Years).**

listeners through a relaxation method that gives them piece of mind when looking to destress and relax. Those who are interested in recording an episode for Good Vibes Friday should feel free to contact me expressing their interest.

### LISTEN NOW

You can access the podcast—and all previous episodes—at [smarturl.it/First5Years](http://smarturl.it/First5Years). You can also access the podcast by searching its name on various platforms such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Prime Music, and more.

We are looking forward to recording our second season featuring more valuable resources coupled with early career member testimonials for further authenticity. Access the podcast here on various platforms such as Spotify, Apple Podcasts, Prime Music, and more. 📻



**Early Career  
Network**

# RAINBOW CONNECTION CELEBRATES PRIDE!

By Amy Moran, Ph.D. and Kate Okeson

## PARADES, PROTESTS, AND PROM

Highly coordinated, citywide LGBT Pride celebrations in major metropolitan centers around the globe serve to make a big splash in major news outlets and enhance a certain kind of large-scale queer visibility.

This visibility can provide a welcome antidote to the queer marginalization and invisibility that many young people experience in their families, communities, and school curricula and culture on the other 364 days of the year.

Along with thumping dance music and logo-enhanced giveaways thrown to throngs of spectators, gigantic LGBT Pride parades (such as New York City's on Sunday, June 26, 2022) also provide opportunities for LGBTQIA+ organizations to gather and march together, demonstrating their unique ways of celebrating queer people and their solidarity and allyship with other queer organizations.

In New Jersey, where several communities mark Pride Month with flag raisings, parades, and other community events, we see some of our favorite groups often featured: SAGE, PFLAG, GLSEN, queer-affirming religious organizations, queer-celebrating athletic groups, queer marching bands, queer-affirming political organizations, and (Amy's favorite) the womyn's motorcycle groups like Dykes on Bikes. The energy of seeing so many expressions of our community together is remarkable!

However, Pride as we know it did not begin as a parade, but as a protest. As history reminds us, Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco (1966), the Black Cat Tavern in Los Angeles (1967) and the Stonewall Inn in New York City (1969) were original sites of queer uprisings against police and their habitual brutality against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

Many of us honor the ways in which LGBTQIA+ Pride wasn't originally an expression of joyful acceptance by the rest of American straight/cisgender culture but an acknowledgement of the literal blood, sweat, and tears of queer Americans who would no longer tolerate being threatened, arrested, battered, jailed; to lose housing and jobs; and/or be physically and sexually assaulted in widespread attempts at silencing queer culture and forcing LGBTQIA+ existence into invisibility, underground and out of view.

Today, Pride parades with corporate sponsorship are countered by Queer Liberation Marches that return the focus of these gatherings to highlighting discrepancies around representation, rights, protection, affirmation and autonomy (think: health care and education), and full equality under the law.

### Why are marches and parades still needed?

What else do these marches and parades provide? Why do we still need them? Or more specifically, why are these demonstrations important to youth? We can't give you every reason, but we can focus on one.

Let's go back into our collective memory, to middle and high school especially, and the communal experiences that balance out the academic



Chaperones at the 11th annual GAYLA! an LGBTQIA+ Youth Alternative prom, co-hosted by Red Bank Regional High School and its Spectrum Group, Roxanne Judice, adviser. From left: Cole Callahan, Paul Savoia (Steve's husband), Steve Koumoulis, Kate Okeson, and Amy Moran.

parts of school; yearbook, athletics, clubs, plays, and perhaps most prominently, *prom*—a pinnacle of high school events.

But what if prom doesn't seem like an option? What if going to the event means you also have to consider *how* you dress—not just *which* dress—because it doesn't align with your gender identity/expression? What if it means that you can't bring a date because you aren't out to your school community? These are the extra layers of complication that go into seemingly typical experiences for LGBTQIA+ youth.

So how do we get spaces that are accepting and affirming of all?

We do it by making and taking up space. By making sure that you and



## GSAS AND PRIDE!

How did your school's GSA celebrate Pride—or anything LGBTQIA+ affirming—this year? Let us know at [RainbowConnectionNJEA@gmail.com](mailto:RainbowConnectionNJEA@gmail.com)!

your community cannot be relegated to a footnote or forgotten in an archive. By being history itself and recording it.

The picture of Amy and Kate at a regional LGBTQIA+ alternative prom is telling. The students present reflect a need to have these very normal youth experiences, and to be seen as perfect exactly As. They. Are.

2022 is proving to be a fragile time, and young people around our country are watching adults around them restrict affirming health care, challenge the necessity of queer and trans histories and contributions, and move to handcuff the adults—their teachers—who may have been their only allies.

Pride, therefore, is a call to all of us to hold that space for the youth we care about. For people like us. For those not like us at all. And for those whom we acknowledge and affirm.

Join someone at an LGBTQIA+ Pride event this month. Show up at the Pride parade in Asbury Park or Princeton, Toms River, Glen Rock, Tenafly, Newton, Lodi, Ramsey, Blairstown, Mahwah, Red Bank, Lambertville, Montclair, Washington borough, Lodi, Leonia, Maplewood, Pitman, Haddon Towns ip and others—and cheer for the youth or your colleagues or even strangers who are marching. Find a municipality that holds a flag raising—or better yet, start one in your own town.

### RAINBOW CONNECTION'S YEAR IN REVIEW!

**September** – In Rainbow Connection's inaugural column, we discussed back-to-school best practices and classroom culture considerations. Ways of honoring peoples' personal gender pronouns, making your support of LGBTQIA+ people visible in classrooms, and clarifying the curricular-inclusion mandate (S-1569) were top on the list. We also honored transgender activist Sylvia Rivera during Latinx Heritage Month.

**October** – It's LGBTQIA+ History Month! Here, we discussed the importance of LGBTQIA+ history in schools and tips for incorporating it in classrooms. We also explored National Coming Out Day, offering tips for queer educators around affirming job security and benefits of being “out” at work in our public schools. Included were book recommendations for grade-level-appropriate teaching of the LGBTQIA+ movement and a list of queer people making history in our government.

**November** – Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) competencies were in focus this month. Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making each support the development of empathy toward self and others. These not only help reduce incidents of harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB), but are useful tools for exploring sensitive issues.

**December** – Following November's NJEA Convention, this column served as a “glow up!” for our wonderful union, featuring testimony from LGBTQIA+ affirming workshop presenters. Workshops centered on best practices for special education folks, health educators, media specialists, and counselors; specific content-area educators; and GSA advisors.

**January** – Happy 2022! Kate explored ways of looking at our content-area teaching materials for how they are (or aren't) supporting queer-inclusion initiatives. Using a critical lens for noticing what's missing, we offered suggestions transforming frustrations into inspiration and connection!

**February** – For Black History Month, Amy interviewed Essex County's SOGI Committee representative Micah Gary-Fryer. We got to know more about Gary-Fryer as an accomplished artist and teacher and viewed Black History Month from his perspective. By exploring the intersections of Black History and queer visibility in schools, we celebrate how he and his colleagues synthesize social justice issues and performing arts pedagogies.

**March** – Women's History Month let us survey states in which public education is being threatened by state legislatures hard at work to omit

## Message from NJEA's officers

“We are proud to lead NJEA as we continue striving to be an authentically justice-centered union. We are particularly proud of our many LGBTQ+ members, along with allies, who are doing brave and necessary work to ensure that our schools are safe, accepting and welcoming for all LGBTQ+ staff and students. We share that passion and support that work. No one in our public schools—student or staff member—should ever have to hide who they are or who they love. That openness and honesty must exist for EVERY student and EVERY educator in EVERY New Jersey public school. Our state has made a public commitment to teach and celebrate the contributions of LGBTQ+ people, past and present, and to recognize and root out prejudice and bias of all kinds. We celebrate and support that commitment and stand alongside every NJEA member who is doing that critical work in our public schools.”

In proud solidarity,

Sean M. Spiller, NJEA president  
Steve Beatty, NJEA vice president  
Petal Robertson, NJEA secretary-treasurer



### *Missed an issue?*

*Go to [njea.org/rainbowconnection](https://njea.org/rainbowconnection) or scan this QR code for a link to the archive, other resources and more.*

LGBTQIA+ affirmation in education and health care policy and practice. We shared excitement about Ketanji Brown Jackson's imminent confirmation as a U.S. Supreme Court Justice and mourned the loss of queer activist/author/educator bell hooks.

**April** – This Rainbow Connection column focused on LGBTQIA+ youth and school-sponsored sports. The intersection of access, cultural competencies, and coaches that make sure everyone can play makes for healthier (mentally and physically!) and better-connected students.

**May** – Borrowing from the Bechdel-Wallace Test (1985) which examines whether movies are inclusive of women, we created our own for use by curriculum-writing teams working to make their new curricula LGBTQIA+ inclusive. **The Moran-Okeson Test** asks that:

1. LGBTQIA+ people and their contributions and/or issues are explicitly included in course curricula.
2. LGBTQIA+ people and/or contributions are studied at least once per school year in each grade, content area, and class.
3. LGBTQIA+ people are represented in a way that's accurate, affirming, compassionate, and three-dimensional.

How did your school district respond to the LGBT-inclusion mandate across content areas? Let us know at [RainbowConnectionNJEA@gmail.com](mailto:RainbowConnectionNJEA@gmail.com)! 🏳️‍🌈

# EdTPA takes the humanity out of the student teaching experience

By Efrain Monterroso

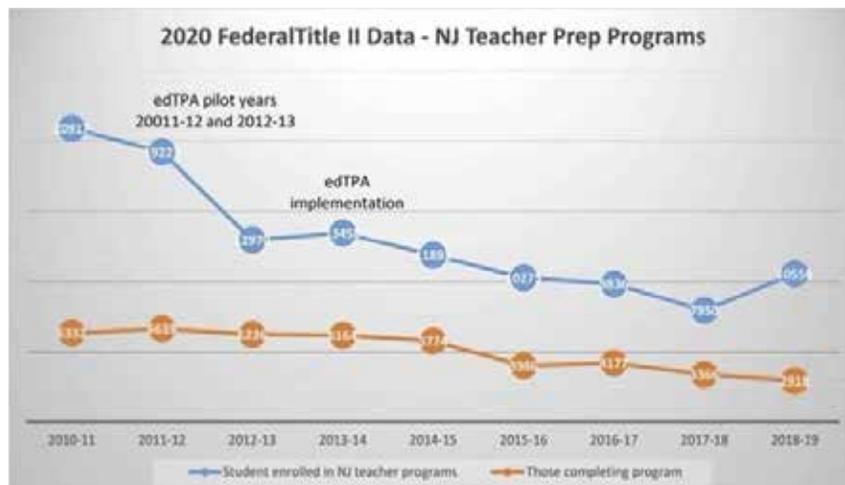


As a first-generation college graduate, I am grateful for my college experience, but it was sometimes a struggle to navigate the higher education system. Even though I enjoyed most of my college life, there were obstacles along the way.

Some obstacles are necessary challenges that lead to professional growth, but others, such as the edTPA, present barriers to teacher recruitment. This is disproportionately true for first-generation college and minority students like myself. Many such students are left behind because of a meaningless score that does not represent them as a potential educator.

EdTPA is a final portfolio project that takes over a prospective teacher's senior year of college, and it discourages many students from continuing onto student teaching or pursuing a teaching certificate. It gets even worse for those of us who move forward with it. We are eager to get into the classroom and begin our student teaching—all while paying tuition—but instead we are pushed to our limits by having to spend countless hours outside the classroom to meet the demands of edTPA.

The edTPA portfolio requires prospective educators to stage a lesson in a cooperating



This graph created by Mike Volpe, the superintendent of Moorestown Public Schools and the Legislative chair of the Central Jersey Program for the Recruitment of Diverse Educators (CJ PRIDE), shows how teacher education program enrollment has gone down in New Jersey after the pilot and implementation of edTPA. Volpe notes, "Whether correlation or causation, the data is clear. Since the full implementation of edTPA, the pipeline that produces our next generation of teachers has been decimated. Considering that we only have accurate Title II data through 2018-19, I fear that the numbers in that chart will only show the problem becoming worse, not getting better. That's why it is so fortunate to have seen so many allies of education—unions, administrators, policy groups, and more—all rallying around this effort to ensure that we do indeed have a "next generation" of teachers."

“

*This portfolio takes the humanity out of the student teaching experience by requiring unrealistic expectations both pedagogically and logistically.*

teacher's classroom, record it on video, and evaluate their performance while answering questions to justify their choices and explain their reasoning at various points throughout the lesson. This portfolio takes the humanity out of the student teaching experience by requiring unrealistic expectations both pedagogically and logistically.

For many, student teaching is the first time they are adjusting to a full-time work schedule, mapping a daily commute, taking on a full teaching load and navigating the quick pace of a school environment. EdTPA takes away the opportunity to learn from those appropriately stressful experiences by consuming time and transferring the stress to passing the edTPA.

Feeling comfortable alone in front of the class is hard enough for student teachers since it is their first time creating lesson plans, creating or acquiring materials, grading assignments and managing a classroom. To add even more pressure, student teachers are regularly observed by their cooperating teachers, content specialists, school administrators and a methods specialist.

EdTPA is a project that takes an unjustifiable amount of time from their student teaching experience. For example, student teachers are often taken away from their classrooms to attend workshops that explain how to complete the portfolio rather than how to improve their pedagogy. This takes time away from receiving effective feedback from those observing the prospective teacher's performance in person.

The saddest part is that one would think that after spending months on a project that leads toward certification, the outcome would be much more than a number. Instead, all the student teacher receives is an empty score and generic comments. This is much less valuable than the productive criticism we promptly receive from the observers who come into our classrooms.

Colleges and universities already have support systems and mentors to ensure that student teachers grow during their student teaching experience. In-person mentors and observers mean more to us than a score coming from a third-party company.

New Jersey lawmakers are considering legislation that would eliminate the edTPA as a requirement for prospective teachers. Please help bring back humanity to teacher education by reaching out to your state Assembly members to either thank them for signing onto A-677 or encouraging them to do so. Your action will help to ensure that there will be teachers in the field who are diverse, invested and equipped to educate our future. 🏠

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*Efrain Monterroso is a Spanish teacher at Hightstown High School and a member of the East Windsor Education Association. He represents the Mercer County Education Association on the NJEA Congressional Contact Committee and is the county's Legislative Action Team co-chair and PAC Endorsement Committee member. He graduated from Montclair State University, earning his Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing in Spanish Secondary Education and is a master's degree candidate in Education Policy and Analysis from Harvard Graduate School of Education.*

## Tell the Assembly to eliminate edTPA

*Note: It is possible that the Assembly will have acted on A-677 after the Review went to press on May 16, but before members received it in early June. If the Assembly passes A-677 after press time, consider writing to your Assembly members to thank them if they voted in favor of the bill.*

### Urge your Assembly Representatives to sponsor A-677.

On March 24, the New Jersey State Senate passed S-896, a bill that would eliminate the use of edTPA in New Jersey, with overwhelming bipartisan support. Now it's the New Jersey Assembly's turn to act. Urge your representatives to sign on as sponsors to the Assembly version of the bill to eliminate edTPA, A-677, and then demand that the Assembly Education Committee post the bill for a hearing and a vote.

### Background

In June of 2014, New Jersey adopted regulations that require teacher candidates, alternate route and out-of-state teachers to pass a performance assessment in order to gain state licensure. The assessment known as edTPA has proved to be an expensive, long, complicated process that takes precious time away from more effective teaching, peer collaboration and authentic student interaction.

EdTPA, is another high-stakes assessment created by Pearson. It requires teachers to prepare a portfolio of materials during their student teaching clinical experience. Teacher candidates must submit unedited video recordings of themselves (and their students) as they teach in their classrooms.

EdTPA is unnecessary since New Jersey's education majors/teacher candidates already are assessed throughout their college experience by professionals who have dedicated their careers to education. The assessment is also a financial burden to teacher candidates as they must now devote a full year to student teaching while continuing to pay for the experience and other college courses as well as pay for the Praxis Core Assessment, the Praxis II Assessment and now the edTPA.

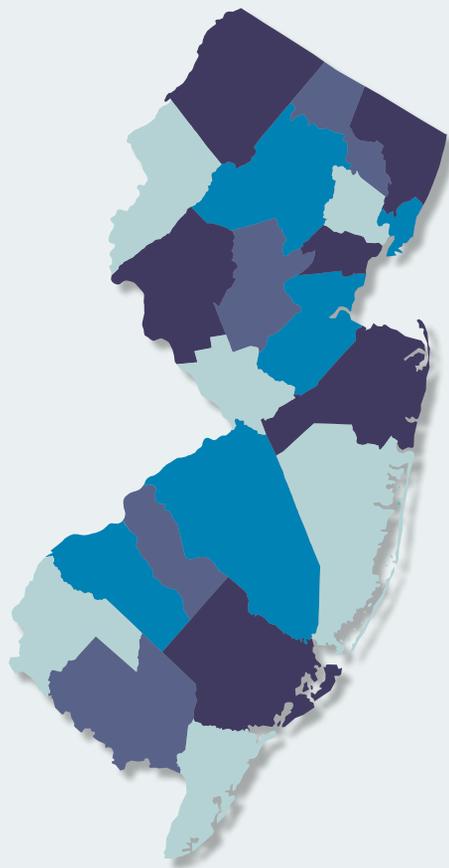
### Take action

Visit [actioncenter.njea.org/edtpa-2](http://actioncenter.njea.org/edtpa-2) to write your representatives in the New Jersey Assembly. Tell them to eliminate edTPA as a requirement to gain teacher licensure.

Urge them to sign on as a sponsor of A-677 and to post the bill for a hearing and vote in the Assembly Education Committee.

Tell them that edTPA:

- Is costly—teacher candidates must pay \$300 for edTPA, on top of other required teacher preparation costs such as student teaching and Praxis exams.
- Takes away time to collaborate with other teachers, work with students and learn best practices.
- Hinders many potential teacher candidates from entering the profession.
- Negates the professional experience, skills and knowledge of dedicated college deans, professors, supervisors and cooperating teachers because it ultimately relies on the results of edTPA as the only assessment to determine whether a candidate can be a teacher.
- New Jersey and other states across the country are facing a severe teacher shortage—edTPA is just another reason for that shortage.



# SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

Workshops and conferences

## highlights

Organizing for social change and computer science

## SHOWCASE

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

### TEACHING IS POLITICAL: A CONVENING TO ENACT EDUCATION POLICY CHANGE

Event date: June 11, 2022  
9 a.m.-1 p.m.

In this in-person, half-day session, members of Radical Pedagogy Institute will gather with other interested New Jersey educators to organize initiatives to enact education policy change. The first half of the session will be dedicated to a group exploration of the political landscape of the New Jersey education system. In this exploration, participants will identify pressing district-level and legislative action that is needed to create a re/humanized and just education system for New Jersey PK-12 students and educators, especially those who are Black, Indigenous, students of color, English language learners and/or queer. Actions identified will be the basis of the working groups that participants will engage in during the second half of the session. Each working group will develop an action plan for its designated issue.

This workshop will provide educators with a better understanding of the current attacks on critical race theory, ethnic studies, and LGBTQ+ inclusive education in the context of New Jersey's Amistad bill and the AAPI, Diversity and Inclusion, and Individuals with Disabilities and LGBTQ legislative mandates. Each of these legislative mandates is directly tied to the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

This in-person session will take place on June 11, 2022, at Rutgers University-Newark, from 9 a.m. until 1 p.m. Registration for the event is \$25.00. Interested educators can register at [bit.ly/rp-reg](http://bit.ly/rp-reg) through June 10, 2022.

Morning refreshments (coffee and pastries) will be available.

For more information, email Brandie Waid at [b.waid@radicalpedagogyinstitute.com](mailto:b.waid@radicalpedagogyinstitute.com).

### TEACHING IS POLITICAL: ADVOCATING AND ORGANIZING FOR SOCIAL CHANGE 2022 SUMMER COLLABORATIVE

Program dates: July 11-14, 2022  
10 a.m.-4 p.m. (in-person only)

In July 2022, the Radical Pedagogy Institute will host its second Summer Collaborative, Teaching is Political: Advocating and Organizing for Social Change. Twenty New Jersey area educators will be invited to gather for four days to research issues related to the current political landscape as it pertains to education (e.g., critical race theory bans, teacher shortage, trans sport bans, voter suppression), learn organizing strategies to fight injustice, and develop and receive feedback on plans to enact organizing strategies and take direct action to fight injustice in their local communities.

This in-person event will take place at Rutgers University-Newark.

Registration for the Summer Collaborative is \$150.00. Interested educators can register at [bit.ly/rp-mem](http://bit.ly/rp-mem) through June 27, 2022.

The Summer Collaborative is designed for PK-12 teachers and teacher educators in New Jersey. The collaborative will provide these educators with tools and means to fight instances of injustice in their school communities. Through their organizing and advocacy efforts, this project will also impact the education outcomes of these educators' PK-12 students and preservice teachers.

Snacks will be available, but registered participants should plan to bring their own lunches (or purchase from nearby restaurants).

Email Leah Owens at [l.owens@radicalpedagogyinstitute.com](mailto:l.owens@radicalpedagogyinstitute.com) for more information.

## NJ COMPUTER SCIENCE PD WEEK

### August 8- 12

New Jersey Computer Science Week will include professional development offerings across all grade bands and emphasize the need to prepare K-8 teachers to teach computer science and adopt the new standards starting in 2022. Public schools in New Jersey are required to implement the new Computer Science 8.1 and Design Thinking 8.2 Standards this September. This week will equip K-12 teachers to incorporate the standards in any subject area classroom. No computer science knowledge or experience required.

Participants will attend one day in-person and four days of virtual meetings on Zoom. Monday's in-person event, held at The College of New Jersey (TCNJ), in Ewing, N.J., will enable K-12 teachers to gather for fellowship, collaboration and support.

Grade band-specific workshops will be offered virtually Tuesday through Friday. Workshops catering to K-2, 3-5, 6-8 and 9-12 teachers will provide specific lessons and ideas that can be implemented in the classroom.

#### Location, date and time:

The College of New Jersey – Aug. 8 (Monday), 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.  
Virtual (Zoom) – Aug. 9-12 (Tuesday-Friday), 8 a.m. - 3 p.m.

#### Registration Fee:

By June 1 (Early Bird Special): \$25  
On or after June 1: \$35  
Breakfast and lunch will be provided on, Monday Aug. 8.

Computer Science Teachers Association membership is not an attendance requirement, but it is highly encouraged. Basic Membership is free. A CSTA+ membership costs just \$50 annually and comes with many incentives and perks.

For more information, email [cspdweek@cs4nj.org](mailto:cspdweek@cs4nj.org). Visit [newjersey.csteachers.org](http://newjersey.csteachers.org) to register.

## MORE TO LEARN ACROSS THE STATE

### TABERNACLE SCHOOL DISTRICT TO HOST TEACHMEETNJ FOR EDUCATORS

This free Edtech sharing “unconference” includes sessions on Google Apps, mobile devices, game-based learning, eSports and more.

Educators and instructional technology specialists will exchange and expand their knowledge at TeachMeetNJ, an educational technology unconference, held at the Kenneth R. Olson Middle School on Thursday, Aug. 11, 2022.

TeachMeet NJ is free and intended for K-12 administrators, teachers, IT staff and anyone in education who has an interest in technology. “Unconference” is a term to describe conferences that are more participant-driven and informal than traditional conferences.

Fast-paced 20-minute sessions will be presented by area educators. Registration and breakfast begin at 7 a.m. with sessions beginning at 8:30 a.m. Attendees will be given a certificate for four hours of professional development upon completion of the half day, which ends at 12:30 p.m.

Attendees who would like to share how they use technology in the classroom can sign up to be a presenter at [teachmeetnj.com](http://teachmeetnj.com).

For more information about TeachMeet NJ, please contact Kyle Calderwood at [Kyle@teachmeetnj.com](mailto:Kyle@teachmeetnj.com).

TeachMeet NJ is also on Facebook and Twitter at [facebook.com/TeachMeetNJ](https://www.facebook.com/TeachMeetNJ) and [twitter.com/teachmeetnj](https://twitter.com/teachmeetnj).



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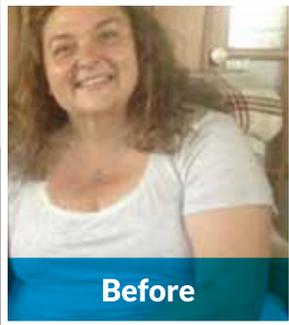
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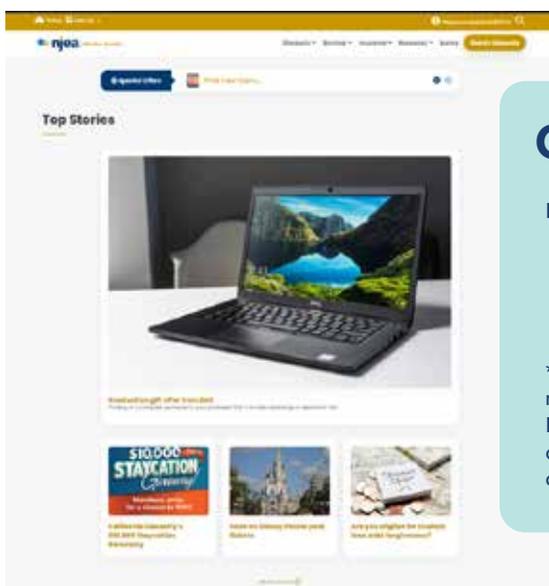


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## Exploring

- Check out the offers and featured programs.
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- Follow the link to NEA Member Benefits where you'll find all the benefits of your national membership.
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- Keep on exploring to find more!

Take a picture!



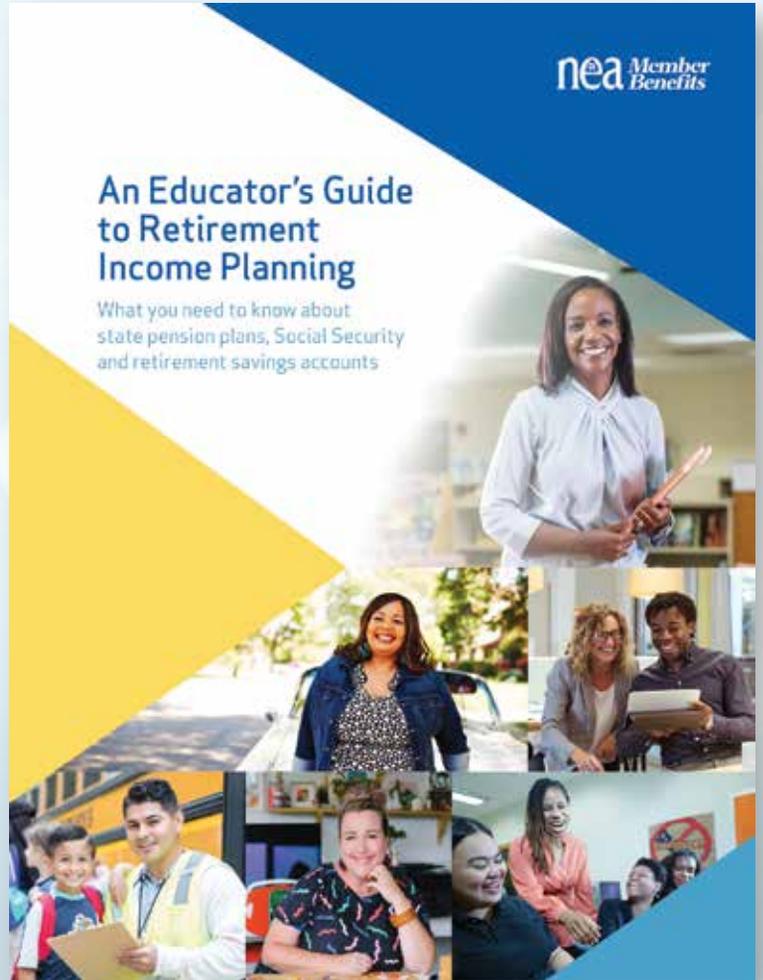
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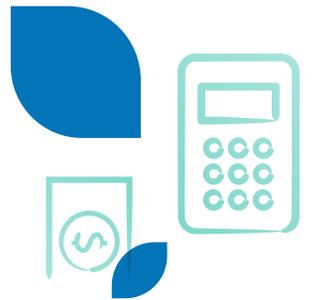
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### NJREA FALL LUNCHEON KICKS OFF THE YEAR

Want to hear the latest pension benefits news? Then, mark your calendars, and join NJREA on Thursday, Sept. 22 for its annual Fall Meeting/Luncheon.

This popular member event will be held at the Nottingham Ballroom in Hamilton. Please be advised that this luncheon will not be advertised in the September *NJREA Newsletter*. Any members wishing to attend this event must use the coupon inserted in the June edition of the newsletter. Reservations in by the Sept. 9.

The day's activities will begin at 10 a.m. with the Delegate Council meeting, where officers and representatives attend to the business of the organization. Any member wishing to bring forward business to the Delegate Council should indicate their intention in the speaker's book upon arrival.

The Member Information Session begins at 11 a.m. Members are urged to attend this session to hear important updates and the latest news affecting our union and its members. There is also time provided for questions and answers.

#### Reserve your spot now

The cost of the fall luncheon remains only \$32 per person, which includes breakfast, lunch and all taxes and gratuities. Members have the option to come for breakfast only, for a cost of just \$5.

**Reminder:** As per NJREA policy, any individuals who are eligible for NJREA membership and have elected not to join are not permitted to attend as guests. Only NJREA members and NJREA-invited guests may attend luncheons, business meetings and workshops throughout the year.

Please remember that attendees will no longer be allowed to reserve tables upon arrival. Any member wishing to sit with their county should indicate this intention on the coupon form. Reserved seating requests will be honored only if received on or before the registration deadline.



Monmouth County REA members at the 2019 NJREA Fall Luncheon.



Past and future NJREA officers at the 2019 NJREA Fall Luncheon. From left, with current titles: NJREA Immediate Past President Judy Perkins, NJREA President Joan Wright, NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty, and NJEA President Sean M. Spiller.

## 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

Oct. 5: Fall luncheon at New Jersey Motorsports Park in Millville. Cost is \$30. To attend, call Irene Savicky at 856-863-8424 by Sept. 16.

#### MONMOUTH COUNTY REA

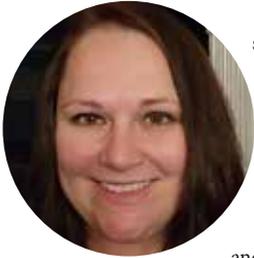
June 14: Meeting/luncheon at Spring Lake Manor. Cost is \$25. To attend, call Sue Shrott at 732-995-7754 by June 3.

#### MORRIS COUNTY REA

Sept. 7: "Welcome Back" meeting at Birchwood Manor in Whippany. Cost is \$35 for members, \$44 for guests. To attend, call John Beekman at 973-514-1080 by Sept. 1.

# STAFF NEWS

## HIRES AND PROMOTIONS



NJEA welcomes **JESSICA COOK** who joined NJEA staff on April 18 as a UniServ field rep in the Region 3 office in Mount Laurel. Since 2007, Cook had been a seventh and eighth grade math and science teacher at Bell Oaks Upper Elementary School in Bellmawr. She had served in numerous offices in the Bellmawr Education Association including president, treasurer, association representative and negotiations committee member. Cook holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics and elementary education from Rowan University and a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Scranton University. Cook lives in Bellmawr with her husband, Anthony, and their two children, Grace and Dominic.



NJEA welcomes **DAWN HOWLEN** who joined NJEA staff on April 1 as a temporary associate director in the Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Dawn had been a teacher in Trenton Public Schools since 2005. She most recently worked as a sixth grade English language arts teacher. She had also been a school literacy specialist in Trenton for eight years. Since 2021, Howlen had served as a Blended Learning Course Facilitator for the National Education Association. Howlen was also employed as one of the first consultants for the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy. She holds a bachelor's degree in English from Rider University and a master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Grand Canyon University. Howlen lives in Morrisville, Pennsylvania with her sons, Quameer and Gary.



NJEA welcomes **DANIEL SUAREZ** who joined NJEA staff on April 18 as a UniServ field rep in the Region 20 office in Jersey City. Prior to NJEA, Suarez was a staff associate for the Communication Workers of America (CWA) – Local 1032. Before CWA, he was a staff representative and organizing director for the American Federation of Teachers – Wisconsin. Suarez holds a bachelor's degree in sociology with a focus on urban and ethnic studies from The College of New Jersey and a master's degree in sociology from the University of Wisconsin – Madison. Suarez resides in Newark.



NJEA welcomes **REBECCA NOVAK** who joined NJEA staff on April 1 as a secretary in the UniServ Region 7 office in Toms River. Prior to NJEA, Novak worked as an administrative assistant for a real estate firm. Novak holds a bachelor's degree in fashion management from the Fashion Institute of Technology. She lives in Toms River.



NJEA welcomes **LIZANDAA ALBURG** who joined NJEA staff on April 1 as an associate director in the Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Alburg had been a teacher in Paterson Public Schools for more than 21 years. She most recently worked at the Paterson Academy for the Gifted and Talented where she taught middle school social studies. In March, Alburg was named Middle School Teacher of the Year by New Jersey National History Day, which put her in the running for the national title.

In the Paterson Education Association, Alburg served on the Executive Board. In addition, she was an NEA RA delegate and RA county coordinator, an active member of the NJEA Members of Color Network, and a founding member of the NJEA REAL Movement. She represented Passaic County on the NJEA Urban Education Committee. Alburg was also employed as one of the first consultants for the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy. Alburg holds a bachelor's degree in journalism with a minor in African American Studies from the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill. She holds a master's degree in administrative leadership from Rutgers University – New Brunswick. Alburg lives in Somerset with her husband, Mark, and her mother, Patricia Gillespie



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## *Classroom Close-up NJ looks back at Relationships Beyond the Classroom*

The emphasis of Camden's Big Picture Learning Academy is rigor, relationships and relevance. History teacher Frank Epifanio Jr. knows firsthand the importance of developing relationships.

Epifanio spent mornings, prep and lunch time to help Miguel Martinez through the challenges of obtaining citizenship. Epifanio volunteered hours to help Miguel study and even drove his student to take the test and attend the swearing in ceremony. Martinez is the first person in his family to become a U.S. citizen, and went on to attend Rowan University.



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://www.facebook.com/crcunj) and visit [classroomcloseup.org](http://classroomcloseup.org).



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# JUNE & beyond

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

<b>JUN</b> <b>03/04</b>	<b>SAT TO SUN</b> LGBTQIA+ Conference	<b>JUL</b> <b>01</b>	<b>FRIDAY</b> Delegates arrive at NEA RA	<b>JUL</b> <b>14</b>	<b>THURSDAY</b> NJEA Radical Imagination Summit for Educators
<b>JUN</b> <b>18</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b> NEA RA Statewide Caucus	<b>JUL</b> <b>07</b>	<b>THURSDAY</b> Delegates depart from NEA RA	<b>AUG</b> <b>04</b>	<b>THURSDAY</b> NJEA PAC Operating Endorsement Meeting
<b>JUN</b> <b>22</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY</b> Executive Committee meeting	<b>JUL</b> <b>13</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY</b> NJEA Conference for Hope and Healing	<b>AUG</b> <b>06-12</b>	<b>SAT-WED</b> Summer Leadership Conference

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



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## RISE UP IN HOPE

CONFERENCES

Hyatt Regency New Brunswick



### July 13, 2022

#### NJEA Conference for Hope and Healing

Join us for a day of **Hope and Healing** sponsored by NJEA in partnership with **Alisha De Lorenzo** and **KYDS** Co-Founders, Rodney Salomon and Mychal Mills. This full day immersion will unite an embodied experience of movement, mindfulness, breathwork, sound healing and transformational self-inquiry with an understanding of the inner work required to create healing-centered and just educational communities.

### July 14, 2022

#### NJEA Radical Imagination Summit for Educators

NJEA's Radical Imagination Summit for Educators (RISE) is back! Join us for a day of exploration that infuses the power of poetry, movement, music and community cultural wealth. In this space, we are invited to stretch our radical imagination around what is possible when we, together, envision and build toward a more just, equitable and liberatory public education system.

**RADICAL** - affecting the fundamental nature of something; far-reaching

**IMAGINATION** - the ability of the mind to be creative or resourceful

**SUMMIT** - top; apex; the highest point; the topmost level attainable

**EDUCATORS** - K-12 public school teachers and education support professionals

Register here: [njea.org/riseinhope](https://www.njea.org/riseinhope)



# Use your **VOICE** to oppose censorship

“

*For politicians who cannot win the next election on the strength of their ideas, fear, division, and distraction become useful tools.*

the words nearly all of us recite in school every morning—a nation “with liberty and justice for all.”

Fortunately, when it comes to banning books and curricula, the loudest voices do not represent what parents want for their children and educators want for their students. But unfortunately, it’s the loudest voices that dominate social media forums and pack school board meetings.

That’s why it’s important that you use your voice to declare that censorship is never the answer. Students deserve the freedom to read books that are as diverse and complex as the society in which we live. When we have books that include characters of all races, genders and backgrounds, students discover their own voices and learn from the stories and voices of others.

Everyone benefits when students learn to better understand the lives, cultures, beliefs and experiences of different people. When some politicians or community leaders attempt to ban books, censor lessons, or erase people from history books, they deprive students of an honest and accurate history that enables them to learn from the mistakes of our past and work to create a better future.

Children—no matter their color, background, or ZIP code—deserve an honest and accurate education. You can use your voice to remind your community that you and your colleagues work together to develop age-appropriate, culturally relevant curricula, which includes a thorough and well-established book selection process. Let your neighbors know that you work hard every day to provide children with an education that imparts honesty about who we are, integrity in how we treat others, and courage to do what’s right. 🗣️

One of the most significant values that parents instill in their children, and that educators instill in their students, is the importance of telling the truth. Whether it’s about what *really* happened on the bus among a group of preschoolers or whether a high school student *really* wrote that essay in their own words, we work hard to help students understand that telling the truth—the whole truth—is the best course of action in the long run. We tell our children and our students that no matter what they may have done, covering up the truth is usually worse than the original offense.

And the vast majority of parents and educators apply the same values to our nation’s history and the stories and lives of the people who live here. It would be hard to find someone who would openly argue against the notion that historically accurate, inclusive curricula create the best learning environment for all students regardless of their personal beliefs or life experiences.

We as individuals are better off telling the truth and learning from our mistakes, and we know we as Americans are better off when we study the truth—the whole truth—of our nation’s past and present.

But for political opportunists, winning the next election usually overrides the lessons they learned in kindergarten. For politicians who cannot win the next election on the strength of their ideas, fear, division, and distraction become useful tools.

They use that fear, distraction and division in local school districts to create chaos, overturn common-sense and inclusive school policies, and inflame their voting base. And what more effective way to sow division than to pluck a book out of a school library collection and misrepresent its contents? And what better platform than social media to spread fear about what our children are learning in school?

The books and curricula that are most often attacked are those that represent the true and sometimes unflattering elements of our country’s and state’s histories. These are the stories that when honestly discussed in the classroom with educators and at the kitchen table among families have the most power to help our nation live up

## What you can do

- Educate yourself on the issues. The NJEA Center for Honestly in Education ([njea.org/edhonesty](http://njea.org/edhonesty)) and the New Jersey Association of School Librarians ([njasl.org](http://njasl.org)) are great places to start.
- Work with and through your local and county associations.
- Talk to parents and people in your community. Answer any questions with accuracy and honesty.
- Monitor local social media pages and groups. Political extremists tend to push misinformation and disinformation on local Facebook groups to manufacture fear and outrage. Being present on these pages can help you understand what mistruths are being spread.
- Report any instances of book or curricular challenges to the NJEA Center for Honesty in Education at [njea.org/edhonesty](http://njea.org/edhonesty).
- Attend a board of education meeting. Let students, fellow educators and like-minded parents know they have your support by speaking at a local board meeting. Before you go to a meeting, always prepare what you’re going to say ahead of time. It’s a good idea to recruit friends to join you. There is power in numbers.

# { VIRTUAL }

## *Graduate Open House*

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