

REVIEW

NOVEMBER
2022

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A ZEN ZONE

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TRUSTING OUR JOURNEY

36 TAMING TIME

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1: An NJEA Pride in Public Education grant helped the **Camden County Council of Education Associations (CCCEA)** to co-fund an event that distributed back-to-school necessities such as clothing, book bags, school supplies and toiletries to the young residents of the Anna Sample House, a family shelter, in Camden. The event also included a meal that CCCEA funded through Pride. CCCEA partnered with PSE&G and an organization ironically named My Wife Can't Cook, that prepares meals for the house among other charitable initiatives. From left: Retired NJEA administrative assistant Roxanne Hawkins, CCCEA Treasurer Sofia Capinha, MWCC Co-Founder Carleen Roberts, CCCEA President April Brown, and Kia Roberts (sister-in-law to Carleen).

2: The **Riverton Education Association (REA)** hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony to open its new little free library at Riverton Public School in September. The little free library was built by a retired NJEA member, Michael Sutcliffe. Lena Sutcliffe, Michael's wife, is a kindergarten teacher at Riverton School. A \$500 Read Across America grant helped fund this project. Seated from left: REA President Christine Durante, art teacher Annie Devonshire and REA Pride Chair Christine Lubitsky. Standing from left: NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty, Burlington County EA President Anthony Rizzo, Riverton Mayor Suzanne Wells, Michael Sutcliffe, Lena Sutcliffe, Superintendent/Principal Joshua Zagorski.

FEATURES



20 | SHOW ME THE MONEY

To recruit the best, school districts need to be willing to offer strong, competitive salaries—for both teachers and educational support professionals (ESPs). Currently, 556 school districts have starting salaries of \$50,000 or higher for teachers. Now, we have set our sights higher and have been working with our local associations to fight for “\$60K Professional Pay Means Teachers Stay.” For ESPs, the association bargaining teams are fighting for settlements that keep these essential professions in the district, with some doubling pay over the course of a contract.

BY CHRISTY KANABY



28 | EVERYBODY NEEDS A ZEN ZONE

Thanks to a grant from the Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education, a Warren Hills Middle School teacher and a school counselor have enhanced a program that addresses the physical and mental health needs of students and staff. The Zen Zone, named in homage of a similar program at West Morris Central High School, provides a space to reduce stress and anxiety.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



32 | SCHOOL COUNSELORS TRUSTING OUR JOURNEY

As school counselors, we must consider the mental health issues of our students and highlight and share effective strategies and resources to better support our students and their families. If not us, then who? We also need to think about how we as professionals must personally and professionally combat compassion-fatigue and burnout—protecting our own mental health as we support others.

BY INDRA OWENS



36 | TAMING TIME

Contrary to the common expression, it is impossible to kill time. Just as we all are better served when we steer away from perceiving disability as a problem to be fixed, we are also better off not thinking of time as something to be overcome. However, we can appreciate time, negotiate with it and even coax it to our benefit.

BY BILL COLE

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The number

\$6 Billion

Tax estimated revenue that could be generated in New Jersey through a "net worth" tax of 2% on every taxpayer with a net worth greater than \$30 million.

Source: "The Geographic Distribution of Extreme Wealth in the U.S.," Institute on Taxation and Economic Policy (ITEP), Washington, DC (2022). (See bit.ly/3TvibwR.)



The Ewing Education Association is one of 120 local associations that has negotiated at or above a \$60,000 starting salary in their current settlement. Higher starting salaries benefit not only early career members but have a positive impact across salary guides.

PHOTO BY
Jennifer C. Marsh



GOOD NEWS

NJ leads the nation in giving children the chance to succeed

New Jersey ranks among the top two states in Education Week's "Chance for Success Index," which measures a state's ability to give its children the greatest chance for success and shows that it is doing more in preparing young people for the challenges they will face as adults.

Source:
Education Week. "Quality Counts 2021: Chances for Success." January 2021. (See: bit.ly/3MCCtZ.)



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REVIEW

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

Organizational Directory

NJEA headquarters, Trenton

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

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

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

Communications Division: responsible for all aspects of the association's communications efforts, both internal and external.

Government Relations Division: includes the Office of Policy and Politics, which addresses legislation, administrative code, policy and advocacy at a statewide and federal level, and the Office of Member and Political Organizing, which works with members at the county and local level to organize around local, state, and federal issues that affect public education.

Professional Development and Instructional Issues: assists members and local and county affiliates with instructional issues and professional learning. The division also monitors state level and school level implementation of administrative code as promulgated by the New Jersey Department of Education.

Research and Economic Services: Provides information to support state and local association programs and activities, including collective bargaining and policy analysis. Offers guidance on retirement issues and administers NJEA Member Benefits.

UniServ regional offices

Provides extensive field services to members and local and county affiliates throughout the state, including negotiations assistance, contract administration and grievance adjudication, member organizing and local member consultation and representation. UniServ field representatives train local leaders and assist in the coordination of NJEA and NEA resources. UniServ regional offices are organized under four zones.

UniServ South

Reg. 1-3
Director's office
856-234-0522

Region 1 (Atlantic and
Cape May counties):
609-652-9200

Region 2 (Cumberland,
Gloucester and Salem
counties):
856-628-8650

Region 3 (Burlington and
Camden counties):
856-234-2485

UniServ Central

Reg. 7-9, 11, 13 and 29
Director's office
732-287-6899

Region 7 (Ocean County):
732-349-0280

Region 8 (Mercer County):
609-896-3422

Region 9 (Monmouth County):
732-403-8000

Region 11 (Middlesex County):
732-287-4700

Region 29 (Higher Education):
609-689-9580

UniServ Northeast

Reg. 15, 19-21, and 25
Director's office
973-321-3221

Region 15 (Union County):
908-709-9440

Region 19 (Hudson County-
North and Newark):
201-861-1266

Region 20 (Hudson
County-South):
201-653-6634

Region 21 (Essex County,
except Newark):
973-762-6866

Region 25 (Bergen County):
201-292-8093

UniServ Northwest

Reg. 13, 17, and 27
Director's office
973-347-0911

Region 13 (Hunterdon,
Somerset and Warren
counties):
908-782-2168

Region 17 (Morris and
Sussex counties):
973-515-0101

Region 27
(Passaic County):
973-694-0154

MEMBERSHIP

Active professional: \$999 (full time); \$199.80 (full time *low-earner); \$499.50 (part time); \$499.50 (on leave); \$199.80 (part time *low-earner). Active supportive: \$488 (full time); \$97.60 (full time *low-earner); \$244.00 (part time); \$97.60 (part time *low-earner); \$244 (on leave). Retired professional: \$88; \$1,095 (retired life). Retired ESP: \$60; \$675 (retired ESP life); Preservice \$15. General professional (outside N.J. public education employment): \$250. Subscribing \$250. Only those in education positions in N.J. public schools and colleges are eligible for active membership. Payment of annual dues entitles a member to receive the Review for one year, from January through December. Dues include \$5 for the NJEA Review. *Low-earner threshold 2020-21 is \$21,700.





PRESIDENT'S *Message*

A month of meaning

November has to be one of the busiest months of our year, and it encapsulates some of our most strongly held beliefs and goals.

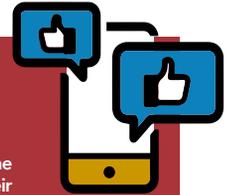
We kick the month off with Election Day. NJEA members have been working tirelessly for months to support pro-public education candidates who share our vision and commitment to a system of education that serves every student, regardless of ZIP code. We are unapologetic in our efforts to advocate for our students and our profession, and voting is one of the most important ways that we make our voices heard. We believe in our democracy, and we demonstrate that and keep it strong by not only being active participants ourselves, but also by presenting a clear example to others.

Closely following Election Day, we shift our focus to Atlantic City and the largest educational conference of its kind in the world! The NJEA Convention provides first-class professional experiences for educators of every job description. Our members are everywhere: from the classroom to the main office, the school bus to the cafeteria, the front door to the hallways to the grounds, and more. This year's convention boasts an incredible lineup of speakers, workshops, exhibitors, and, for the first time ever as part of our Health and Wellness Area, goat yoga. It is not to be missed! It is also a clear example of how our members are lifelong learners. We believe that we can always improve our practice, learn from each other and strengthen our knowledge base to best serve our students.

Immediately following the NJEA Convention, we celebrate American Education Week. Public education is one of our nation's great success stories, and the people who have made New Jersey's public schools the best in the nation have reason to applaud that. But this success must be safeguarded for the future. We know that we cannot take it for granted; we must continue to be fierce advocates for our students and for public education, now and always.

It is extraordinary that one month should exemplify all we do to maintain and strengthen public education now and into the future. But our strength has always been our unity as colleagues, as advocates, and as true believers in the power of education to change lives.

Thank you for all that you do to help make the future a brighter place for New Jersey's 1.4 million students.



SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

@SpillerforNJEA: I was honored to join the Paterson Education Association for their Welcome Back to School event last week. The stronger our relationships, the stronger our unions, and the PEA is ready to have a year filled with #UnionPower #WEareNJEA

On Oct. 3, NJEA President Sean M. Spiller shared photos from a Welcome Back to School event hosted by the Paterson Education Association (PEA). PEA has been fighting for justice in the school district by pushing for policies and practices that would mitigate the negative effects of the current educator shortage. Spiller joined PEA to celebrate their local union's work and reiterate the importance of maintaining strong union bonds with fellow NJEA members.

STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: Super Saturday spent with our members ... starting off with a deep-dive into organizing with our higher education members to better enable our growth and collective power. A great group, eager to step into the work ... Then off to Hillsborough to stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters from the trades and fellow unions in support of Tom Malinowski. From top to bottom, a dedicated and supportive member of Congress who we need to insure gets re-elected! ... And thank you to Assemblyman Roy Freiman and Assemblywoman Sadaf Jaffer for always showing up and showing your support. And special thanks to Hillsborough Education Association president Henry Goodhue and to all that helped put the event together!

On Oct. 2, NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty reflected on the inspiring work of NJEA's members that he experienced throughout an action-packed day. Beatty shared photos from the three events he attended, each supporting a different facet of NJEA's mission to support public education.

PETAL ROBERTSON

Facebook

@petalfornjea: Let's talk about building an inclusive union. Manchester EA held a night to celebrate their Educator and ESP of the year recipients. But they added additional awards to celebrate job categories not recognized by the Governor's Award. Kudos to President Dan Staples and his team. We are always stronger together. #njea #petalforthepeople

On Oct. 9, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson shared photos from the Manchester Education Association's (MEA) Excellence in Education Celebration. The MEA's celebration was designed to recognize the work of teachers and educational support professionals (ESPs) who've received various awards and recognitions. Robertson addressed all who attended, and as she reflected on the event in her social media post, she reminded her followers that lifting all members for their work and achievements is necessary for building inclusive unions.

OFFICERS ONLINE

KNOW. LEAD. ACT.

NJEA NAMES KEVIN KELLEHER AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



NJEA's Executive Committee has named Kevin Kelleher as the association's next executive director.

Kelleher, who has served as the union's deputy executive director since December 2019, will succeed Steve Swetsky, who is retiring on March 1, 2023. A feature introducing Kelleher is slated to appear

in the March *NJEA Review*.

Kelleher first joined NJEA staff in 2003 as an associate director in the Research and Economic Services Division. He went on to become the director of that division and the interim director of Government Relations. Before coming to NJEA, he was a math teacher and local union leader in Mendham Township.

"Kevin has been a valued member of our leadership team for the last three years," said NJEA's officers, President Sean M. Spiller, Vice President Steve Beatty and Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson, in a joint statement. "He brings both a keen understanding of the challenges NJEA members face and a thoughtful vision for how we can continue to grow and strengthen NJEA as a justice-centered union. We are confident that he is the right choice to lead our staff and to ensure that NJEA remains the strong, effective union that our members expect and deserve."

"Kevin has been a terrific partner over the last three years," Swetsky said. "He's a creative thinker with a tremendous work ethic. I know that NJEA will thrive under Kevin's leadership. I look forward to working as closely as ever with him over the next several months to ensure a smooth transition into his new role. NJEA is in very good hands."

"I'm grateful to the Executive Committee for trusting me with this responsibility," Kelleher said. "I look forward to working with Sean, Steve and Petal, as well as all of NJEA's dedicated leaders and outstanding staff, to keep our union on an upward trajectory. We have hard work ahead of us to rebuild the educator pipeline and to strengthen the profession so that our schools will remain the best in the nation. I'm confident we will succeed in that work."

NJEA AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNICATIONS

Enter your association's communications efforts

At the NJEA Communications Tools Workshop on April 22, 2023, local and county associations will be recognized for excellence in three award categories:

- Most Effective Use of Communications Tools to Achieve a Goal
- Best Website
- Best Newsletter (print or electronic)

To be eligible for consideration, entries must come from local or county associations affiliated with NJEA, NJREA or NJEA Preservice.

Associations may submit one entry for each award category within one of the following six divisions based on size and association type:

- Local associations (500 or fewer members)
- Local associations (501 or more members)
- County associations (8,000 or fewer members)
- County associations (8,001 or more members)
- County NJREA organizations
- NJEA Preservice campus-level associations

Local associations representing members working at institutions of higher education would compete in the appropriate local association division based on size. Preservice organization entries must be submitted by campus-level NJEA Preservice chapters that are recognized by their respective New Jersey institutions of higher education and are affiliated with NJEA.

In all instances, submitted materials must have been developed and created by members of the association entering the awards program during the 2021-22 or 2022-23 school years.

Visit njea.org/commawards for details entry forms.

The deadline to enter is Jan 15, 2023.

AMAZON, APPLE AND STARBUCKS LABOR ORGANIZERS TO SPEAK AT NJEA CONVENTION

Join Amazon Labor Union President Chris Smalls, as he shares his journey from aspiring rapper to worker to union leader. Smalls will be joined by ALU Vice President Derrick Palmer, Starbucks Workers United leader Sarah Mughal, and Jacob Nardone, Apple Union Organizing leader.

They will appear in Hall A at the Atlantic City Convention Center on Friday, Nov. 11, at 1-2:30 p.m.

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How to *write* for the NJEA Review

What can I submit for publication?

Feature article

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

Letter to the editor

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

Speak out

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

I Am NJEA

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

Proud moments

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

Toolbox

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

How do I submit for publication?

Submitting content

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

The review process

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

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



2023 Winter Leadership Conference

SOUTH

JAN. 27-28, 2023
HARRAH'S - ATLANTIC CITY
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: DEC. 9

NORTH

FEB. 24-25, 2023
SHERATON - PARSIPPANY
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: JAN. 13

CENTRAL

MAR. 31 - APR. 1, 2023
HILTON - EAST BRUNSWICK
REGISTRATION DEADLINE: FEB. 10

WORKSHOPS:

1. Presidents' Roundtable
2. X's & O's for Local Leaders
3. AR—Key to a Strong Organization
4. Legal Issues Affecting School Employees
5. Grieve, Don't Gripe—Contract Enforcement
6. Preparing for Negotiations—Collective Bargaining
7. Salary Guides—What All Members Should Know
8. District Changing Carriers? How to Avoid the Benefits Bait and Switch **NEW**
9. Passion. Purpose. Power. **NEW to WLC**
10. Professional Practice as an Organizing Tool **NEW**
11. Advocating for Women's Rights in the Workplace **NEW**
12. Successful Organizing 101 **NEW**

COOL STUFF



METRO ATLANTIC ATHLETIC CONFERENCE SHARES LITERACY RESOURCES

The Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference (MAAC) and NJEA invite all students to take a Time Out and celebrate Black culture and history while reading with great college basketball athletes and their coaches. Celebrate reading with children's picture books by award-winning authors and illustrators at timeoutforblacklives.com. Educate in an entertaining way by just clicking on the book title of your choice and watch the player or coach read to you. Then, continue the discussion with the "Let's Talk About It" resource included with every reading.

APPLY FOR A GRANT FROM SUSTAINABLE JERSEY FOR SCHOOLS

Apply Now

Sustainable Jersey for Schools strives to connect participating schools and districts with financial and technical resources to successfully complete actions and make progress toward a sustainable future. For the 2022-23 grants cycle, NJEA is contributing \$180,000 to support the Sustainable Jersey Grants Program. Funding supports efforts to implement projects that help schools and school districts gain points needed for Sustainable Jersey for Schools certification and make progress toward a sustainable future. Visit sustainablejerseyschools.com/grants/njea-cycle for grant application details. The application deadline is Nov. 21 at 11:59 p.m.



NJSBF PUBLICATION AVAILABLE

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation (NJSBF) offers more than 30 publications to educators and the public. The fall 2022 edition of *The Legal Eagle* is now available. The issue contains articles on religious liberty, New Jersey's three strikes law and whether passcodes are protected by the Fifth Amendment. A PDF of the fall issue can be downloaded, or individual articles can be read and printed from *The Legal Eagle's* blog, The Lowdown. All blog posts include discussion questions and relevant glossary words for ready-made lesson plans. Written in plain language, these posts help students better understand the subject matter and enhance class discussion. You can find both the blog and all editions of *The Legal Eagle* and other NJSBF publications at njsbf.org/legal-eagle.



NJSIAA'S A COACH FOR ALL SEASONS ANNUAL CAMPAIGN

The New Jersey Interscholastic Athletic Association (NJSIAA) is once again looking to hear from your school. Each month, NJSIAA features a deserving coach who generously gives their time throughout the school year, coaching multiple sports over multiple seasons. Take a minute to consider anyone throughout your athletic programs who fits that description and nominate them at bit.ly/njsiaa-cfas and share the link widely.



TACKLE YOUR STUDENT LOAN DEBT

NEA Member Benefits offers a free member benefit that provides technical support for one year from student loan experts who can answer your questions. They can help you fill out and e-file a student or public service loan forgiveness application.

This personal assistance greatly increases the likelihood that you will successfully complete the process and, hopefully, reduce or eliminate some of your student loan debt.

To access this free benefit, tinyurl.com/neastudentdebt. Questions? Contact Beth Buonsante at bbuonsante@njea.org.



In my own words

Bergen County ESP of the Year Eugene Wojna

By Eugene Wojna

I'm a teacher's aide at Carlstadt Public School and go by "Mr. W." because my last name is hard to pronounce. I'll get a few students or staff who pronounce it perfectly the first time, and I'm stunned when they do.

I have a dual role at school. When I get there in the morning, I consider myself the doorman for pre-K through second grade. I make sure the students line up and get into the building safely. I enjoy greeting them and their families and take pride in becoming a familiar and trusted person for them. I have also started to build a reputation as "DJ Mr. W." at the front entrance where I provide upbeat or themed music. It's fun to get everyone energized!

Some of my favorite moments are talking to the younger kids. They have the most innocent and fascinating things to say. I sometimes encounter a little separation anxiety, but a smile and some words of encouragement usually help the kids overcome it.

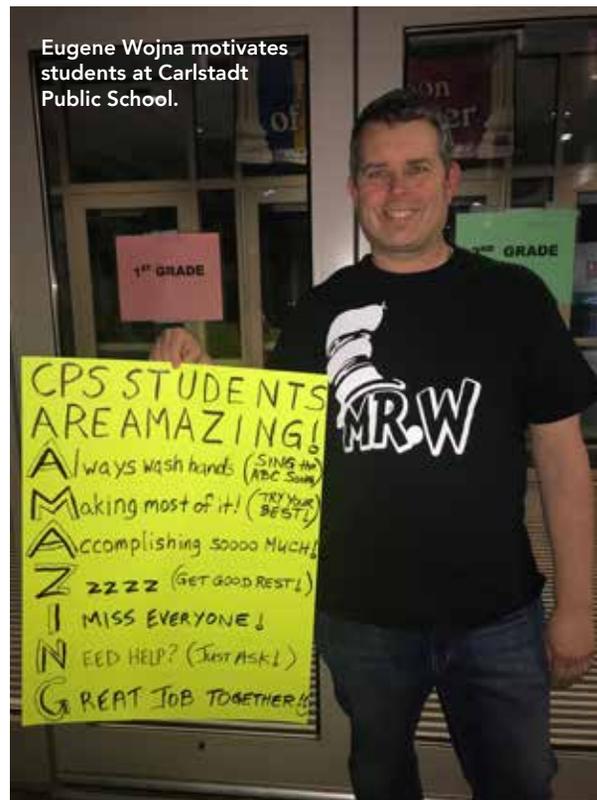
Once 8:45 a.m. comes, I go upstairs to the third floor where I'm an eighth-grade aide. I'm assigned to work with one of the eighth-grade sections, which means I go to all their classes with them. I'm slowing down a bit, but I think some of the students are surprised that I can still hit a three-pointer in physical education class.

I enjoy hearing the eighth graders' teenage viewpoints and being able to joke around while still getting the work done. I have come across students with great senses of humor.

Academically, I have the greatest impact in small-group settings for language arts and math. By working more closely with a few students I reinforce the teacher's lesson and take time to break it down for them so they further grasp the concepts.

Encouraging independent thinking

I try to instill accountability and organization in my students. I want them to be independent thinkers who are able to use the resources available to get things done. I feel being a student is their "job" at this age. Working to the best of their ability to overcome the challenges they have with things like time management, due dates,



Eugene Wojna motivates students at Carlstadt Public School.

collaboration and accountability, will help build a strong foundation for their lives in general.

There are always a few students each year you can connect with on a different level. Depending on their situation, they may need that extra person in their life, and you are able to have a special rapport with them. It is heartwarming when you're out for a day or two they say they really missed you while you were gone. Or they say, "Hey, Mr. W, if you hadn't helped me study for this test, I don't think I'd have done as well." That's really rewarding.

I had the opportunity to be a mentor to a seventh-grade student. I believe that was the first time that a teacher's aide was asked to be a mentor at our school, so I felt honored they saw the qualities in me to have that responsibility. I helped a student who needed additional

“ I enjoy hearing the eighth graders’ emerging teenage viewpoints.

guidance and support in order to keep them on track toward their goals and to be ready to be promoted to the next grade. I met with them a couple times a week and discussed whatever was on their mind. We set goals and talked about strategies to achieve them. It was a success!

From the corporation to the classroom

I worked in the corporate world for over 20 years. It’s a completely different mindset. I have a different motivation and purpose working as an aide in Carlstadt. I also see it as a way to give back to the district and community I love.

Having a daughter with special needs means that someone must be home and readily available to take care of her. My wife Colleen, who is an exceptional nurse, put her career on hold to be home when our daughter was younger. After I lost my job, we flip-flopped positions. My wife went to work full-time, and I took over the role of home-based caretaker.

I was all set to start another job, but it did not feel like the right move for me or my family. In a fortunate twist of fate, I went online and looked through the latest school board minutes. I saw on the agenda that there was a special education aide who was retiring and there was a new job posting for the position.

It had easily been several months since I last checked the board meeting minutes, so this was an amazing coincidence. My daughter attends a special-needs school and the hours and calendar match up perfectly with hers. I thought this was meant to be. I have a special place in my heart for students with special needs and felt I had something to offer these children. I applied, and they hired me.

The unique part of my story is how ingrained Carlstadt and the school district have been in my life. I was born in Carlstadt and have been a lifelong resident. I attended grammar school on the same land our new school is built on. When we got married, my wife and I bought a house in Carlstadt and raised two children here. I also served on the board of education for six years. My son and I actually had the same kindergarten teacher! I would have to do some research, but it is possible I’m the only person in Carlstadt who checks all those boxes.

ESPs are invaluable to students

Just being selected as the Educational Support Professional (ESP) of the Year at the district level was incredible since I work with a lot of caring and dedicated people. Many of the people I work with helped my children

over the years and they have my utmost respect and gratitude. I was shocked when I was told that I’d won the award at the county level.

I want to congratulate all the district ESPs of the year in Bergen County. I know personally and professionally what it takes, and you are all remarkable and invaluable to your students and their educational communities.

I also want to thank those who saw qualities and actions in me that motivated them to nominate me for the district and county awards and finally, those on the committee who selected me Bergen County ESP of the Year. It is pretty amazing to know people recognize me in that way. 🏠



Wojna, who attended Carlstadt Public Schools in the 1970s and 80s, celebrates '80s Day in the Carlstadt school where he now works.

NJEA Report

Central Zone hosts Facebook Live

By Tracie Yostpille, UniServ field rep

Are you doing anything on Tuesday night? If not, log into the Central Zone Facebook page at fb.me/njeacentral for "Central Talk Live." These live and lively conversations are presented bimonthly to provide information to help Central Zone members in their everyday life.

The NJEA's Central Zone consists of local associations in Middlesex, Mercer, Monmouth, and Ocean counties, and members in New Jersey's community college's. The Central Zone Facebook page was created by NJEA Central Zone field representatives Tom Hayden, Colleen Neil, Marcia Klienz and me. Mike Rollins, an NJEA field rep for organizing, and Marybeth Beichert, an associate director in the Government Relations division round out the team. The team works under the direction of Central Zone Regional Director Jennifer Raike.

The Central Zone Facebook page offers local association leaders and members one place to go for information and upcoming events that membership in the NJEA entitles them to attend--it's "one-stop shopping" for everything that's happening in the Central Zone.

Colleen Neil, a field rep in Region 7, is the host of "Central Talk Live: Conversations with Colleen" She engages in 30- to 45-minute conversations with NJEA staff and or NJEA members on myriad topics. The sessions are recorded. If you can't log on live, watch the recorded conversations at your leisure on the Central Zone Facebook page.

Many members do not know that being an NJEA member provides so much more than strong contracts, good salary settlements and job-related assistance when needed. There is so much to gain from membership in the association.

The first Central Talk Live was held last December. The topic was "Holiday Hacks with Member Benefits." Beth Buonsante, the NJEA associate Director in Research in the Research Division who specializes in NJEA Member Benefits, shared holiday shopping discounts just for NJEA members. Everyone who watched the live or the recorded conversation found a way to save money through the NJEA Member Benefits, a program which is exclusively for members.

Schroeder Buonsante was once again a guest, to discuss the AID NJEA program with Diane Vistein, one of the NJEA



Region 7 UniServ Field Rep Colleen Neil hosts "Central Talk Live."

members who answers the phones and AID NJEA. In that conversation, Diane explains how she came to be part of the AID NJEA team who staff the phones 24-7. She also discussed resources members can expect when they call AID NJEA in crisis or just for direction.

Neil also hosted three-part conversation series on stress. She administered a stress inventory to two local association presidents to help them identify stressors in their life. Neil also practiced breathing exercises in a conversation with Carmen Torres-Izquierdo, an who is now a program manager in the Office of Human and Civil Rights, Equity and Governance. At the time, Torres-Izquierdo was an administrative assistant in the Region 7 office.

NJEA Associate Director of Research Dan Goldman talked with Neil about school budgets. Who would have thought a conversation on how schools are funded and how schools budget could be an interesting, informational topic!

Michael Saffran, the NJEA organizing field representative who leads the planning and execution NJEA's Summer Leadership and Winter Leadership conferences talked with Neil about what members could expect at SLC. Future Conversations with Neil are planned to include topics so every member of the NJEA will find some valuable information and a place to get involved with the NJEA.

Be sure to log on to Facebook and "like" NJEA Central Zone. And on Tuesday nights, check in and see what Neil's talking about on "Central Talk Live."

Team South opens house, empowers members

By Rodney Lane, NJEA Communications Consultant

A family picnic atmosphere served as an inspirational way to open a new UniServ office in Mount Laurel. The NJEA UniServ Region 3 field office there held an open house for the members on Sept. 30. The event featured both indoor and outdoor activities and helped build camaraderie among the members of the newly formed region.

Members toured the new indoor facility, which includes multiple conference rooms for use by staff and members. In the largest room, Region 3 hosted various affinity group organizations and NJEA Members Benefits partners. Members staffed tables promoting the NJEA Members of Color Network and the NJEA Early Career Network-Team South. Sponsored vendors from both NEA and NJEA Member Benefits also greeted members, distributing materials about the services they provide at a discount.

"The open house was an amazing opportunity for members from the newly formed Region 3 to experience the brand-new space that is used to serve them," said Lindenwold Education Association Co-President Ryan Strothers, who is also a Region 3 UniServ consultant. "We had an opportunity to bring together new members and our veteran members to share what is happening right here in South Jersey, and it's incredible."

The new location will serve members from Burlington and Camden counties following the merging of UniServ regions 3 and 5 earlier this year. The new building merges the previous regions' talented staff and into a single state-of-the-art facility.

"Members get the best of the expertise of various staff full- and part-time staff members," said Laurie Gibson-Parker, the vice president of the Camden County Council of Education Associations. "We are all really trying to impart members' value to us as an organization." Gibson-Parker is a teacher in Cherry Hill and represents New Jersey on the NEA Board of Directors.

Dunk a director

The outdoor portion of the event featured great food, powerful conversations and a dunk tank. Two vendors fed members at the event: Bubba-Que and Jeremiah's Custom Cuisine. This unique contrast in foods offered something for everyone.

The event was attended by NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty, NJEA Deputy Executive Director Kevin Kelleher,



Members from the newly formed Region 3 enjoy conversation, barbecue and food truck offerings at the UniServ field office's open house. Seated from left: Carmen Cooper, Katrina Squire, Sofia Capinha, and Sharita Stinson. Standing: CCCEA Vice President Laurie Gibson-Parker. See more photos at [flickr.com/njea](https://www.flickr.com/photos/njea/).

as well as staff from headquarters in Trenton and regions 1, 2 and 3. The relaxed atmosphere fostered dialog among officers, staff and members.

As congressional elections approach, NJEA Government Relations staff provided information on the importance of the NJEA Political Action Committee (NJEA PAC). NJEA PAC helps elect pro-public education candidates.

"It was great to see members come out to the open house and not forget about our political efforts," said Adam Sheridan, an associate director in the Government Relations Division. "It's election season, and our PAC dollars are even more crucial than ever right now."

One of the highlights of the gathering was the dunk tank. As part of an NJEA PAC fundraiser, members could dunk NJEA UniServ South Director Patrick Manahan. Manahan heckled the throwers as they attempted to hit a target with baseballs and dunk him into the ice-cold tank on one of first frigid days this fall. After multiple hurlers tried to dunk Manahan, the heckling subsided as he was finally dunked again and again. One of the most skilled dunkers was Manahan's son, Ryan, a teacher at Cherry Hill High School West.

"Being able to interact and have so many authentic conversations with members was such a highlight and to see all of the happy and excited faces in such a beautiful space was definitely something I'll never forget," Strothers said.

NJEA hosts its first Members of Color Empowerment Conference

NJEA held its first Members of Color Empowerment Conference on Sept. 16-17 at the Hyatt Regency in New Brunswick, and by all accounts it was a huge success. The member-planned event featured workshops, speakers and social events. Twelve NJEA members spent over five months working with NJEA staff to plan the conference.

In the words of NJEA Organizing Specialist Eric Jones, "It was not a conference where we hoped people of color would attend—it was designed for people of color to attend, feel at home, and become empowered. There is a difference in being invited versus being welcomed—and we are just getting started."

Additional photos from the conference can be found at [flickr.com/njea/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/njea/albums/).



From left: Tamar LaSure-Owens, Pleasantville; Dr. Karoline Bethea-Jones, Bergen County Vocational; Adrienne Capritti, Robbinsville.



NJEA's officers capture a selfie with members at the conference.



Tiffany Reid Anglin of Union Township listens to a discussion on intersectionality.



NJREA member and former East Orange Education Association President Jacqui Greadington is honored for her lifetime dedication to opening NJEA's doors to all members, including members of color.

JCPPA honors Para-Professionals of the Year



Jersey City Para-Professional Association President Keith Olkewicz (center) surrounded by local, state and national association leadership. The event drew NEA Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria (second from left), NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty (left) and NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson (fourth from left).

On May 27, the Jersey City Para-Professionals Association (JCPPA) honored the 2021-22 Para-Professionals of the Year in each of the school district's building. Under the leadership of JCPPA President Keith Olkewicz, the association drew a wide range of guests, nationally, statewide and locally to congratulate the Jersey City's paraprofessionals.

NEA Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria, NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson, JCPPA 2nd Vice President Jennifer Santana, Hudson County Education Association President Andrea Pastore, Educational Secretaries of Jersey City President Beverly Senior, Jersey City Board of Education President Gerald Lyons, and Assistant Superintendent Ellen Ruane each addressed attendees.

The 31 Jersey City Para-Professionals of the Year were selected by their colleagues through an election process administered by JCPPA. In addition, three paraprofessionals received outstanding achievement awards: Salaam Shannon, a one-to-one paraprofessional, Lucy Ortiz, a bilingual educator, and Pam Lee Cahill, a paraprofessional in grades pre-k to 4.

The association also honored its friends and allies with the Angel to a Para Award: Joan Terrell-Paige, former school board member and community activist; the

Jersey City Together Organization, led by Boris Franklin; Steven Campos, Hudson Partnership Care Management Organization Leader and community activist, and the Educational Secretaries Association, led by ESA President Beverly Senior. A special appreciation award was given to Dr. Gilbert Moore, JCBOE insurance manager and former first vice president of JCPPA.



NEA Secretary-Treasurer Noel Candelaria congratulates Jersey City's paraprofessionals.

You may be eligible for property tax relief

By Kaitlyn Dunphy, Esq.

New Jersey will provide property tax relief payments to eligible homeowners and renters through the Affordable New Jersey Communities for Homeowners and Renters (ANCHOR) program. The deadline for filing a benefit application is Dec. 30, 2022.

Payments are expected no later than May 2023, either by check or direct deposit.

For homeowners

Homeowners with a 2019 income of \$150,000 or less will be eligible for a benefit of \$1,500, while homeowners with income above \$150,000 up to \$250,000 will receive a \$1,000 benefit.

You are considered a homeowner if, on Oct. 1, 2019, you owned a house, owned a condo on which you paid property taxes, were a resident shareholder of a cooperative housing complex, or were a resident of a continuing care retirement community where you pay proportionate share of property taxes on your unit. The property must be located in New Jersey, and you can only file for your main residence.



How to apply

To file, you'll need your taxpayer identification number (for most applicants, that's your Social Security number), your New Jersey gross income from Line 29 of your NJ-1040 (report "0" if you are not required to file a NJ-1040), your 2019 tax filing status and your date of birth. You should also have this information for your spouse or civil union partner, if applicable. If requesting direct deposit, you may be asked for bank account and routing information.

Homeowners, unlike tenants, will also need an ID and PIN as described in this article.

Both homeowners and renters can apply online at:

www1.state.nj.us/TYTR_Saver/jsp/common/HBWelcome.jsp

Homeowners can also apply by phone at:

877-658-2972

Homeowners may opt file a paper application, found at:

nj.gov/treasury/taxation/pdf/anchor/anchor-h.pdf

Those filing on behalf of a deceased homeowner or trust must file on paper.

FAQ for homeowners

state.nj.us/treasury/taxation/anchor/home-faq.shtml

Tenants may opt to file a paper application, found at:

nj.gov/treasury/taxation/pdf/anchor/anchor-t.pdf

FAQ for tenants

nj.gov/treasury/taxation/anchor/tenant-faq.shtml

If you have other questions about the ANCHOR program, visit:

nj.gov/treasury/taxation/anchor or call the ANCHOR hotline Monday through Friday 8:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. at 888-238-1233.

“ **Eligible homeowners can receive between \$1,000 and \$1,500, and eligible renters can receive \$450.**

You do not qualify as a homeowner if you were exempt from paying property taxes or made payments-in-lieu-of-tax.

Homeowners should have received postal mail or email from the state that included an ID and PIN to file the application. If you have not received them, you can retrieve that information while applying online for the ANCHOR benefit (link in sidebar) if you filed a Homestead Benefit application last year for the same property. If not, call the ANCHOR hotline at 888-238-1233.

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

For renters

Tenants who rented and occupied an apartment, condo, or house, or who rented or owned a mobile home located in a mobile home park in New Jersey on Oct. 1, 2019 as their principal residence are eligible for a \$450 benefit. Your name must appear on the lease and you must have paid at least a portion of your rent. Your unit, if in a building of multiple units, must have had its own separate kitchen and bathroom. The renter must have had an income not more than \$150,000 in the 2019 tax year to qualify.

Renters who lived in tax-exempt, subsidized, or campus housing, or whose rental property was otherwise not subject to local property taxes, do not qualify for ANCHOR.

Tenants will also be asked whether you shared rent with anyone, and if so, their names, and whether you or your spouse/civil union partner were disabled as of Dec. 31, 2019.



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SHOW ME THE MONEY

New Jersey's educators are demanding strong starting salaries to close wage gaps

By Christy Kanaby



The Ewing Township Education Association is one of 120 local associations that has negotiated at or above a \$60,000 starting salary in their current settlement. Higher starting salaries have a positive impact across salary guides for these newer and veteran members. Seated from left: Assoc. Rep. Shannon Pedersen, Vice President Patty Yapple and Brooke Stock. Standing from left: Vice President Lisa Jones, President Ryan O'Donnell, Elandra Johnson, Pride Chair Amanda Salvitty, Liam Gonzales, Ine Collins, Treasurer Dorie Montferrat, Secretary Leigh Cline, Membership Chair Kari Booth, Amir Siddiqu and Jamie VanHise.

As the saying goes, no one goes into teaching to get rich. Most see teaching as a calling, with a strong desire to serve others and enrich the lives of the countless students they connect with over the course of their careers. It's exhausting work, fraught with constant challenges, and yet, New Jersey's public school educators make it work. And—as countless reports can confirm—they are among the best in nation, year after year.

These days, however, it's getting harder for teachers to remain in the profession. Between heroically navigating the pandemic, helping students recover academically, facing constant budget cuts and lack of classroom materials and the ongoing political rhetoric over state mandates and curriculum choices, the profession is facing a massive educator shortage.

For those who remain, they—like many Americans—feel the impact of the current economic conditions. However, unlike peers in other professions, educators are not paid for their expertise, expenses or time. The Economic Policy Institute estimates that teachers earn 19% less than comparable professionals, while the Learning Policy Institute estimates the wage gap is widened to 30% by an educator's midcareer. (See bit.ly/3ES3fov and bit.ly/3ExwexD.) Teachers historically have taken second and third jobs just to make ends meet. This, coupled with the sheer mental, physical and emotional toll endured each day, has caused many to question whether they'll make it until retirement.

It's clear something needs to change. This is about more than finding ways to keep quality educators in our state's classrooms; it's about developing cohesive plans to attract the best and the brightest to fill open positions. While there are a considerable number of factors out of educators' control, many are taking full advantage of their right to collectively bargain and are heading to the bargaining table to demand salary increases commensurate with the amount of work educators do.

NJEA has been steadfast in its belief that to recruit the best, school districts need to be willing to offer strong, competitive salaries. Since 2008, through its "\$50K Right Away!" program, NJEA has been working with its local affiliates to bargain \$50,000 starting salaries, and—to date—556 of New Jersey's 584 school districts have them in place.

Now, we have set our sights higher and have been working with our local associations to fight for "\$60K Professional Pay Means Teachers Stay." By doing this, local affiliates aim to quell the exodus and begin to rebuild the



The negotiations team for the Atlantic County Special Services Bus Drivers/Aides Association often met around Vice President Rich Miller's kitchen table. Here, the team discusses how they fought for—and won—their contract. From left: Regina Costanza, bus driver, association secretary; Jerome Walker, bus driver, shop steward; Karin Trasferini, bus driver, president; Miller, bus aide, vice president; and Cindi Hulse, bus aide, treasurer. See Page 25.

profession, salary step by salary step.

Reaching for the top

The Ewing Township Education Association (ETEA) was one local that set its sights on this goal. Historically finding themselves with below-average settlements in Mercer County, ETEA members began to execute a methodical plan to not only increase the district starting salary, but to wind up with a contract that put them at the top.

Lead by ETEA President Ryan O'Donnell and NJEA Field Representative Jenn Larsen, the local analyzed all the starting salaries in the county. Quickly realizing that an average settlement would still leave them thousands of dollars behind other districts, the local began to piece together ways to achieve an aggressive settlement percentage.

"Our 2021-22 starting salary was \$51,000, and we were losing new staff to neighboring districts that offered higher salaries of \$8,000 and \$10,000 more," said O'Donnell. "Because we could not compete, our district began to hire people at higher salary steps—without the corresponding experience—to attract new hires, which caused a lot of animosity among members."

ETEA immediately rolled up its sleeves and got to

Christy Kanaby is an associate director in the NJEA Communications Division. She can be reached at ckanaby@njea.org.



The ACSBDAA celebrates a contract for ESPs that anyone could love! From left: Hulse, Miller, Trasferini, Walker and Costanza. See Page 25.

work. It held salary guide workshops in every building for its members to explain that the current 2.92% increment cost—the cost of moving from one step on the guide to the next—and the high number of steps on the guide were hurting the local’s ability to improve its salary guides. Through this direct effort, ETEA members began to understand what the bargaining team wanted to accomplish, and it empowered the team to hold firm in its demands.

“The toughest obstacle was educating our members about how a salary guide works. Everyone always wants to see big numbers added to their step,” O’Donnell continued. “Unfortunately, since our increment percentage was so high, we could only add \$200 to each step with a typical settlement.”

With that in mind, both ETEA and the Ewing Township Board of Education worked to reach settlement percentages that allowed both new hires and those who’ve worked in the district for many years to benefit. In the end, ETEA bargained a five-year deal, with settlement averages that helped them achieve their two original objectives: to take a turn at the top of the county list and to offer a starting salary of over \$61,000 in 2025-26 and \$64,000 by 2026-27.

“Showing what it would take to achieve our overall goals, eliminating steps on guide and our dedication to increase starting salaries definitely helped us to retain

members,” O’Donnell stated. “Our new salary guides will put us back in a competitive market for new hires, as well as allow us to increase salaries for all members down the road, which will increase our morale.”

Leading the way

While many locals are realizing the current benefits of strong starting salaries, others like the Riverside Education Association (REA) have been making it a mainstay for the last few decades. Striving to view salary guides as an emotionless math problem, the REA worked to use its starting salary goals to uplift others.

“We never viewed a high starting salary as ‘taking money from the top’ because the way that salary guides are constructed, those bottom steps have virtually no impact on the overall settlement,” said Andrew Jacobs, REA negotiations chair and Burlington County Education Association (BCEA) treasurer. “NJEA has long promoted the idea of high starting salaries because ‘a rising tide lifts all ships.’”

This approach was not without challenges along the way. Years ago, Riverside was on track to be the first school district in Burlington County to reach the \$50,000 threshold in one of its contracts, though the Riverside Board of Education didn’t want to be the first to do so. REA was forced to make some adjustments to its guides, which created a small salary bubble—or unusually large

increment cost between two steps— they eventually had to smooth out.

Additionally, Chapter 78's implementation created some turmoil. REA members' take-home pay was significantly impacted, and veteran members pushed to put more money at the top of the guides to mitigate the issue. However, the REA leadership continued to work to keep the integrity of the guide—and the association's long-held views—intact.

"It's easy to believe that the top of the guide has to get a certain number of dollars or the contract will never ratify," Jacobs said. "There were many one-on-one conversations that happened over the years to educate membership about why we were doing what we were doing, and the long-term goal of keeping the integrity of the guide."

This unwavering focus—and the local's ongoing commitment to a low increment cost— has paid off. Despite a contentious round of negotiations that went to fact-finding in the last round of bargaining, REA successfully negotiated a starting salary of over \$60,000 for the 2020-21 school year, which was the second year of the contract. This positioned them well for their latest round of negotiations. Working with NJEA Field Representative Angel McDermott, along with a new superintendent and business administrator, both sides believed that strong salaries shouldn't happen at the expense of veteran salary increases. This collective mindset resulted in a five-year deal that will bring the district's starting salary to over \$70,000 in its final year.

"Our entire association is benefiting from our commitment to guide construction because we construct all of the guides in the same way: pay the increment and pay equal dollars," stated Scott Atkinson, REA president. "For this reason, we are proud that our ESPs are also being paid considerably better than other districts, as well. Once we stopped thinking about salary guides as a process to endure every three years, we were able to build something that will serve our members well in the long run."

Know the lingo

To properly understand salary guides and the way they're constructed, it is necessary to become familiar with the vocabulary associated with guides. Below are some of the most commonly used terms.

Structure – the overall composition of the guide, including the minimum and maximum salary rates, the pattern and size of the increments, the pattern and size of the column differentials, the length of the guide and any unusual items (such as "balloons").

Minimum – The beginning step of a guide, considered to be the hiring step with no experience.

Maximum – The highest step on a published salary guide. It may also be called the "career rate."

Column differential – the difference between the salary rates at the same step on two adjacent columns. A differential is the additional salary that an employee would receive for placement on the next column because of an additional academic degree or credits.

Increment – the difference between two consecutive salary rates on the same column. An increment is the additional salary that an employee would receive if that individual advanced one step.

Number of increments – the number of movements required to travel from the minimum salary rate to the maximum salary rate on a given column. Note: The number of increments is one less than the actual number of steps.

Balloon or "bubble" – an inordinately large increment.

Longevity – Additional money paid to an employee above the salary guide. It is usually based upon years of service to the school district or the profession in general but can be a specified dollar amount or a percent of salary.

FTE – the number of full-time equivalent employees in the district, which is based on an employee's full time or part-time status. Each full-time employee is counted as 1.0, and each part-time employee is counted at their decimal equivalent (i.e., 0.5 for a half-time employee.)

Distribution of the salary increase – the way in which the negotiated salary increase is allocated to FTE throughout the guide. The increase may be distributed as a flat dollar amount for each FTE or a flat percentage amount, or by using some other approach that results in different amounts being allocated to different FTE on different steps of the guide.

Breaking the pattern

Achieving strong starting salaries isn't just possible for those in counties with historically higher average settlements. Locals that choose to make a long-term commitment to salary guide best practices, as well as seek to build partnerships with their boards of education can achieve it, too.

In late spring, the Flemington-Raritan Education Association (FREA) ratified a contract that will include a starting salary of over \$60,000 in the 2023-24 school year. Led by FREA Negotiations Chair Sue Vala and NJEA Field Representative Brian Rock, FREA negotiated settlements more in line with surrounding counties. In their five-year deal, these settlement percentages helped them achieve overall significant salary improvements, resulting in an increase of \$6,525 at the top of the guide.

FREA President Aileen Marsh credits the good relationship they have established with the Flemington-Raritan Board of Education with her local's ability to reach this above-average settlement amicably. In the last few years, the FREA partnered with the board to pass a facilities referendum, as well as worked to elect a former FREA member to the board itself.

"I have worked in Flemington-Raritan as a teacher since

1999, and I've always been proud of the level of devotion and professionalism of the staff here," said Marsh. "We have worked hard to develop and maintain open and honest communication among the association, the board, and the administration, through good times and bad. Our solid relationships have now led to a great settlement for all our members."

Educating educators is key

Building relationships with board members and spotlighting the valuable work educators do on behalf of their community's students are just couple of areas that many locals that have achieved their starting salary goals have in common. But when asked what locals can do to also reach this milestone, one thing was clear: educators need education, too.

"I encourage members to attend NJEA's Summer Leadership Conference (SLC), Winter Leadership Conferences (WLC) or the Jim George Collective Bargaining Summit," offered O'Donnell. "Use those conferences to learn as much as possible about health benefits, bargaining, salary guides and any other new trends the education world is facing. You'll be amazed at what you discover you can do." 🏠



ESP union doubles members' wages

Though there aren't many positive things to say about the COVID-19 pandemic, the one thing it did was shine a bright spotlight on the value of our schools' educational support professionals (ESPs), especially those who transport our most vulnerable students.

The Atlantic County Special Services Bus Drivers/Aides Association (ACSSBDAA) is a 49-member local in the Atlantic County Special Services School District, a special education school district educating classified students from pre-k to adult in Mays Landing. ACSSBDAA is just one of hundreds of school employees' unions that went above and beyond to meet the needs of New Jersey's children during this unprecedented time. Also, just like those hundreds of unions throughout the state, ACSSBDAA found itself losing members to better paying jobs as they continued to deal with the impact of inflation.

As he was preparing for negotiating a successor contract, outgoing ACSSBDAA President Rich Miller—now the local's vice president—saw the disparity between what his public school bus drivers were being offered as a starting hourly wage, compared to private-sector drivers. Holcomb and First Student—both private companies in the surrounding areas—were offering \$21/hour. It led the local leadership to begin to worry about the union's future, and Miller was determined to close the gap.

"We needed more money ... otherwise, members like me will go to a private company, and our local association won't exist anymore," observed Jerome Walker, the union's elected shop steward.

Both the ACSSBDAA and the board of education recognized the need to attract and retain drivers, and what they eventually bargained led the local to be nominated by NJEA UniServ Consultant Brian Currie for the 2022 Jim George Bargaining Award.

Working with Currie, the ACSSBDAA's negotiations team—led by newly elected ACSSBDAA President Karin Trasferini, Miller, Treasurer Cindi Hulse, Secretary Regina Costanza and Walker—began negotiating with the board in the fall of 2021. By May 2022, the two sides reached an agreement for a five-year contract with the help of NJEA Field Representative Mario Montanero and Greg Yordy, NJEA associate director for Research and Economic Services. Among the achievements were:

- Salaries went from \$14.35/hour in 2021-22 to \$19.08/hour in 2022-23 and will reach \$27.09/hour by the end of the contract—nearly doubling members' wages over the life of the contract.
- All wages now are calculated in 15-minute increments, and drivers are paid from the time they pick up their bus until they return it to the yard.

- Each bus driver is guaranteed to work at least five hours per day for 180 days.
- Perfect attendance bonuses of up to \$500 each year.
- CDL licenses are renewed and paid for by the district.
- Drivers no longer need to wait three years to be eligible for full health benefits. For the first year of the employment, new drivers will be eligible for single coverage through the New Jersey Educators Health Plan (NJEHP) and eligible for full family coverage in the NJEHP the second year.
- Drivers will be reimbursed up to \$100 for annual physicals.

These notable achievements at the bargaining table weren't just for the drivers. Throughout the negotiations process, the ACSSBDAA was adamant that the bus aides be compensated appropriately as well, especially since many were barely making minimum wage.

"In our local, no position is left behind," declared Trasferini. "Aides are vital, too, and they deserved more."

On Feb. 4, 2019, Gov. Phil Murphy signed legislation increasing New Jersey's minimum wage from \$8.85 an hour for school employees to \$15 an hour by 2024. When the two parties began negotiating, the minimum wage was set to become \$13/hour in January 2022. The law is clear: the requirement to meet the minimum wage law is on the school district and should be not be funded out of any contract settlement.

Both the ACSSBDAA and board of education understood this and were careful to ensure that any funds to meet the state mandate were in addition to the salary settlements. In the final memorandum of agreement (MOA), the bus aides' starting hourly wages went from \$13.21 in 2021-22 to \$16.25 in 2022-23, and they will reach \$26.24 by the end of the contract—doubling their earnings.

Like the drivers, aides were guaranteed five hours of work per day, and all wages are also calculated at 15-minute increments. And, like the drivers, they will be immediately eligible for health benefits on the first day of employment.

"If a union wants to have a profound impact on the lives of every member, it must be willing to give all members of its team an equal voice and have the courage to ask for what they deserve," Montanero said. "The Atlantic County Special Services Bus Drivers/Aides Association did just that, and they are now the proof that it's possible."

\$60K professional pay means teachers stay

As of press time, 120 local associations have negotiated a starting salary at or above \$60,000 in their current settlements. Four locals have negotiated a starting salary above \$70,000. Here is the current list of such districts.

Atlantic

Atlantic County Special Services
Atlantic County Vocational
Margate City
Pleasantville
Ventnor

Bergen

Allendale
East Rutherford
Fort Lee
Hackensack
Ho-Ho-Kus
Northern Highlands Regional
Ridgewood

Burlington

Burlington County Institute of
Technology
Burlington City
Burlington Township
Cinnaminson
Eastampton
Lenape Regional*
North Hanover
Pemberton Township
Riverside*

Camden

Brooklawn
Camden County Educational
Services Commission
Merchantville
Mount Ephraim
Pennsauken

Cape May

Cape May County Special Services
Lower Cape May Regional
Wildwood

Charter

Soaring Heights

Cumberland

Cumberland County Vocational**
Bridgeton
Deerfield
Downe
Hopewell
Lawrence
Millville
Upper Deerfield
Vineland

Essex

Irvington
Nutley
Orange

Gloucester

Delsea Regional
Deptford
Kingsway Regional
West Deptford

Hudson

Secaucus
West New York

Hunterdon

Flemington-Raritan
High Bridge
Tewksbury

Mercer

East Windsor Regional
Ewing Township
Lawrence Township
Mercer County Special Services
Mercer County Vocational
Princeton Regional

Middlesex

South Amboy
South Brunswick

Monmouth

Asbury Park
Atlantic Highlands
Eatontown
Freehold Regional
Henry Hudson Regional
Marlboro
Millstone
Sea Girt
Spring Lake
Upper Freehold Regional

Morris

Boonton Town
Chatham
East Hanover
Hanover Park Regional
Kinnelon
Long Hill
Madison
Morris County Vocational
Morris Hills Regional
Morris School District
Mountain Lakes
Parsippany-Troy Hills
Randolph
Rockaway Township
Washington

Ocean

Bay Head
Lakehurst
Little Egg Harbor
Manchester
Southern Regional



Passaic

Clifton
Passaic County Vocational
Pompton Lakes
Ringwood
Wanaque

Salem

Penns Grove-Carney's Point
Quinton
Upper Pittsgrove

Somerset

Bedminster
Hillsborough
Montgomery
North Plainfield
Somerset Hills Regional
Warren
Watchung Hills Regional

Sussex

Green
Montague
Sparta
Sussex County Vocational
Wallkill Valley Regional

Union

Kenilworth*
Linden
Morris-Union Jointure
Commission
Plainfield
Rahway
Springfield
Union Township
Westfield*
Winfield

Warren

Hackettstown
Warren County Vocational

*Includes at least a \$70,000
starting salary in current
settlement

**Shop teacher guide



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Everyone needs a Zen Zone

By Kathryn Coulibaly

In 2019, Warren Hills Middle School teacher Heather Garcia and school counselor Hope Ranalli each approached their principal with some ideas about introducing mindfulness practices to students. While Ranalli hadn't yet had any formal training, Garcia held a social-emotional learning (SEL) mindfulness certification through Breathe for Change.

The principal encouraged them to collaborate, and together they came up with a plan. While they hoped to eventually reach all 450 seventh and eighth grade students, they knew they couldn't reach everyone at one time. Instead, they started with a small group of students who had been diagnosed with anxiety or school phobia or who had reported feelings of anxiety.

They converted a room in the school basement into an inviting space and began working with the students on meditation, mindfulness and basic yoga. Their initial feedback was fantastic.

In early 2020, Garcia and Ranalli applied for an NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Grant for Excellence in Education to build a calm space for students and staff to use at their school. They were successful. They planned to use the \$4,750 grant to expand the space and provide more resources to reach even more students and staff.

They were inspired by a similar project that was already successful at West Morris Central High School called the Zen Zone, so they adopted the name as an homage to that project.

And then the global pandemic changed everything.

"We were meeting virtually with students and staff and offering meditation and yoga online," Ranalli said. "But it was hard to provide these resources remotely. A lot of students were just done being on the computer at the end of the school day. They just wanted to shut down their computers and go outside."

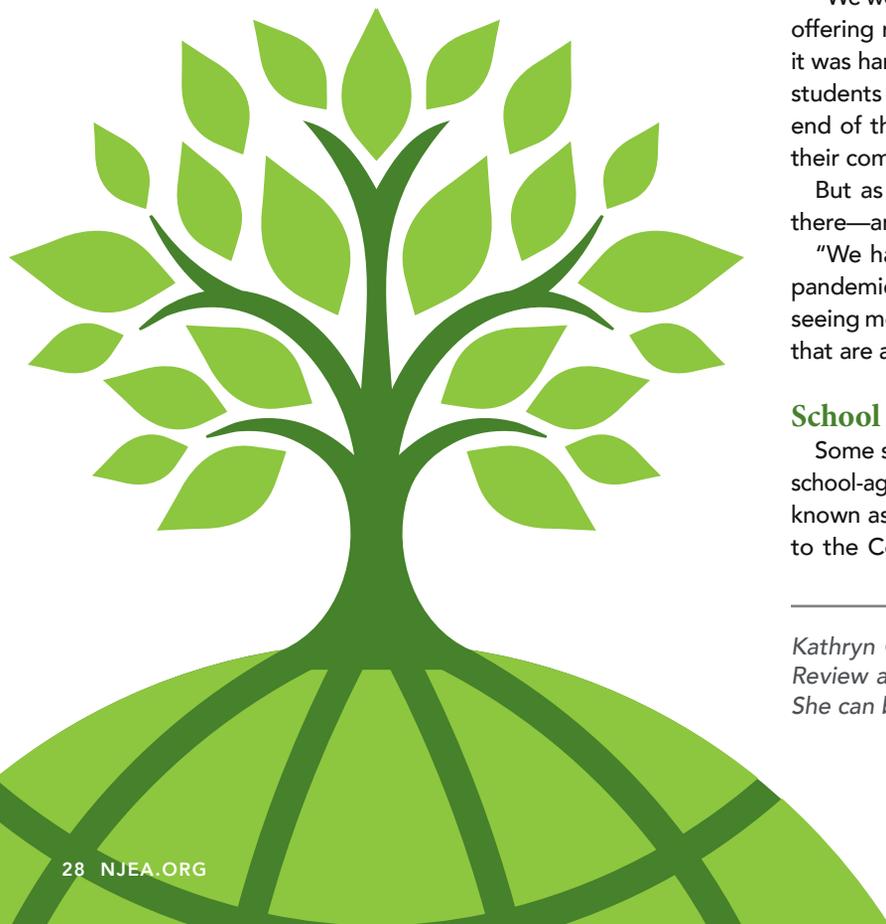
But as Garcia and Ranalli knew, the needs were still there—and they weren't being met.

"We had seen school phobia and anxiety before the pandemic," Ranalli said. "We know that most schools are seeing mental health issues that far exceed the resources that are available for students and families."

School anxiety

Some studies estimate that as many as five percent of school-age children experience school phobia, which is also known as school avoidance or school refusal. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), more than

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Ranalli welcomes students and staff to the Zen Zone, a calming restorative space. From left: Hope Ranalli, Olivia Smith, Ka'lynn Wilson, Jonathan West, and Brennan Winters alongside some of the artwork in the Zen Zone.

seven percent of children between the ages of three and 17 have been diagnosed with anxiety. Students manifest mental health issues in a variety of ways and it can be hard for parents and school staff to recognize when there's a problem. Even when it is clear, there aren't enough counselors or therapists available to treat students.

According to an article in *NorthJersey.com*, "'Crisis situation': Mental health services in NJ stretched thin as pandemic boosts demand," New Jerseyans seeking mental health treatment are facing an enormous wait time, if they are able to get an appointment at all. According to Jennifer Thompson, executive director of the National Association of Social Workers' New Jersey chapter, prospective patients are facing a "30- to 60-day wait for a private practice counselor and a three- to five-month wait to see an agency therapist."

Many families are dealing with mental health issues, which may lead students' needs to go unmet as resources are diverted to other family members who are perceived to be in greater crisis.

During the pandemic, Garcia and Ranalli ran several programs to engage with students and get them to open up about their emotions. They recorded guided meditations that students could access whenever they wanted. They held a "bring your pet to yoga" event. A popular activity was Yoga Dice, where students took turns rolling dice and then did the pose that popped up.

A labor of love

For Garcia and Ranalli, the Zen Zone became a labor of love and an area where they could devote their energies and, hopefully, spark positive changes in students' and staff members' lives.

They enlisted students to create a mural, and they outfitted the large space with soft lighting, salt lamps, bean bag chairs, futons, yoga mats, blankets, and music and meditations gently playing from the Calm app.

Ranalli also used part of the Hipp grant to become SEL certified. She is also yoga certified and she enjoys bringing these new skills to her students.

“ As many as five percent of school-age children experience school phobia.



Hope Ranalli developed the Zen Zone to be a collaborative labor of love for students and staff, alike.

"I work with our alternate health class of eighth graders on a mindfulness curriculum that includes mindful movement and basic yoga movements," Ranalli said. "It's been so fun to expose students to this when I believe they never would have been able to experience this."

After Garcia left the district, Ranalli carried on with the vision for the Zen Zone. Ranalli sees the space as providing students and staff with a space to disconnect. There's no technology allowed unless they're working on a project.

District support

The Zen Zone has enjoyed universal support from administration and the board of education, including funding.

"The superintendent started a mental health committee to address student and staff mental health concerns and to help support everyone," Ranalli said. "The district held a professional development day and Hope ran three different sessions for staff and showed off the Zen Zone and mindfulness and meditation. It was really geared toward self-care and explored different ways to relax and be mindful of their emotions."

Support staff mental health needs

When the Zen Zone was first conceived, the focus was on the students' mental health needs, but Ranalli has come to recognize how important it is that staff be part of it.

"When we first started, I was more focused on the students' experience," Ranalli said. "But now I'm realizing that it's equally important to our staff. Our custodians are sometimes in there. They clean it for us every night, but they also take some time to enjoy it. Our vice principal will take a moment in there. Some people take their prep periods in the Zen Zone. The more they use it, the more likely they are to use it with their students."

Ranalli also recognizes the importance of staff checking in on their own mental health needs, especially as working in all sectors of education has gotten more stressful.

"Our staff is not putting their mental health needs first," Ranalli said. "They're really just focused on their students. But they need to address their own mental health in order to be really present and successful in helping students."

The Zen Zone has been warmly embraced by the entire school community. Staff sign it out for students to meditate, and Ranalli runs after-school groups such as Club Zen and after-school yoga and meditation. In addition, there is a staff meditation held every Wednesday.

"This has grown into an amazing opportunity to expose students and staff to mindfulness, meditation, and movement," Ranalli said.

For anyone suspicious about how effective mindfulness really is, the American Psychological Association analyzed more than 200 studies and found that mindfulness-based

therapy is very effective at reducing stress, anxiety, and depression.

"We are thrilled at the success of the Zen Zone and we just hope to continue to build and draw in more students and staff," Ranalli said. "We believe in the power of meditation, yoga, and mindfulness to help people and we want to share this with students and staff so they can take that with them throughout their lives." 🌱



The Zen Zone has a variety of resources to assist students and staff, such as pillows for meditation, cozy blankets, singing bowls, areas for art and much more.

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. The deadline is March 1. Grants range from \$500-\$10,000. Learn more at njea.org/hipp.

TRUSTING OUR JOURNEY AS SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Normalizing difficult conversations

By Indra Owens

The typical school day for school counselors across the country looks something like this: the sky is clear, the sweet chirping of birds awakens most of us, and the morning commute is welcomed with calm traffic and good news on the radio. We pull up to the school building at 7:45 a.m. and parents are already waiting at the door greeting us warmly—I'm sure we all silently pray during the commute that it'll be a quiet day.

OK, wishful thinking interrupted...

By 8 a.m., I am supporting administrators who are communicating with concerned parents, broadcasting the morning announcements, working with the nurse to support a student with an annoying ear infection or

a sudden bloody nose, deescalating a crying student in the middle of a crisis. All day long, I'm mediating dozens of conflicts.

During my lunch duty, kids are smiling, socializing, eating, laughing and enjoying these moments when they can just be kids. This seems to be the only safe space for me as a school counselor—and even that can be daunting at times depending on the phases of the moon.

Yet there's an underlying concern for me that continues to arise, and that's the social, emotional and mental health of our students and their families. As mental health professionals, school counselors must consider the mental health issues of our students and highlight and share



Indra Owens, dressed in school spirit gear, welcomes students to Atlantic City's Pennsylvania Avenue School.



Indra Owens recently joined the Pennsylvania Avenue School team after many years in the district. She is working to create an engaging and welcoming office where she can meet with students.

“Life doesn’t get easier or more forgiving; we get stronger and more resilient.

– Steve Maraboli

effective strategies and resources to better support our students and their families. If not us, then who?

In the words of actor Shannon Purser, “Mental health affects every aspect of your life. It’s not just this neat little issue you can put into a box.”

Caring for students, families and ourselves

When discussing the mental health issues and concerns of the students we serve, we cannot have an honest dialogue without first considering their home environments. We must also consider the post-traumatic stress that has followed in the wake of the COVID 19 pandemic. The pandemic has exacerbated latent and untreated mental health concerns that had already existed in many of our students and their families.

We also need to think about how we as professionals must personally and professionally combat compassion-fatigue and burnout—protecting our own mental health as we support others.

A recent study published in the *Journal of Research and Practice* asked parents to report their children’s mental and physical health as well as their own mental health. The article, “Associations of Mental Health Among Parents and Other Primary Caregivers With Child Health Indicators,” reported that one in 14 children aged 0–17 years had a parent who reported poor mental health. Those same children were more likely to have poor general health, to have a mental, emotional, or developmental disability, to be living in poverty, and to have had adverse childhood experiences such as exposure to violence or family disruptions including divorce. (See bit.ly/3SSvB5P.)

As educators, we have to be emotionally and culturally sensitive and empathetic to the needs of all the students we serve. What used to be considered normal or healthy has changed, in definition and context, as we strive to educate and serve the next generation of students.

*Indra Owens is a school counselor at Pennsylvania Avenue School in Atlantic City. She was named the 2020 New Jersey School Counselor of the Year by the New Jersey School Counselor Association. She is the author of *Trust Your Journey: Balancing Personal Life, Power Moves, and Parenthood*. Owens can be reached at trustingmyjourney2020@gmail.com*

Create partnerships with parents

Our students often have much younger parents, who in many cases, have their own trauma and sets of not-so-positive experiences in the school and community. Our students are heavily engaged and influenced by social media. Additionally, I believe that the COVID pandemic and the emphasis on technology integration into the classroom/homeschooling environment has made it even more challenging to get through to the average middle school student. When we look at serving and supporting students and families through this lens, there is an urgency to create healthy partnerships with parents.

I want to believe that parents, even those who may seem negligent on the surface, are just as frustrated at home as we are at school. With that frustration as the common denominator, the questions become, what are **WE** going to do with these kids and how can **WE** partner to make sure they are successful?



Art teacher Rebekah Mahler works closely with Owens and other school counselors to meet students' needs.

Helping students by helping parents

Here are some ways to address students' mental health needs by creating healthy partnerships with parents:

- Accentuate the positives; highlight students' strengths.
- Talk candidly about students' behaviors at home and at school.
- Identify triggers.
- Refer to parents by their names, making the relationship personal and valuable.
- Recommend counseling and have resources readily available.
- Share mental health exercises/games/activities, such as an emoji chart to talk about feelings.
- Integrate self-care/coping skills into everyday life such as talking walks and riding bikes.

Have a list of extracurricular activities available; most have an indirect mentoring component that helps our students, giving them other safe spaces with adults not at home or school.

Addressing latent trauma

Here are some ways to help students' mental health needs when related to latent trauma:

- Encourage parents to seek individual and family counseling; have resources readily available.
- Using positive affirmations; using uplifting language versus language that tears down and discourages or hurts.
- Have honest conversations with parents about the negative effects of "trauma bonding" with their children. Remind parents to avoid exposing children to adult conversations, involving children in family feuds and domestic disputes, having negative conversations in front of children about an absent parent, or venting their frustrations with their children.

The reality of latent trauma

The children we serve—preteens, looking for affirmation and validation—aren't really children in their own minds. At home, many are living lives with adult responsibilities. Often they are caregivers for younger siblings, staying up late and taking responsibility for their own care and behavior. They often lack the structure, security and rules many of us took for granted in our own childhoods. Some have been victims of physical and sexual abuse. Some have been exposed to pornography, gun violence and domestic disputes.

Trauma and contextual stress can negatively impact children and adults' functioning, often undermining parenting efforts, family relationships, and family functioning, and increasing the risk for family violence (Jaffe and Wolfe 1986; McCubbin & McCubbin, 1993; Appleyard & Osofsky, 2003; Scheeringa & Zeanah, 2001; Green, et al., 1991).

It has long been understood that a family and its individual members, especially its children, are interdependent (Minuchin, 1985). Each member and family subsystem performs vital roles and functions within the context of multifaceted family relationships. Families can be negatively affected by chronic exposure to trauma, including the trauma and stressful conditions associated with living in poverty.

As school counselors, we must be prepared to have honest conversations with students and parents about mental health. We have to become advocates for our families to seek individual and family counseling and therapy.

As school counselors, I believe that we have to normalize having hard conversations to help foster new generational patterns in the lives of our students and their families, redefining mental health awareness, advocacy and support in all communities and building resilient families. Although it is hard to start these conversations, there's no better feeling than hearing success stories from your students and parents about the benefits they're experiencing because they were trusting enough to take your advice.

Trusting our journeys as school counselors

In the midst of the pandemic, when my own resilience tank seemed to be treading on empty, quarantining at home with a fourth-grader, attempting to juggle parenting and professionalism, making sense out of the nonsensical, and having multiple daily pep talks with myself and my daughter, I started a project called Trust Your Journey (TYJ). Through TYJ, my mission is to engage, educate, empower and equip.

- Engaging: Creating safe spaces and healthy partnerships with parents by being relatable, honest and fact-based at all times. This can turn resistant parents into receptive partners.

Self-care

Self-care is crucial! Making time for yourself is essential to keeping your resilience tank full. We cannot effectively serve others if we don't take good care of ourselves, physically, mentally and emotionally.

Here are some ways to address your own mental health needs when helping others with theirs:

- Create clear boundaries; remain professional to avoid absorbing the issues of your students and the families you serve. Keep office hours and do not work outside of them!
- Use your "NO"—School Counselors tend to become the glue that keeps the school building functioning; sadly, this "super power" will often have us taking on more responsibilities that aren't counseling related. Learn to say, NO!
- Have at least one "vent buddy" or therapist you can talk to regularly.
- Get the sleep you need—at least eight hours—you need to reset each day.
- Balance—make time for the things you enjoy—pampering sessions, bike riding, gardening, golfing, painting, sewing, vacationing, spending time with family and friends.

- Educating, empowering, equipping: once parents become partners, provide them with the tools and resources that help them. Make sure the resources and tools are easy to understand and follow. I typically never give parents more than two resources or tools at a time, and I rarely share resources and tools with parents that I haven't used myself—or at least researched.

As school counselors we can lose ourselves in the pursuit of helping and serving others. We too have to protect our own peace, be steadfast in serving without overextending ourselves, getting comfortable with using our "NO," and taking proactive intentional approaches to maintaining and sustaining our mental health and keeping our resilience tanks full. 🙏



TAMING TIME

Meeting the challenges of disability around the clock

By Bill Cole

Time is a constant, sometimes gentle, sometimes harsh. The beat goes on within all of us. For individuals with disabilities, time can be particularly challenging. Those with more severe disabilities are likely to have highly unconventional experiences with time frames, whether while performing daily living skills, processing information or just moving from one room to another. Society's continued emphasis on maximal hourly productivity as an essential measure of self-worth inherently undervalues the lives of all of us, but especially those with disabilities or those with a diverse way of perceiving the world. Time in our culture has become inextricably tied to financial success.

Contrary to the common expression, it is impossible to kill time. Just as we all are better served when we steer away from perceiving disability as a problem to be fixed, we are also better off not thinking of time as

something to be overcome. However, we can appreciate time, negotiate with it and even coax it to our benefit. The uniquely fractious relationship that some students have with time can be represented within both neurological as well as educational contexts. How these contexts are addressed can make all the difference.

Neurological context

There are numerous examples of how neurodiversity or a disability affects a person's relationship with time as reflected in specific regions in the brain.

Students with ADHD typically have atypical executive functioning abilities, which includes such skills as time perception and time management and can be associated with underdevelopment in the prefrontal cortex. (See wb.md/3RON2D9.)

Children on the autism spectrum have been found

to have difficulty accurately gauging the passage of time when asked to estimate the intervals between three flashes. They tended to overestimate short durations and underestimate long durations. This misjudgment of time intervals more likely affects their processing rates and may contribute to increased feelings of anxiety based on a perception of unpredictability in their environments. (See bit.ly/3g0xWNU.)

Studies have revealed those with hearing impairments are prone to difficulty with time perception. This suggests that there might be a unique capability in the auditory cortex related to the encoding of temporal information and that a lack of experience with speech might affect the development of temporal processing. (See bit.ly/3CO6ko7.)

Studies have shown that individuals diagnosed with depression are more likely to report that time passes slower than it is actually moving, possibly related to lower dopamine levels. (See bit.ly/3MABfYI.)

Educational context

For students with disabilities, time can be an unwieldy obstacle affecting their academic functioning. Students who require special services due to various disabilities often rely on teachers to modify their learning environments by explicitly teaching them time management strategies to help them successfully get through their day. These typically include extra time on tests and assignments and building in “wait time” before expecting verbal responses.

These modifications allow those students to sufficiently process what is being asked of them. Additionally, research suggests that students dealing with dyslexia often perform poorly on rapid naming tests and generally exhibit slower processing speeds, warranting highly specialized instructional reading programs that take these time-related differences into account. (See bit.ly/3CNmijC.) 📌

Bill Cole is a school psychologist at Normandy Park Elementary School in the Morris School District. He can be reached at metacole14@gmail.com.

Strategies for educators to “tame time”



- Provide students with extra time on classroom assignments and tests.
- Reduce the volume of expected work within reasonable limits, e.g., on a worksheet of math problems, assign the students only the odd numbered items; instead of requiring a five-paragraph essay, have the students compose a three-paragraph essay.
- Allow a few seconds of “wait time” after asking the students a question allowing them to more fully process the information before providing a response.
- Use a visual schedule or checklist for given classroom assignments to help the students work through the tasks in a more timely and sequential manner.
- Assist the students in actively articulating their goals and priorities related to completing specific tasks to help frame what is expected of them.
- Break down classroom tasks into smaller chunks, establishing adapted expectations for time completion for each segment.
- Provide brief work breaks to help students “recharge their batteries” and encourage optimal on-task behavior.
- Have the students use an egg timer or stop watch, if helpful, to reinforce a sense of time frames while working through classroom tasks.
- Have the students prepare for dismissal a few minutes ahead of time if it is anticipated they need some additional lead-in time when packing up their belongings.
- Have the students practice a “60-second challenge,” which entails the students “blindly” guessing when a minute has elapsed and comparing how close the guess is to the actual duration. Graph their progress in guessing. This activity can help students better appreciate the passage of units of time and potentially strengthen their ability to “feel time.”
- Discuss with students the role the prefrontal cortex in their brains play with their time management and time perception skills. Providing this physical, internal and personal point of reference can help them conceptualize time as a more concrete and real factor related to their learning.

Time can be relentless for students with disabilities. There is no fighting it. A more effective approach is refining the art of modifying and working with the temporal environments and associated time frames. In doing so, we tame this most daunting of forces, treat it like the precious resource it is, and elevate the humanity of all disabled individuals as they strive to achieve their full potential.

PREVENT CONSTRUCTION-RELATED HAZARDS

Use union eyes on the plans and more

By Dorothy Wigmore

Librarians or administrative staff working during the summer, the state of a classroom in September, and building repairs during the school year are all situations posing construction-related hazards for school staff. Whether it's renovations, additions, electrical upgrades, or dealing with mercury flooring, mold or ventilation, the activities can affect those in school buildings during the work or after that work is supposed to have fixed a problem.

Hazards include:

- Chemicals in the air (e.g., from paints, glues, roofing materials, new carpets or furniture).
- Dust and debris (e.g., asbestos, lead, construction materials).
- Mold and leaks during or because of construction.
- Noise.

Recent federal funding programs have led to lots of construction and renovation activities.

"During the year, there's usually not much," says New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC) industrial hygienist, Allen Barkkume. "It's the aftermath of the summer work we usually hear about. Repairs can make things worse, create new problems. It's not unusual for replaced or repaired roofs to leak somewhere else, thanks to poor quality work. That leads to mold and indoor air hazards.

"Replacing univents might be done room by room at weekends, taking a year to finish," he adds. "That's different because the job can be broken down and done when people aren't around."

Still, that work may lead to surprises, like asbestos tiles

under the devices.

How to prevent problems

Health and safety committees or the local association (if there's no committee) need an inventory of hazards in and around the school (location, type, seriousness/priority). They also need a log of past issues and how they were addressed.

In fact, an inventory is the law for asbestos. AHERA—the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act—requires the district's asbestos management plan have an up-to-date inventory. Another important feature: within 60 days of starting work, maintenance and custodial staff must have at least two hours awareness training. (See "More to do" and "Resources" sidebars.)

Any other airborne hazard can be addressed using the state Indoor Air Quality Standard. The district must have a plan and "designated person" to implement it. The document also must explain how the district will ensure good air quality "during renovations and remodeling."

Whatever the hazards, a running inventory and a history log will help local associations point to possible problems during construction activity. The local and/or health and safety committees can use these documents in discussions about planning for, carrying out and evaluating the activities. Members who work in facilities or maintenance can provide feedback about proposed timelines and realistic ones.

The history log is key for long-standing hazards. Otherwise, there's institutional amnesia when the only person who remembers things like ventilating the gym with a mercury floor retires.

Follow-up matters too. As Barkkume said, "Just because



it got replaced doesn't mean that the problem's gone. Committees need to be vigilant."

His final advice: "Whatever work's being done, by whomever it's done, the local needs to know and involve its health and safety committee in reviewing for possible hazards and hassles. They need to know all the parties involved from planning to clean-up and what they're doing. That's supposed to be in the scope of work."

More to do

Health and safety committees can also:

- Use the American Rescue Plan rule that union locals must be at the table for all decisions using that funding: how money is used, who's hired, specs, etc. If the local hasn't been involved so far, start now.
- Use a current copy of the asbestos management plan. Ask for plans and reports about completed work.
- Ask the district for "scope of work" documents before any job starts (and whenever you find out about it). Review it. Ask questions about the company's qualifications for the job, plans to isolate spaces where they work, clean-up, etc. Organize walk-throughs or other check-ups during and after the work is done, with appropriate protections.
- Use the district's written Indoor Air Quality Standard plan. Remind the district to notify the local association and individuals about any work that may affect the air quality, meet with the "designated person" about their activities, challenge problems involving airborne hazards.
- Request a staffing list, to know who might be in the building(s) when work is to be done—whether it's weekends, holidays, the summer or another time. Ensure the people on the list know about the work. If there are no protections or inadequate protections in place, take it up with the district before the job starts.
- Always check on clean-up. It's part of the job. What's needed once the work's done? Who's doing it? How? When? Who's checking on it?
- When in doubt, local associations should consult their UniServ reps, who can request help from WEC. 🏠

Dorothy Wigmore is a consultant to the New Jersey Work Environment Council and a long-time health and safety specialist, trained in occupational hygiene, ergonomics, and "stress." She has worked in Canada, the U.S. and Mozambique, focusing on prevention and worker participation to solve job-related hazards.

Resources

NJEA Review

"Asbestos killer dust in your school?"
njea.org/asbestos-killer-dust-in-your-school

"When School is Out – Construction Begins"
njea.org/when-school-is-out-construction-begins

NJ Work Environment Council

"Education and expansion: Model school district policies for protection of staff and students during school construction"
bit.ly/wec-construction-policy

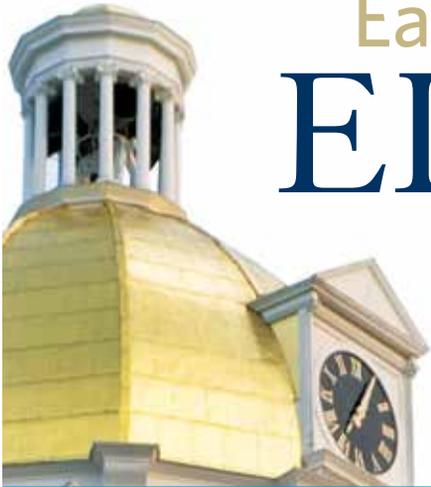
New Jersey Department of Labor

Indoor Air Quality Standard
(includes the standard, guidance, documents)
bit.ly/iaq-standard-nj

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HOPE AND HEALING

By Amanda Adams

It's natural for educators to spend a lot of time thinking about how to create the most impactful learning environments for our students. Many of us are fighting to correct the injustices that are showing up in our school districts and communities.

I would like for educators to carefully contemplate what this means for themselves. Let's consider what our work is in a world of political division, recovery from a global pandemic, and a continued attack on the rights of the LGBTQ community, people of color and women. Can we heal the world without healing ourselves?

We have to heal ourselves to lead effectively and effect social change. In Shawn Ginwright's new book, *The Four Pivots*, he reminds us, "Changing things that are broken in our society requires individual and collective healing. The most important aspect of social change is not problem analysis, power building, narrative change or coalition building—it's healing."

We have to look at the structures causing the harm, and we also have to look at what that harm looks like in us. Without such an examination, those who engage in leadership can become toxic. If we consider there's a leader in each one of us, then we all need to ask ourselves, "When are we going to heal? And how are we going to do it?"

When we get stuck focusing on what all the problems are, and we don't make the space in our lives to reflect on the root causes of those problems, it becomes impossible to imagine real solutions. Instead, we will be conditioned to only focus on surface solutions to deep problems. The struggles that we face day to day in serving our students

and their families often pre-defines our dreams and dictates what we can imagine. That's why so many of us have a hard time describing what a "new normal" for public schools feels, looks, smells and sounds like.

Taking the time to heal ourselves creates space to practice hope. And as educators get better at reframing their conversations for change that is based on hope-filled action, we will be making a new kind of political statement rooted in love, rather than divisiveness. We will be able to fully control the narrative around how we best serve our students and why we are taking the approaches we take. I invite all educators to move from asking what's wrong with our schools today to asking how we can embrace the lessons from the past in order to reimagine, predict and help create what the community wants for their children in the future.

According to Dr. Ginwright, traumatic and painful experiences from the past are the most enduring experiences to learn from, and they are most likely to bind us to the past. We often mull over the pain, discomfort and turmoil until it determines, predicts and becomes our future. That is how the status quo is maintained. That is how we continue to perpetuate the things we don't like about our schools rather than propel us toward the best versions of ourselves.

Instead, ask the tough questions that cultivate your ability to imagine and dream. Have the audacity to hope all while holding the key lessons from the past to best serve all of the students in our schools in the future. 🌱

Amanda Adams is an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division and a coordinator for the NJEA ACCESS Model program. She can be reached at aadams@njea.org.

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– Mariame Kaba

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edTPA is almost gone! Now what?

By Victoria Gladstone

Yes! The edTPA has nearly been eliminated! Is it time to celebrate? Not quite. As of press time, the state Legislature was still considering the terms of Gov. Phil Murphy's conditional veto of S-896, which passed unanimously in both houses in June 2022. The legislation was intended to prohibit the commissioner of education from requiring a teacher performance assessment as a condition of certification.

In his veto, the governor agreed with eliminating the edTPA as an unnecessary barrier to certification, but he wanted to ensure that there were guardrails in place before shifting the responsibility for a performance assessment process to educator preparation programs.

On Sept. 23, the day Murphy conditionally vetoed S-896, he shared his thoughts on the bill's proposed changes proposed in a press release.

"I wholeheartedly agree that the current edTPA requirement for teaching candidates is counterproductive and should be eliminated but also believe that other types of performance-based assessments can ensure that teaching candidates are ready to enter the classroom," Murphy said.

Murphy's consideration of the prospective educators is promising as the removal of the edTPA will be a step in the right direction for improving the certification process.

I have heard of several experiences with this exam through my fellow aspiring educators, including TCNJ alumni Olivia Haas as she worked tirelessly to eliminate the edTPA. She wrote about this for the February 2022 edition of the *NJEA Review* in an article titled "EdTPA: Serving neither preservice educators nor students." After learning about how difficult and inaccessible the exam can be for the college students graduating in New Jersey, I am happy to see our government actively working to improve the certification program.

Victoria Gladstone is a student at The College of New Jersey and a member of NJEA Preservice. With fellow NJEA Preservice member Kayla Kanarkowski, she represents aspiring educators on the NJEA Editorial Committee.

As a current junior in college studying to become a teacher, I experienced a whirlwind of emotions upon learning that the edTPA is on the precipice of elimination. On the one hand, I may not be expected to take the edTPA test by the time I graduate and attempt to get my teacher certification. This means I will not have to record my live lessons during student teaching, pay excessive fees or deal with any of the other issues attached to this exam.

On the other hand, I may need to experience a brand-new assessment process to earn my certification. Putting the responsibility of assessing aspiring educators into the hands of a college, university or any educational institution can lead to many outcomes. New challenges or obstacles that current college students, like myself, may be the first to experience.

I am hopeful that my experience with the certification process will be positive as I believe all parties involved with the assessment process will try to avoid creating something similar to the edTPA. 🏠

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The NJEA Preservice Program and the New Jersey Center for Teaching and Learning (NJCTL) have partnered to provide NJEA Pre-service Members free access to NJCTL's Core Praxis 1 Mathematics Test Prep course. This \$300 course is available for free to pre-service members as a benefit to membership in the Association.

To use this benefit, NJEA Pre-Service members can request access to this course by completing the following form: <https://form.jotform.com/222425457432150>.

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INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S MONTH

An entry point for culturally inclusive education

Amy Moran, Ph.D. and Kate Okeson

November is Indigenous People's Month, so let's talk about how participating in the learning around Indigenous peoples connects to inclusive and culturally responsive education.

Something you may have varying degrees of familiarity with is a land acknowledgement statement, and it is a practice increasing in frequency. What is a land acknowledgment? It's a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as traditional stewards of this land and the enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories.

Many of the acknowledgment statements we hear rightfully include labor acknowledgements to address not only forced removal of Indigenous Peoples from the lands on which we have our schools and institutions, but of the properties built by the hands of enslaved laborers. (We have included links to readings, maps, and examples of these acknowledgment statements in this month's resource QR code.)

This is fundamental to an approach to inclusive education in two of many ways: one, that we have appropriated more than land, and two, that histories have been erased. Only with our joint concerted efforts do we review our curricula, texts, and lessons for the erasure of peoples' histories and contributions that are not always evident. The "not always evident" is a product of settler colonialism, of structural racism, of hetero/cisnormativity as default positions within our educational frameworks and texts.

Further, we need to dig into the other term referenced above: culturally responsive teaching. We come to this from the position that LGBTQIA+ communities are, in fact, a culture, as are racial, ethnic, and religiously connected communities that have seen their culture de-centered in education.

Scholars have responded to these marginalizations by developing pedagogies that incorporate students' identities and lived experiences in the classroom as instructional methods. While a lot of the terms vary, they re-center marginalized communities in curriculum and instruction, and that is one big means by which instruction becomes inclusive.

While it is often a first step to connect cultural and heritage months to new learning about marginalized cultures, it is important to not embed the entirety of

inclusive approaches in the "heroes and holidays" method. Even though such months are a solid way to introduce new content, they do not move us to engaging with any culture or identity regularly. Therefore, we must also connect cultures and identities to the objectives of our curriculum. We must think BIG and take the necessary steps in our teaching, our PLCs, and our school communities to explore and connect cultures from which we have language, fashion, art, technological advancement, and more:

- If appropriated, acknowledge it and ask students why.
- If adopted, ask what makes it important to all of us.
- If adapted, ask students to consider what we do better together.

This kind of teaching allows us to connect our students to many disciplines, such as the arts and culturally important objects, crafts and art histories. We have opportunities in STEM to explore inventions that originated across the globe—for many of which we and our students don't have full knowledge of their first creators. We can make geographic connections when we write our very own land and labor acknowledgment for our school district.

Taking some of the precious time we have as educators to explore these possibilities will engender better teaching practices and aid us in expanding cultural competency in our education spaces. These practices will help us to be more culturally responsive with all our communities and cultures in the classroom. 🌈

We invite you to join your colleagues at NJEA Convention and check out the inclusive education and representative curricula workshops throughout the convention and especially the materials and resources (BOOKS! Lots of BOOKS!) that will be available on Main Street.



Use this QR code for book recommendations and resources. Want to share your ideas? Email rainbowconnectionNJEA@gmail.com.

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Why I worry about bias against community colleges

by Charles Selengut

Community colleges are now much in the news. A great deal of this public interest was generated by Jill Biden, the first lady, herself a former Community College professor who lobbied strongly for free tuition at community colleges. There was significant support for the free tuition provision of President Joe Biden's "Build Back Better" legislative proposals, but due to political opposition, it was not included in the final legislation. Still educators, parents and even some legislators on both sides of the aisle championed the measure.

Despite these worthy objectives, New Jersey community colleges, their students and faculty still experience prejudice and social stigma. Community colleges are seen as institutions geared for those who were unsuccessful in high school, students from working class families or the economically disadvantaged, not places for the successful and well-born. As one of my students, a talented serious student who worked as a landscaper told me, "My friends at four-year colleges make fun of me and say in, "You are in the 13th grade, not in a real college!"

Despite the American ideal of educational equality, bias is prominent in higher education. As one student wrote on a community college blog, "My parents' friends who are decent people think I am a failure for attending community college." The student asked, "What's wrong with community colleges?"

There is nothing wrong with community colleges—many students do extremely well, as I can attest. But as Bradley Griffin, a higher education researcher, explained, for well-educated middle-class families, community college attendance is seen as last resort suitable only for the unmotivated and underprepared.

This class bias, negative labeling and stigma has serious

consequences, in my view, leading many students to see themselves unfairly, as abject failures and their institutions as mediocre and second best. This perception often leads to low expectations and less commitment to scholastic work. Four-year colleges and universities often share this negative perception.

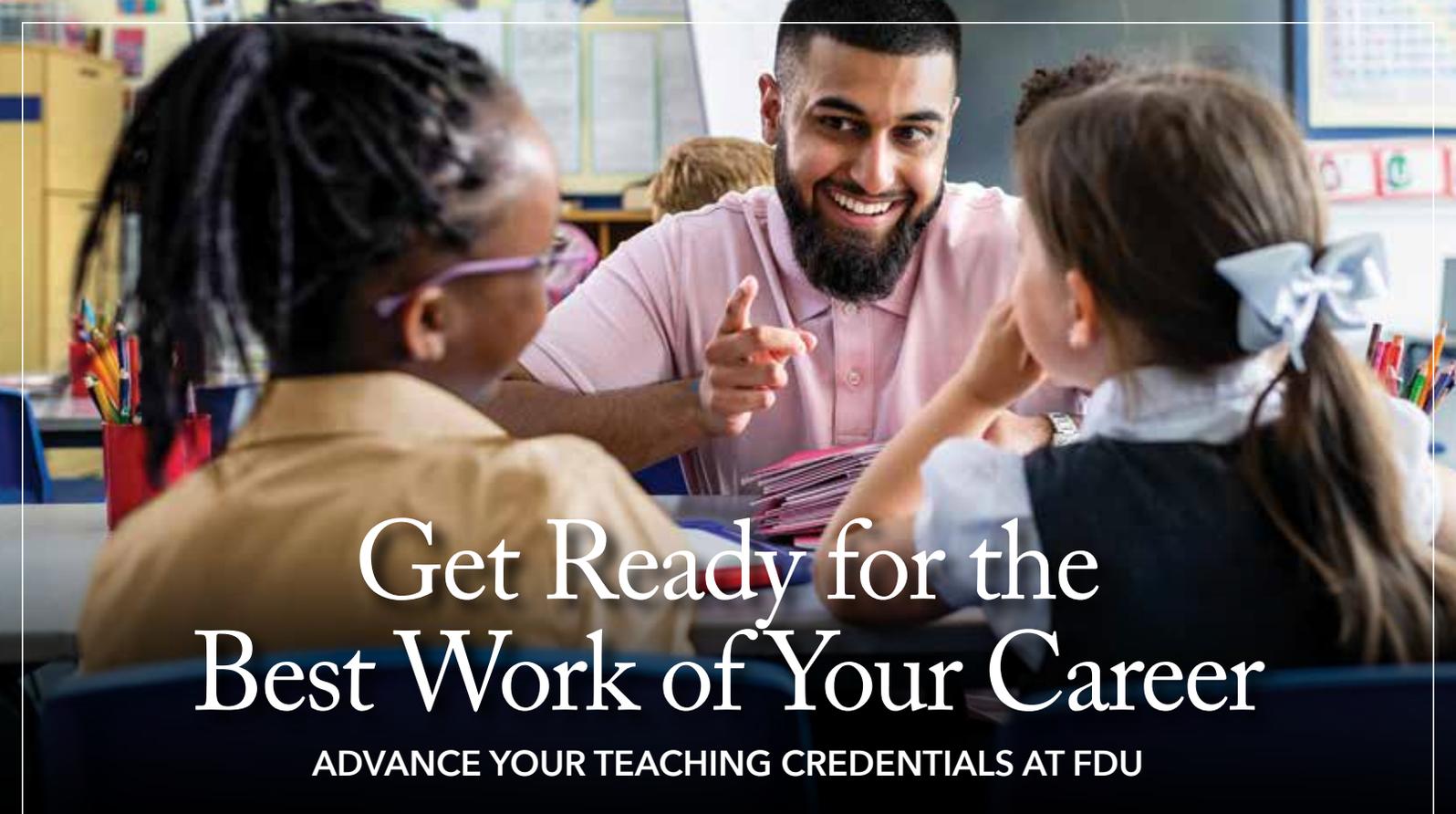
One personal example: I was a visiting professor at a New Jersey university where I taught a course on the sociology of religion that I similarly taught at my regular position at the County College of Morris in Randolph. One of my students who transferred to that university was refused credit for the class because it was taught at a community college. It was only after I contacted the university dean and explained that I taught both classes similarly that credit was given to the student transferee. This prejudice extends to community college faculty who are asked to omit their community college affiliation at scholarly meetings and in publications.

For students who are motivated, community colleges provide wonderful opportunities for educational and economic advancement. Many students do extremely well. However, due to the negative perception of community college education, many students become disillusioned and never graduate. The Hechinger Report on Higher education reports that only 1 out of 5 students graduate in three years.

In my half century of teaching in New Jersey, I observed how the negative labeling and stigma attached to these schools lead some of my students to see themselves as educational failures. This sense of malaise often comes out in conversations with students often arguing with me that despite my optimism and expectations for them, there were still in a glorified high school or as one student expressed, "Sorry to tell you, Prof, this is a vocational school."

Courageous educational leadership is needed to challenge this educational bias so that all of our students are treated respectfully and without prejudice. 🇺🇸

Charles Selengut, a professor of sociology at the County College of Morris, is the author of Sacred Fury: Understanding Religious Violence. Selengut can be reached at cselengut@gmail.com.



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THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

The early career network offers events and resources for members in their first five years

BY BRIAN HARKAVY



Early Career Network

It is no secret that it is harder than ever to be a teacher or educational support professional (ESP), and the first five years are some of the most tumultuous of the career. Helping our young educators is more important than ever. To aid new teachers and ESPs, NJEA created the Early Career Network for members eager to connect with other members and share their ideas. The Early Career Network offers excellent events and resources to new members of the association.

What is the Early Career Network?

The Early Career Network (ECN) is a member-driven organization offering resources, professional development and networking opportunities all geared around members in their first five years. Events run by the Early Career Network are a great opportunity for members who are new to the field of education. The ECN offers opportunities to meet other new members from all around the state and to learn about what it means to be a part of NJEA.

The network is broken up into four regions: Northeast, Northwest, Central and South. Each has its own team of captains who create events and resources for their region. Events are held throughout the year within each region. Captains are early career members from all over the state who volunteer to serve the Early Career Network.

The Early Career Network also has a major presence at the NJEA Convention. At its booth last year, the ECN had many resources for newer members and had a relaxation corner to enjoy some yoga between convention sessions. The Early Career Network also played a role in hosting the after-hours networking event that included delicious hors d'oeuvres and a stand-up comedian. ECN members

Brian Harkavy is a band, chorus and general music teacher at Berkeley Township Elementary school in Bayville. He is also a captain for the central region of the Early Career Network and the Visual Caption Head for the Toms River High School East Marching Band.



A the 2021 NJEA Convention, Lindenwold EA President Ryan Strothers, with South Orange EA member Sabina Ellis, proudly wears his Early Career Network Team South shirt.

were at their booth throughout the convention to help new members navigate the space, share information and get to know each other.

What to expect at events

Early Career Network events are a great opportunity to meet other new teachers and ESP in a friendly and supportive environment. Often food and beverages are served and many times there are giveaways. Events are always focused around the needs of NJEA members in their first five years. Past events included workshops such as Member Benefits, Surviving Evaluation, Self-Care and Mindfulness, and How to Read Your Paycheck. The Early Career Network has also hosted cooking classes, end-of-year celebrations, and book clubs. Events are open to all members but are primarily intended for members in their first five years.

Where can I learn more?

The best way to keep up with the Early Career Network is to follow it on social media. You can find the Early Career Network on Facebook, Instagram (njea_earlycareernetwork), and Twitter (@NJEA_ENC). Each region also has its own social media. You can also sign up for out for text messages and emails about events. 📧

STAFF NEWS

HIRES AND PROMOTIONS



NJEA welcomes **TAMANYKA BOOKER** who joined NJEA staff on Sept. 1 as a temporary secretary in the Government Relations Division's Office of Policy and Politics. From 2001 through 2022, Booker was employed at Mountainside Hospital where she first worked in the corporate office before serving the hospital itself in departments such as the emergency room, out-patient registration and the Adult Health Center. For the past two years, she also provided part-time front desk and office support at Montclair Radiology. She was born and raised in Montclair, where she still lives with her son, Jaydon.



NJEA welcomes **ANNA MUESSIG** who joined full-time NJEA staff on Oct. 3 as a temporary associate director in the Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. Muessig has nearly 20 years of experience in public education at both the classroom and administrative levels. Since 2020, Muessig had been an assistant principal/director of student activities at Riverside High School. From 2017 to 2020, she was an instructional coach and English teacher at Collingswood High School where she also served as the Evaluation Committee Chair for the Collingwood Education Association. From 2015 to 2017, she was the curriculum supervisor and director of the district technology team for Audubon Public Schools. From 2004 to 2015, Muessig was an English teacher at Audubon Junior-Senior High School where she served on her Local Professional Development Committee, the School Improvement Panel, and several other local association and district committees.

Since 2019, Muessig was among the first group members to serve as consultants for the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy. She holds a bachelor's degree in English and a master's degree in teaching, both from Rowan University. Muessig lives in Cherry Hill with her husband, Kevin, and their teenage sons, Dash and Zeke.



NJEA congratulates **CRYSTAL INMAN** on her promotion to associate director for statistics and school funding in the Research and Economic Services Division. Inman initially joined NJEA staff in August 2012 as a part-time office assistant in the Region 12 UniServ office in Monroe Township, Middlesex County. Prior to that, Inman worked through a temporary agency in the Research and Economic Services Division from May 2011 to May 2012. She returned to that division as a principal clerk in September 2013. She was promoted to program assistant in May 2018. Inman holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Rider University. She lives in Atco with her partner, Bob.



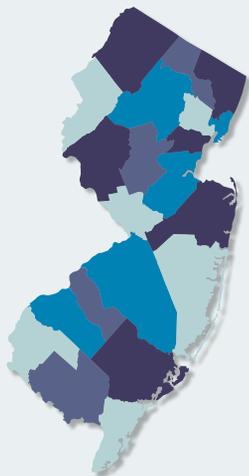
NJEA congratulates **LESLEY NEWMAN** on her promotion in June to chief-business services in the Membership Office in the Business Division. Newman initially joined NJEA staff as principal clerk-bookkeeper in October 2019. Prior to her employment with NJEA, she had over 15 years of customer service, sales, visual merchandising and expense control experience in the retail industry, including such retailers as Cole Haan, Banana Republic and Ann Taylor Loft. Newman holds a bachelor's degree in Spanish/Latin American Studies from American University. She lives in Stratford with her husband, Brian.



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Workshops and conferences

highlights

Restorative justice and SEL in arts education

CULTIVATING CONDITIONS FOR SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING AND ARTS EDUCATION

Student artists can develop a deep sense of identity, belonging and agency when social emotional learning is intentionally embedded into arts education. This 90-minute virtual workshop will offer arts educators and administrators the opportunity to self-assess readiness to embed social emotional learning into arts programs and teaching practices that are rooted in culturally responsive arts education. You'll learn about resources and key principles that will help you to cultivate conditions for social emotional learning and culturally responsive arts education.

The workshop takes place on Zoom on Nov. 16 at 3-4:30 p.m. The presenter is Latasha Casterlow-Lalla, supervisor of Visual and Performing Arts in Passaic Public Schools

The fee is \$75.

Visit bit.ly/3evMl46 to register.

NJSBF TO OFFER EDUCATORS TRAINING IN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation (NJSBF) is offering a new workshop designed to provide educators with strategies for whole school implementation of restorative justice, which can have positive

impacts on school climate. Restorative justice in schools is an approach that proactively builds community and helps to prevent harm and conflict. When there is harm, restorative justice helps students make things right for those impacted and acknowledges that those who do wrong need healing as well.

In this new training, educators will learn ways to respond to student misbehavior by focusing on accountability and repairing harm rather than punishment. Restorative Justice training complements other anti-bias and conflict resolution trainings offered by NJSBF. The goal is to provide trauma-informed and social-emotional learning practices that can address equity and inclusion while preventing bias, bullying and violence in schools.

NJSBF is committed to providing educators with a toolbox of intersecting approaches, mindsets, and practices to promote positive school climate as well as reduce violence and bias. Professional development credits are available.

To receive information about restorative justice training and other anti-bias and violence prevention, subscribe at bit.ly/njsbf-training.

To view current offerings, visit njsbf.org/events.

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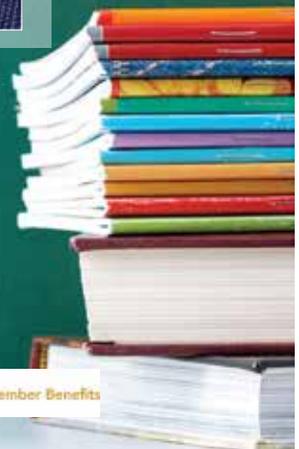
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Questions? Email
Beth Buonsante at
bbuonsante@njea.org.



FACEBOOK: Follow **@NJEA Member Benefits** on Facebook for discounts and services that save you money.

NJREA SCHOLARSHIPS

Do you know any high school seniors with high academic accomplishments, active participation in school activities and a community-service mindset? NJREA wants to help them continue their education! Through its annual scholarships, NJREA aims to continue its long-standing tradition to help students embark on successful college careers.

All four-year and two-year scholarships are offered to graduating high school seniors, and each is renewable based on the recipient's continued enrollment as a full-time student and cumulative grade point average at the end of each academic year. Each four-year scholarship has a total value of \$6,000, or \$1,500 per year, and each two-year scholarship has a value of \$2,000, or \$1,000 per year.

Students may apply for only one scholarship, regardless of type. To be eligible, a student must fulfill the following requirements:

Elizabeth A. Allen/Isabelle M. Hickman four-year scholarships

- Will graduate from a New Jersey public high school, including vocational-technical and charter schools.
- Has been accepted to a four-year college or university.
- Has a cumulative grade point average of 3.75 or higher.

Fred Aug Memorial Scholarship

- Will graduate from a public high school in New Jersey, including vocational-technical and charter schools.
- Has been accepted by a community college.
- Has a cumulative grade point average of 2.75 or higher.

Walter P. Krichling Jr. Trade, Vocational or Career and Technical Education Program two-year scholarship

- Will graduate from a New Jersey public high school, including vocational-technical and charter schools.
- Has been accepted to a trade school/vocational program to earn certification in a vocational field of work.
- Has a cumulative grade point average of 2.3 or higher.

Application requirements

To be considered for any of the four scholarships, the applicant must submit four copies of the following:

- The completed 2023 scholarship application form.
- Their high school transcript.
- A brief essay, illuminating goals and interests for college and beyond.
- A list of extra-curricular activities, athletics, honors, community services and employment.
- Two letters of recommendation, one of which is from a teacher at their high school.

Encourage a student you know and respect to apply today. To be considered, all applicants must use the 2023 NJREA scholarship form available at njea.org/njrea-scholarships. Applications from previous years will not be accepted.

All information must be postmarked on or before Feb. 1, 2023. Late applications will not be accepted.

Contact Cathy Raffaele at 609-599-4594, ext. 2300 with questions.



Around the counties

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

CUMBERLAND COUNTY REA

Dec. 7: Holiday luncheon at New Jersey Motorsports Park in Millville (GPS: 8000 Dividing Creek Rd.). Cost is \$30. To attend, call Irene Savicky at 856-863-8424 by Nov. 18.

GLOUCESTER COUNTY REA

Dec. 6: Holiday meeting/luncheon at Four Star Event Catering in Wenonah. Cost is \$30, payable by check made out to GCREA. To attend, call Candy Zachowski at 570-710-5514. Donations of cash or canned goods for local food bank appreciated.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY REA

Dec. 15: Holiday luncheon at the Grand Marquis in Old Bridge. Cost is \$43. To attend, contact Susan Jaysnovitch at teachtheinternet@aol.com or 732-925-1606 by Dec. 8.

MONMOUTH COUNTY REA

Dec. 13: Holiday luncheon/meeting at Molly Pitcher Inn in Red Bank. Cost is \$35. The day will include a food and toy drive. To attend, call Sue Shrott 732-995-7754 by Dec. 2.

MORRIS COUNTY REA

Dec. 7: Holiday luncheon/meeting at Birchwood Manor in Whippany. Cost is \$35 for members, \$53 for a guest. Appearance by The Nocktaves—Pequannock High School Acapella Group. To attend, call John Beekman at 973-514-1080 by Nov. 29.

OCEAN COUNTY REA

Dec. 8: Holiday meeting/luncheon at the Clarion Hotel in Toms River. Cost is \$28. To attend, call Barbara Miller at 732-477-1711 by Nov. 25.

PASSAIC COUNTY REA

Dec. 7: Holiday meeting/luncheon at The Brownstone in Paterson. Cost is \$35. To attend, call Kitty Sausa at 201-410-1325.

SALEM COUNTY REA

Dec. 12: Holiday meeting/luncheon at the Woodstown Diner. The Woodstown High School Chamber Choir will be singing. Cost is \$17. To attend, call Rosemma Ward at 856-467-4795 by Dec. 5.

SUSSEX COUNTY REA

Dec. 5: General meeting/luncheon at the Farmstead Golf and Country Club in Lafayette. Appearance by the Harmony in Motion Singers. Cost is TBD. To attend, call Sharon Mullen at 908-852-1221.

NJREA MEMBERS – ENJOY DISCOUNTED ONLINE CLASSES THROUGH VITALITY SOCIETY



Any NJEA member (one member per household) is eligible for the discounted offer by going to <https://bit.ly/VSNJEA>. Vitality Society will offer the first month complimentary, and thereafter, \$19.99/month for unlimited access to 16 fitness, wellness, and enrichment classes live on Zoom each week and class recordings. For questions email: help@vitality-society.com.

Vitality Society is an online community for people 60 and better to be at their best. They accomplish this by tapping into members' vitality, curiosity, and creativity in the context of community. They offer over 16 fitness, wellness, and enrichment classes each week. Members refer to Vitality Society as a "lifeline," "a portal of community and opportunity," and "a game-changer for my physical and mental health."

NJEA Delegate Assembly

Minutes of Jan. 4, 2020

The NJEA Delegate Assembly (D.A.) met at Hyatt Regency Princeton, 102 Carnegie Center, Princeton, N.J. on Jan. 4, 2020 at 9:30 a.m. President Marie Blistan presided

Roll Call was taken. There were 122 out of 126 delegates present. Alternates were seated as follows: Panis (Cumberland) for Carbonara, Mazzone (Hudson) for Crawford, Turturiello (Passaic) for McEntee, Lehr (Salem) for Gilmartin, Smith (Sussex) for Bussow, Perez-Gani (Union) for Mitchell-Hall.

Absent was representative Chau (Atlantic), Nelson (Somerset), Alston (Union), Pryor (Alternate from Union).

Grace Rarich gave the Inspirational Message and then led delegation in the Flag Salute.

Blistan asked if there was objection to adopting the D.A. Rules of Procedure. There was no objection. Agenda was adopted with flexibility.

Moment of Silence was observed for Micah Tennant and the Jersey City community.

President's report

Blistan highlighted S-3945, a bill signed by Gov. Phil Murphy also known as the Create a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural Hair Act, which prohibits racial discrimination on the basis of traits historically associated with race, including but not limited to hair texture, hair type, and protective hairstyle.

Murphy also signed legislation that requires boards of education to include instruction and adopt instructional materials that accurately portray political, economic, and social contributions of persons with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.

Blistan provided an update on Chapter 78 and Job Justice, the dropping of LMDRA regulations, and the repeal of the Excise Tax.

Vice President's report

Vice President Sean Spiller reported on the State Board of Education's conversations around assessments and being appointed to the Governor's Public Bank Task Force.

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty gave the fiscal report of NJEA.

Beatty spoke about the NJEA ACES Task Force. The group met and discussed how Pride or FAST can be used to facilitate community outreaches.

Beatty reported on work with the Center of Future Educators, New Jersey Future educators Association, and about LGBTQIA+ Initiatives.

Nondelegate speakers

Jon Coniglio (Morris) spoke to the power that we have in this room and this association in regard to endorsing political and local candidates. Pranita Bijlani (Middlesex) discussed environmental issues that are damaging the earth. John Flora (county not given) spoke to NJEA's political endorsement process. Maria Enriquez (Hudson) spoke to NJEA's endorsement process, the Global Witness Report and divestment. Steve Roy (Middlesex) spoke against the NJEA's support of S-2173. He is against its vaccination stance. Dan Cummings (Middlesex) calling for NJEA to divest in fossil fuel companies. Sharleen Leahy (Somerset) called for divestment from fossil fuels. Theresa Fuller (North Plainfield) called for divestment from fossil fuels. Joe Toye (Somerset) spoke against government mandating vaccinations. Carolyn Simpson (Burlington) spoke against S-2173, vaccinations. Eileen Gavin (Middleton Township) spoke for S-2173. Vaccination protect students. Annemarie Della-Donna (Monmouth) spoke in support of S-2173 commented that it protects students. Ricardo Viteri (Woodbridge Township) spoke against vaccines. Robin Cogan (Camden) stated vaccines save lives. Kathy McCutchen (Haddon Township) school nurse spoke in support of S-2173. Gina Emge (Burlington) vaccines are safe. S-2173 can save lives. Richard Gruen (no county or local given) spoke against vaccines. Colleen Prince (Union) spoke to needing information about the amendments to Chapter 78 relief. Needs more information. Mary Walworth (Edison Township) spoke to divestment. Kelly Ann Morris (Camden) spoke to how Chapter 78 affected her and the need of her pension to be funded. Chrissy Kozar (Gloucester) spoke to divestment. Christopher Phillips (Parkridge school District) Spoke against S-2173. Lauren Murphy (Southern Regional District) spoke against vaccines. Janina West (Marlboro Education Association) spoke against S-2173. Laura Benjamin (Piscataway) spoke against vaccines and S-2173. Julie Klikus (Union) spoke to making amendments to S-4114 available.

Lunch Break was called. Will reconvene at 1:30 p.m.

Novak Francella audit presentation

Auditors from Novak Francella presented information from the audit of our accounting. Auditors took questions from delegation.

Executive Director's report

Executive Director Steve Swetsky reported on the pandemic an opportunity to redefine normal and to redefine our environment and redefine our profession as educators and redefine our union as union leaders and take this opportunity to think differently, act differently, and work in ways that we

probably never ever think we would work before. He reported the need to start talking about Chapter 44 and assisting members to understand the different plans. He spoke of the R.E.A.L Movement and the Members of Color Network in connecting with members

Committee reports

The body received reports without recommendations.

Election Committee-Diane MacKay, Hudson County. There were no questions. NJEA PAC Operating Committee (Informational report, there were no questions from the delegation)

The body received reports with recommendations.

Affiliations Committee: Affiliations Committee: Report was moved. Motion carried. Budget Committee Report: All recommendations were moved. Motions were carried. Government Relations Committee: Motions were moved. Motions carried. Certification, Evaluation, and Tenure Committee: Report was Moved. Motion carried. Human and Civil Rights Committee: Report was moved. Motion carried. School Finance Committee: Report was moved. Motion carried. Technology Committee: Report was moved. Motion carried. Executive Committee: Report was moved. Motion carried.

New Business Items

NBI #1: Esther Fletcher (Bergen) moved that in accordance with NJEA policy on Human and Civil Rights, using existing

media, NJEA will make a statement denouncing acts of violence against people of diverse religious beliefs, especially in light of the rise in anti-Semitic hate crimes. Further, that NJEA Equity Alliance will explore ways to raise awareness of acts of violence against individuals and groups based on their religion.

Motion was moved. Duly seconded. Motion carried.

NBI #2: Melissa Tomlinson (Atlantic) Refer the concern for divestment of fossil fuel investments to the Pension Policy Committee for review and report back to the D.A. by the March 2020 meeting.

Motion was moved. Duly seconded. Motion carried.

For the Good of the Order

Blistan reported that Jacqui Greadington is being inducted into the National University of Women. Mary MacRae (Somerset) thanked NJEA lobbyists for supporting members with autoimmune disease. Christine Sampson-Clark (Mercer) asked members to go to strongpublicschools.org on how to be a delegate to DNC and RNC. Chris Canella (Essex) spoke on the seriousness of Russian cyber terrorists and attacks on schools. Marilyn Weeks (Middlesex) asked members to start planning for the NEA RA and support James Frazier's campaign. Judy Perkins (NJREA) reported that the NJREA will be 100 years old on January 13.

Barbara Rheault (Atlantic) moved to adjourn. Motion was duly seconded. Motion carried.

GRADUATE STUDIES
WILLIAM PATERSON UNIVERSITY
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Admission deadline: **February 1** for July start.

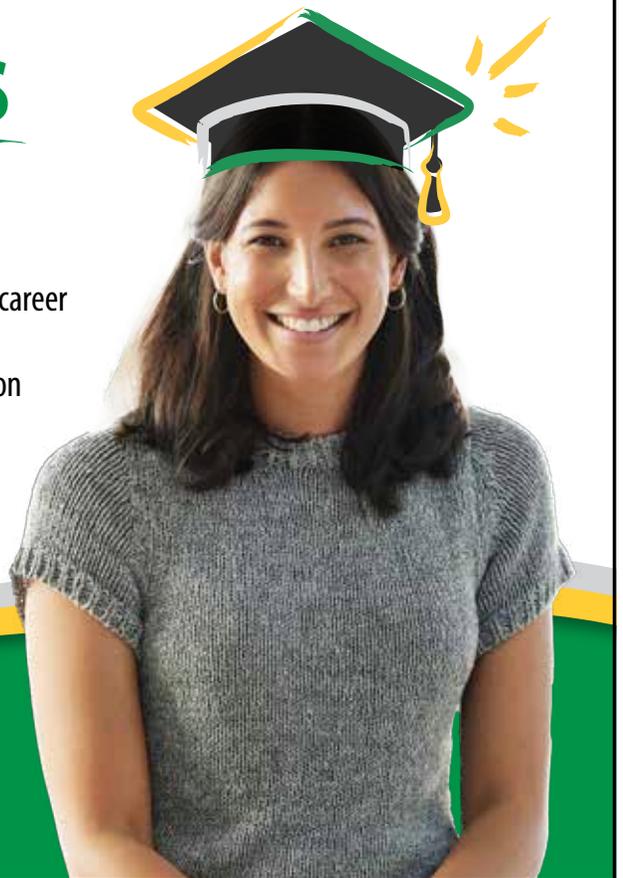
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Questions? Email graduate@wpunj.edu

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Got a great idea?

Get it funded, just like these NJEA members!

Classroom Economy – Hopatcong’s Durban Avenue Elementary School fourth graders learn how to be successful in today’s rapidly changing and highly independent society. Thanks to a \$4,615 Hipp grant, educators created an integrated, and consequently, more relevant curriculum that immerses both general and special education students in a fully functioning classroom economy that is similar to the town’s economy. Students took field trips to meet a cross-section of people in the community performing a variety of vital jobs. Then students filled out job applications and interviewed for mock positions in the fields that interested them.

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

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

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Our Vietnam Veteran Tour Guides give all tours, so students hear history from the people who were there. Virtual Vet visits bring our tour guides into your classroom.
[Email us at tours@njvvmf.org.](mailto:tours@njvvmf.org)
- **High-Quality full-day Professional Development sessions.**
On December 1, 2022 in partnership with the National Council for Social Studies, will host Dr. Rodger Harris from Ken Burn's Documentary on the Vietnam War for an on-site clinic. [Email us at learn@njvvmf.org](mailto:learn@njvvmf.org)

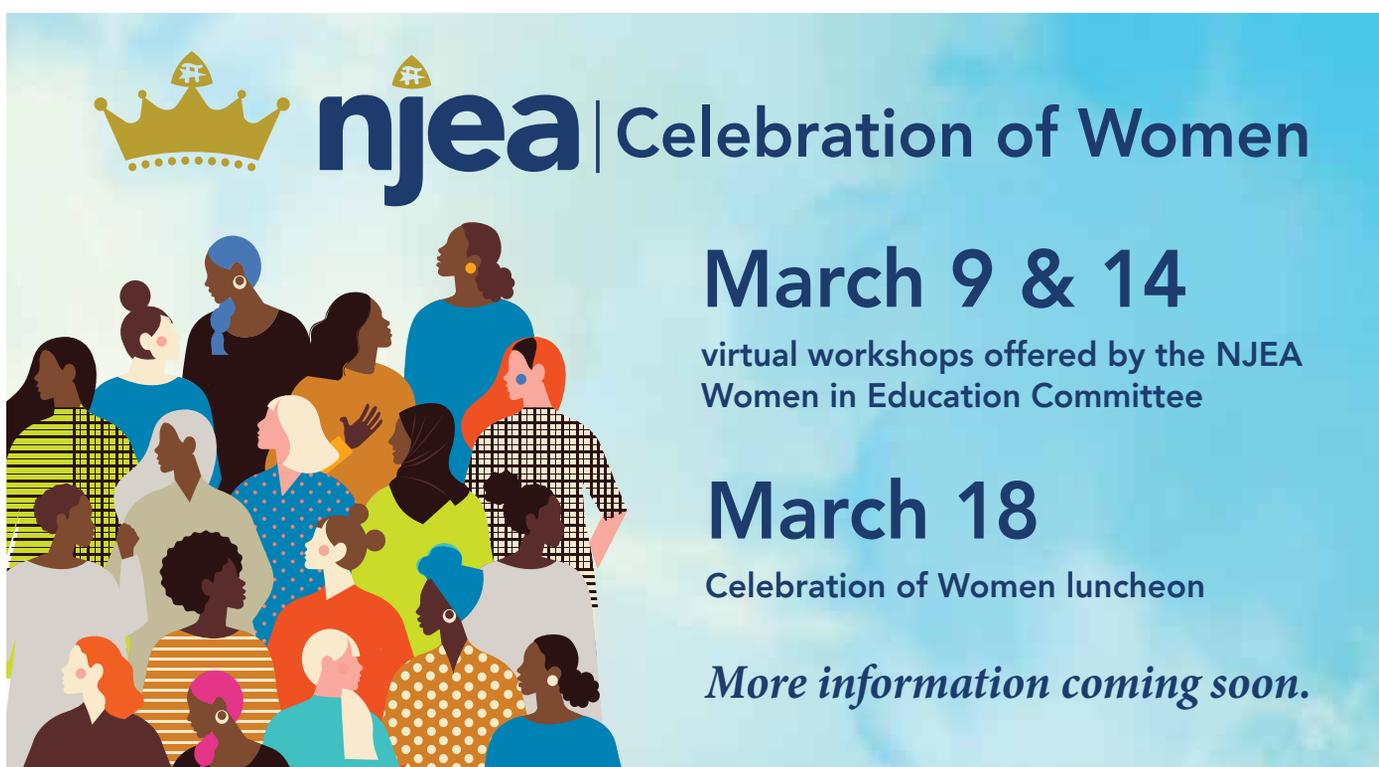
For more information, visit: www.njvvmf.org

NOVEMBER & *beyond*

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

<p>NOV 09</p>	<p>WEDNESDAY Executive Committee meeting</p>	<p>NOV 12</p>	<p>SATURDAY Delegate Assembly meeting</p>	<p>JAN 07</p>	<p>SATURDAY Delegate Assembly meeting</p>
<p>NOV 09-10</p>	<p>WED & THURS NJREA Convention</p>	<p>DEC 07</p>	<p>WEDNESDAY Executive Committee meeting</p>	<p>JAN 13-14</p>	<p>FRI & SAT NJEA HCR Summit and Equity Alliance Conference</p>
<p>NOV 10-11</p>	<p>THURS & FRI NJEA Convention</p>	<p>JAN 06</p>	<p>FRIDAY Executive Committee meeting</p>	<p>JAN 14</p>	<p>SATURDAY Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Human Rights Celebration</p>

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



 **njea** | Celebration of Women

March 9 & 14
virtual workshops offered by the NJEA Women in Education Committee

March 18
Celebration of Women luncheon

More information coming soon.

A rising tide lifts **ALL** boats

No teacher seeking a full-time position in New Jersey today would accept a starting salary of \$18,500. But in 1985, 80% of districts had starting salaries below \$18,500, with some districts offering as little as \$10,600. So when New Jersey set \$18,500 as the statewide minimum salary for teachers, it was a major step forward.

Signed into law by Republican Gov. Tom Kean with NJEA's strong support, the legislation created the highest mandatory starting salary in the U.S. But some long-time NJEA members at the time resented the boost in pay for early-career educators who "walked in the door" earning a salary they had worked years to attain.

This month's cover story about the campaign to bargain starting salaries of at least \$60,000 may lead some of today's veteran educators to feel the same way veteran educators did in 1985.

Bob Willoughby, a now-retired NJEA staff member was a leading champion of the 1985 law because he knew that higher starting salaries benefited teachers across the guide from the first year to the last. Knowing this, he helped launch NJEA's "\$40K Right Away" within a decade of the "eighteen-five" law. Now retired for nearly 10 years, educator salaries are still his passion—today he believes starting salaries should rise "to six digits with no decimal places." He also sits on the board of The Teacher Salary Project (teachersalaryproject.org). The reason he believes in higher starting salaries boils down to basic math.

To understand the significance of the \$18,500 law in 1985 on all teacher salaries—and a starting salary of at least \$60,000 today—it is important to understand the relationship between the lowest salary on the salary guide and the money it generates for future settlements.

When a local association negotiates, for example, a 5% pay raise, the dollars associated with that percentage are calculated from the actual dollars the district spent on

salaries in the previous year. The higher the total amount spent on salaries in a given year, the more dollars a 5% settlement yields.

The sudden increase in minimum salaries across the state in 1985 was matched by a sudden increase in the total amount of dollars each district spent from its budget for salaries. Thus, subsequent settlements yielded more dollars to be distributed across the various steps of salary guides from top to bottom.

“ It is in the interest of veteran staff members to raise the minimum salary as high as possible. ”

When an educator at the top of a salary guide retires, the amount of money a district spends from its salary budget decreases. With that reduction, the dollars yielded from a negotiated percentage decreases. The greater the distance between the highest salary and the lowest salary, the greater the reduction in dollars generated from a negotiated percentage. If fewer dollars are generated, there is less money available for distribution anywhere on the guide, including the top step. That's why it is in the interest of veteran staff members to raise the minimum salary as high as possible.

The same holds true for the salaries of educational support professionals—which is why salary achievements like those made by the Atlantic County Special Services Bus Drivers/Aides Association are vital in setting the pace for the entire school team. (See Page 25.)

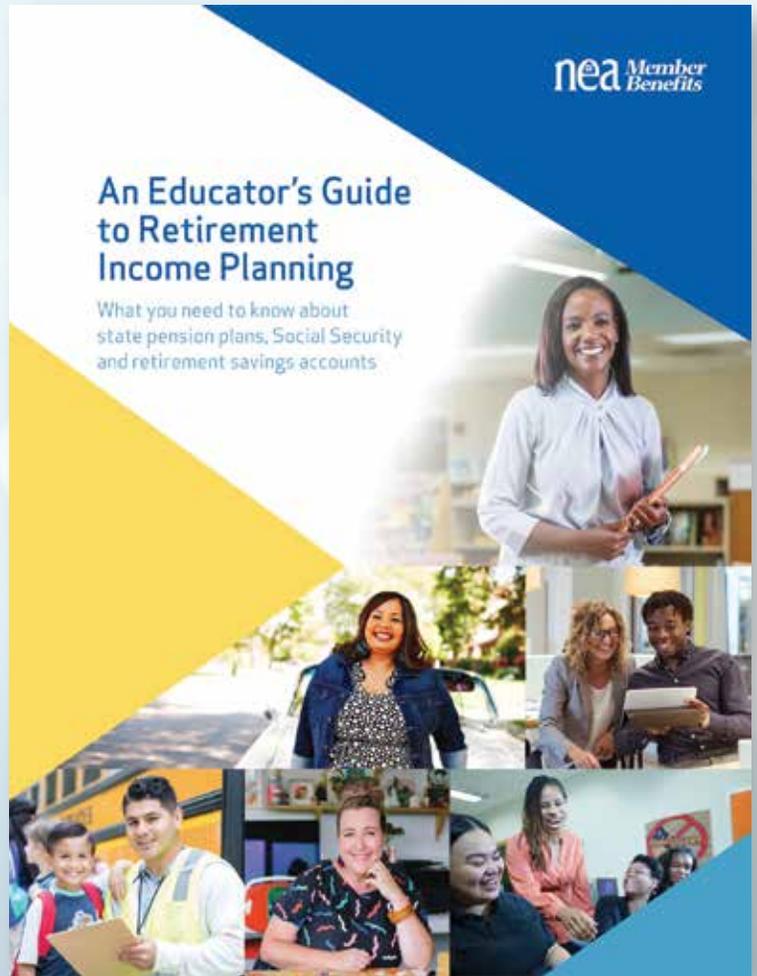
Since 1983, minimum salaries for teachers have consistently outpaced inflation because of the bargaining power of local associations supported by NJEA. Had minimum salaries increased at a rate equal to the consumer price index, with no new minimum salary in 1985, the average minimum salary in 2021-22 would have been approximately \$41,850. Instead it is \$56,370.

In 1983, New Jersey's average teacher salary ranked 14th in the nation. In 2021-22, New Jersey's average teacher salary ranked among the highest at \$78,407. The money generated from higher starting salaries benefits everyone on the salary guide. Indeed, a rising tide lifts all boats. 🌊



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