

# REVIEW

FEBRUARY  
2023  
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an education and advocacy resource

**18** MEET TRINA JENKINS,  
THE 2023 NJEA ESP OF THE YEAR

**24** CODING WITH KIDS

**28** WARETOWN REFERENDUM UNITES  
ASSOCIATION AND BOARD

**30** SEL DAY: UPLIFTING HEARTS,  
CONNECTING MINDS

*Trina Jenkins*

**2023 NJEA ESP of the Year**

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**1: The Essex County Education Association** hosted a successful early career engagement and membership event with over 30 members in attendance. The members had a wonderful time conversing and networking with each other and with more experienced members. In addition, the NJEA Member Discount Program was on hand to offer members savings and prizes.

**2: The Lenape District Support Staff Association** (Burlington) made this sizable and generous donation to Operation Santa—an initiative from the Medford Township Police Department. LDSSA members truly stepped up. LDSSA member Jackie Robel coordinated the donations.

**3: The Gloucester County Education Association** hosted an overnight workshop program for dozens of its educational support professional members in December. Standing from left: Melba Moore-Suggs, Chardae Ingram, Norman Scott and Danielle Relation. Seated from left: Deborah Mensch, Jean O'Connor, Ann Hayes and Joann Hanson.

**4: NJEA members from the Burlington County Special Services District** showed up in force for the **Burlington County Education Association** educational support professionals overnight workshop. They were brimming with pride for the Burlington County ESP of the Year, Sandra Wilcox (at center, tan sweater, glasses), and retired BCSEA member Pat Niehaus, the 2016 NJEA ESP of the Year (seated, second from right).

## FEATURES



### 18 | MEET TRINA JENKINS, THE 2023 NJEA ESP OF THE YEAR

Trina Jenkins believes that when students, schools and the community work together, they not only survive, they excel. Her calling to serve students with special needs, and her advocacy for her colleagues and community, have led her to be named the 2023 NJEA Educational Support Professional (ESP) of the Year.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



### 24 | CODING WITH KIDS

The annual CodingWithKids computer science event coordinated by 2023 Warren County Teacher of the Year and New Jersey State Teacher of the Year finalist Daryl Detrick returned to Warren Hills Regional High School for its seventh consecutive year. Detrick believes that coding prepares students not only for future careers in computer science but provides life skills no matter what students choose to do after high school. He also believes that computer science provides career pathways for women and students of color helping to build a stronger middle class.

BY SHARON MILANO

## SAVE OUR SCHOOLS VOTE YES ✓ ON NOV 8TH

### 28 | WARETOWN REFERENDUM UNITES ASSOCIATION AND BOARD

Waretown's public schools needed help. They were confronted with laying off eight teachers and class sizes expanding to 30 students. Despite sometimes contentious negotiations with the board, they joined forces to pass a referendum to save their school district. In the end, they proved that collaboration can be more powerful than confrontation.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



### 30 | SEL DAY: UPLIFTING HEARTS, CONNECTING MINDS

Get ready for SEL Day on March 10, 2023, by reading about some great ideas from Mount Olive, East Orange, Rutgers, and the Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning.

BY MAURICE J. ELIAS AND JENNIFER LY



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*We're more powerful together*

# The number \$10,000



The total you may be eligible for when you apply for a grant through the NJEA Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education. The foundation provides grants to educators

from \$500 to \$10,000. But hurry, the application deadline is March 1. Go to [njea.org/hipp](https://njea.org/hipp) now.

Source: NJEA Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education

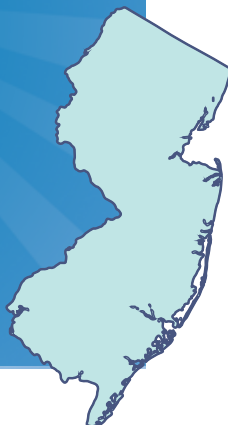
## GOOD NEWS

### Preschools in NJ's City Schools Are Best in Nation

New Jersey's preschool programs in its largest urban school districts have been rated among the best in the nation.

#### Source:

Friedman-Krauss, A.H., Barnett, W.S., Garver, K.A., Hodges, K.S. Weisenfeld, G. G., & DiCrecchio, N., (2021). "The State of Preschool 2020: State Preschool Yearbook." New Brunswick, N.J.: National Institute for Early Education Research. [nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks/yearbook2020](https://nieer.org/state-preschool-yearbooks/yearbook2020)



Trina Jenkins, a paraprofessional in Pleasantville, is the 2023 NJEA Educational Support Professional of the Year. Jenkins works to ensure that ESPs are respected and that the community understands the critical role ESPs play in schools.

PHOTO BY  
Kathryn Coulibaly

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NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

# REVIEW

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

President: Sean M. Spiller | Vice President: Steve Beatty | Secretary-Treasurer: Petal Robertson

Executive Director: Steve 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*

## Celebrating Educational Support Professionals

February may be the shortest month of the year, but it seems like more events are packed into it than any other month. It seems fitting, then, that this month we honor educational support professionals (ESPs) since they pack more into a day than almost anyone I know. No one better exemplifies this than the 2023 NJEA Educational Support Professional of the Year, Trina Jenkins.

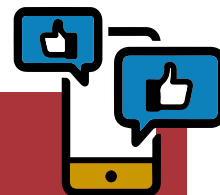
Trina is a paraprofessional in Pleasantville, Atlantic County, and her story of love, loss and commitment to her students and their education is powerful and moving. Trina is a vibrant and charismatic person whose enthusiasm and warmth carries everyone along with her, from the students in her building to the members she tirelessly serves.

Trina is a proud advocate for ESPs and is working hard to ensure that every member feels their value to public education and to our union.

We, as an association, know that educational support professionals provide essential services without which our schools could not function, and they go above and beyond their job descriptions every day to ensure that New Jersey's public school children are able to learn in a safe, secure and nurturing environment.

They are essential to our union, as well, and NJEA would not be the strongest public school employee union in the nation without ESPs and their tireless efforts to advocate for fairness, safe and healthy schools, and well-funded public schools.

We are one union, working toward a common goal that we can only achieve through our united efforts. Thank you for sharing your unique skills, talents and perspectives with your communities and your union, and thank you for all that you do to ensure that our public schools continue to be the best for every child.



### SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

@SpillerforNJEA: As I reflect on the teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., I feel a sense of profound hope and inspiration. Dr. King believed that the key to building a better, more fair society began with serving others and finding power in collective action. These lessons ring true today, so let us all stand together as union members, ready to build a more just society for our students to inherit. #MLK #WEareNJEA

On Jan. 16, NJEA President Sean M. Spiller reflected on the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He encouraged his fellow NJEA members to consider King's service lessons while reminding them that King taught about the power of people remaining united and working together.

### STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: Over 200 high school students at today's NJ Future Educator's Winter conference at The College of New Jersey! A fantastic gathering of prospective educators and colleagues, coming together through our partnership and work with the Center for Future Educators ... Thank you to all of our members who brought their students today ... as well as our partners at TCNJ, Dr. Jeanne DelColle and Program Assistant Wambui Gilbert—and our NJEA Preservice ambassadors, Matt and Olivia. And thanks to 2022-23 NJ State Teacher of the Year Christine Girtain for a great keynote!

On Jan. 14, NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty shared photos from the New Jersey's Future Educator's Winter Conference at The College of New Jersey. He thanked all in attendance and reflected on the importance of actively recruiting new educators to the profession.

### PETAL ROBERTSON

Facebook

@petalfornjea: I love the camaraderie I see at every NJREA luncheon. Are you retiring this year or know a retiree? Get or give the gift of continued union membership.

On Dec. 19, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson posted a photo of members of the Ocean County Retired Educators Association (OCREA) during their winter luncheon. Robertson serves as NJEA's official liaison to the New Jersey Retirees' Education Association (NJREA), and she used the photo to encourage active NJEA members to join NJEA upon retirement. See the NJREA column in this Review to learn how to give the gift of NJREA membership.

OFFICERS ONLINE

# KNOW. LEAD. ACT.

## NEA RA TO MEET IN ORLANDO WILL YOU BE THERE?

### What is the NEA RA?

The annual National Education Association Representative Assembly (NEA RA) charts the direction of NEA. It adopts the NEA budget, and adopts the association's legislative program, resolutions, policies, and other items of business. Delegates also vote on proposed amendments to the NEA Constitution and Bylaws, elect NEA officers, Executive Committee members, and at-large NEA Board of Directors members in their respective election years.

This year, the NEA RA will be held in Orlando, Florida, from July 2 to July 6. Delegates arrive on July 1 and depart on July 7.

### Why would I want to be an NEA RA delegate?

The NEA RA is the largest democratic deliberative assembly in the world. As a delegate to the NEA RA, you are the voice of the members you represent in your state, county and local associations.

The NEA RA is also a wonderful opportunity to work closely among and socialize with teachers and educational support professionals from throughout the nation. Delegates often make lifelong professional connections and friendships with members of the public education family across the U.S.

### Delegates must be elected

All delegates must be elected. Candidates for NEA RA delegate positions must nominate themselves online between Feb. 1 and Feb. 28. Elections are held by mail-in ballot in April. To complete the online self-nomination form to run as a state delegate, go to [njea.org/NJEAelections](http://njea.org/NJEAelections) between Feb. 1 and Feb. 28.

For nomination and election as a local delegate, check with your local association.

You may run as both a state and local delegate. If you win both, you must choose which position you will take, so a successor delegate can claim the position you don't take.

Your odds of winning are good: together with its local associations, NJEA is entitled to send more than 800 delegates to the NEA RA.

## How are my travel, food, and lodging expenses paid?

NEA RA delegates receive a flat reimbursement intended to cover the cost of airfare, meals, and lodging. For state delegates, the entire reimbursement comes from NJEA. For delegates elected at the local level, the reimbursement is a combination of state, county and local association funds.

Delegates receive the first half of their reimbursement in early June prior to the NEA RA. They receive the second half at the conclusion of the NEA RA. Hotel reservations are handled through NJEA, but delegates arrange their own transportation to Orlando.

## What am I waiting for?

That's a good question. Go to [njea.org/NJEAelections](http://njea.org/NJEAelections) to learn more about the NEA RA and how you can be a part of it.

## \* SAVE THE DATE \*

### COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS WORKSHOP TO BE HELD APRIL 22

A strong local or county association uses effective communications strategies to engage and organize its members and the community. Learn ways to keep your members informed and ready for action by attending the NJEA Communications Tools Workshop on Saturday, April 25 at NJEA's headquarters in Trenton. (Note: If the headquarters building is not yet completely open for member events, the workshop will take place in The Contemporary building, which is next door to NJEA headquarters.)

The NJEA Communications Tools Workshop is the perfect place for local and county association editors, social media teams and public relations committee members to strengthen their message development and delivery skills.

Workshop topics will include:

- Newsletters for Retiree Associations
- Design Principles for Local Communications (includes Canva and Photopea)
- Social Media: Overview for Local Associations
- Power Writing
- Sendy emailing
- Communicating through Smartphone Photos

Look for registration information and more details in the March Review.





## AN NEA RA DELEGATION THAT LOOKS LIKE NEW JERSEY

New Jersey's public schools serve a highly diverse student population. According to data from the 2020 U.S. Census, 48% of New Jersey residents identify as members of an ethnic-minority group. NJEA members themselves come from diverse backgrounds.

The best decisions are made when everyone is represented, and the NEA RA is the highest decision-making body in the National Education Association. NEA Bylaw 3-1.g requires each state association to develop a plan to send a delegation to the NEA RA that reflects the state's ethnic-minority proportions. Thus, it is NJEA's goal to send a delegation to the NEA RA that meets or exceeds the 48% threshold.

To assist in reaching that goal, NJEA has established ethnic-minority-concerns positions within the NEA RA delegation. All NJEA members can nominate themselves for both regular and minority-concerns positions. If elected in both positions, a member must decide which seat to hold so that a successor delegate can take the open position.

Members may also place themselves in nomination at the local level and at the state level. Members who win both local and state delegate seats must decide which seat they will represent so that successor delegates can take the open positions.

For complete rules and procedures, and to self-nominate for state delegate and minority-concerns positions, visit [njea.org/NJEAelections](http://njea.org/NJEAelections).

## DA TO HOLD NEA DIRECTOR ELECTION

Nominations for three of New Jersey's nine representatives on the NEA Board of Directors and for alternates will be accepted by the NJEA Executive Committee in February and submitted to the Delegate Assembly (D.A.) for its March 4 meeting. The meeting will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Princeton. If there are more than three candidates in either category, an election will be held at the meeting.

The elected board members will serve three-year terms from Sept. 1, 2023 to Aug. 31, 2026. Elected alternates will serve one-year terms beginning Sept. 1, 2023. The NJEA

Executive Committee may submit nominations to the D.A. Additional nominations may be made by D.A. members from the floor. No nominating speeches are permitted.

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

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

Anyone interested in being nominated as an NEA state director or alternate should contact their NJEA Executive Committee member. Your county's representatives to the Executive Committee can be found at [njea.org/member-committees](http://njea.org/member-committees).

For more information, contact the NJEA Governance Office at 609-599-4561, ext. 2293.

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# COOL STUFF



## FREE LEGAL NEWSPAPERS FOR STUDENTS OF ALL AGES

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation offers more than 30 publications to educators and the public. The Legal Eagle is published in September, January, and March each year. *The Legal Eagle's* 2023 winter issue contains articles on corporal punishment, environmental issues in New Jersey and political free speech on social media. A PDF of the issue can be downloaded. Print copies can be ordered for classroom use. Individual articles can be downloaded from the Legal Eagle Lowdown. Educators can subscribe to receive future issues. Go to [njsbf.org/publications](https://njsbf.org/publications) and click on "Order Publications."



## AID-NJEA CAN HELP

The AID-NJEA helpline has served NJEA members and their families for nearly 20 years. NJEA members and their families have access to this free and confidential service 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Educators and school counselors are on the line from noon until 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and until 6 p.m. on Fridays to provide peer-to-peer support and information to callers. In addition, University Behavioral Health Care provides mental health professionals who answer the helpline during all other hours for 24/7 coverage.

Callers seeking help from AID-NJEA can count on:

- Help from a staff of Education Support Specialists experienced in education and trained in behavioral health.
- Immediate personal response — a "real voice" with no buttons to push.
- Access to thousands of resources from the AID-NJEA Information Directory.

High quality help by telephone with personal, family and school-related demands.

Why handle tough times alone? Whether you are a new teacher, a support staff member, or a retired school employee, AID-NJEA has people on the line who can provide guidance and information to help. Dial 866-AID-NJEA (243-6532) or email [helpline@njea.org](mailto:helpline@njea.org).

AID-NJEA is a program or partnership between the NJEA and Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care.



## LAW FAIR/LAW ADVENTURE – YOU BE THE JURY!

Register for this free event: Experience what it's like to serve as jurors in person with your students (Law Fair for grades 3-6 and Law Adventure for grades 7-8) at the New Jersey Law Center. Hear cases performed by winners of this year's competitions. After hearing the cases, you and your students will deliberate and render verdicts. Events will be held at the New Jersey Law Center in New Brunswick. Multiple days and sessions (a.m. and p.m.) available. See Law Fair/Law Adventure link for more information (space is limited!)

Law Fair and Law Adventure help to fulfill new State mandated civics education requirements (NJ Learning Standard 6.3.8 Civics PR.5). Go to [njsbf.org/mock-trial](https://njsbf.org/mock-trial).



## HISTORY DAY COMPETITION LOOKING FOR JUDGES

The competition takes middle and high school students and gets them excited about history. Each year, the competition provides a theme which students' projects must address, and it gives them five categories in which to present their work: papers, exhibits, documentaries, websites and performances. The 2022-23 theme is *Frontiers in History: People, Places, Ideas*. Learn more about the competition at [bit.ly/njhd-2023](https://bit.ly/njhd-2023).

Judges will attend a two-hour virtual training workshop before the competition.

Those judging exhibits, documentaries, or performances on competition day will be at the competition from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Breakfast, lunch and parking will be provided. Those who can't make one of the competitions can volunteer to judge papers or websites, which are judged remotely roughly two weeks in advance of each competition.

This year's contest dates are:

- Saturday, Feb. 25: Rutgers Camden University
- Saturday, March 4: Monmouth University
- Saturday, March 18: Seton Hall University

For more information, or to register to serve as a judge, email [njhistoryday@wpunj.edu](mailto:njhistoryday@wpunj.edu).



## SHARING NETWORK FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIP

The Sharing Network Foundation has multiple scholarships available for graduating high school seniors. The scholarships are awarded to students who have been affected by organ and tissue donation and transplantation and/or are advocates for life-saving mission of the Sharing Network. The application is available at [SharingNetworkFoundation.org/Scholarship](https://SharingNetworkFoundation.org/Scholarship). For questions, contact [scholarship@njsharingnetwork.org](mailto:scholarship@njsharingnetwork.org). All submissions must be received by the end of the day on Monday, Feb. 27.

## TEACHING TIP: WHAT WOULD X SAY?

By Dr. Glen Coleman

I have taught social studies for 25 years. I believe that it's not enough to know something; students must be able to use what they know to make something new as well as to see the world in new and interesting ways. I do this with social studies, but I believe the following question can inspire learning in any classroom: "What would X say?"

"X" is the thought or person who brings your course to life.

Here are some examples

- What would Gandhi say about driverless cars?
- What would George Washington say about COVID-19?
- What would Galileo say about the James Webb Space Telescope?
- What would Picasso say about Instagram?
- What would Michelangelo say about Photoshop?
- What would Martin Luther King Jr. say about our elections?
- What would Henry Ford say about Happy Meals?
- What would Helen Keller say about Title IX?
- What would our Founding Fathers say about Trump's impeachment?

Here's some background on the last question: It was the fall of 2019. President Donald Trump was being investigated in the House of Representatives for leveraging U.S. relations with Ukraine to sway the 2020 presidential election. So we debated this question: "What would our Founding Fathers say about President Trump's alleged involvement in the Ukraine?" Students then chose a Founding Father and argued whether they would be for President Trump's impeachment.

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*Glen Coleman teaches social studies at River Dell High School, is an HP Teaching Fellow for reinventing the classroom, and delivered a TED-talk, "To Teach Well, Let 'Em Fail." Coleman is also the author of 100 or Nothing: Reimagining Success in the Classroom. He can be reached at [info@100orNothing.org](mailto:info@100orNothing.org).*

In this instance X was the Founding Fathers. We used their views to help us understand the day's big issues, which in this case was the question of Trump's impeachment.

It brought class to life. It energized students to express their unique ideas. Furthermore, it energized me. When we used history as a tool to help us better understand the complex issue of impeachment, the classroom became a place of genuine inquiry.

I remember one student who got the class to stop and think. She asked, "But is it enough? What is the line at which we determine whether to throw out our president—an elected official? Is one phone call enough?"

It was a great question that motivated students to research more deeply and evaluate what our founders thought about the rule of law, the power of mobs, the corrosive effects of power and the fear of foreign interference in our politics.

After the assignment I surveyed students: Was it worthwhile for us to have learned about the Founders by looking at it through the lens of Trump and his impeachment? Eighty-eight percent of students said "Yes." Twelve percent said "No." This response from one student echoed throughout many of the 67 respondents who answered the survey:

*"I believe it was worthwhile because I think all young adults should be exposed to current events as much as possible. We are the next generation of adults, and we're 15-16 years old, which means we will be voting soon. By being knowledgeable about our current president and what he's doing and the decisions he is making, we as citizens will become more well-versed in how we want our country to be run."*

When students are afforded numerous opportunities—to try, fail, learn from each other, and try again—when students tackle challenging, open-ended questions like "What would X say?" we all get energized.

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## Advocating for parents and children one family at a time

### Meet Cumberland County ESP of the Year Damita White-Morris

For Damita White-Morris, the 2022 Cumberland County ESP of the Year, life had other plans for her when she was planning her post-college future.

"When I graduated from Delaware State University in 2006, it was the beginning of a recession," White-Morris recalled. "Most of the jobs I applied for were either eliminated or combined, so I became a substitute teacher. My former high school assistant principal, who had since become the principal, pulled me into her office to discuss my employment plans. She shared with me how much she believed in me and assisted me with the alternate route process to teach science."

Once White-Morris began working in the schools, she saw so many disparities, especially with minority students.

"I did all I knew how to help my students excel," White-Morris said. "I had so many obstacles and challenges that took me away from my own child's success in school that I decided to apply for the position of attendance officer. I hoped to help students and parents understand and appreciate education from a different perspective."

"I was only planning to be here for six months tops, but I've been an attendance officer for 12 years," White-Morris added.

White-Morris demonstrates the value of education for her students. She holds bachelor's degrees in chemistry and criminal justice. She has master's degree in administration of justice with a concentration in homeland security. She also is an active member of many organizations, although she is particularly proud to be a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., and municipal chair for the city of Bridgeton.

White-Morris brings all her education and experience to the table when it comes to advocating for students and helping parents.

"I am a parent and I know what it's like trying to navigate a system and coming up short," White-Morris said. "Since I was a little girl I have always wanted to help people. I thought I would be a doctor or a lawyer but instead, I



**2022 Cumberland County ESP of the Year Damita White-Morris at the NJEA Celebration of Women on March 26, 2022.**

became an educator and I love it. God has blessed me to help my parents and my students in my role as an attendance officer. I realized early in the position, if a child is having attendance issues, nine-and-a-half times out of 10, there are other pressing issues in the home. In order to have successful students, we must first have successful parents."

In her position as an attendance officer, White-Morris has organized and hosted various resource fairs for parents where different agencies come into the schools and provide services. One of her favorite events is the parent "chat and chew," where parents can share their concerns, needs and suggestions over a meal in the hopes of improving their child's educational experience.

White-Morris is an expert in building relationships and representing proudly. She appreciates the honor of being named the Cumberland County ESP of the Year because she believes it will open even more doors for her to bring opportunities to the students and families she serves. 🌟

# NJEA Report

## Elimination of edTPA a victory for all members

On Dec. 16, Gov. Phil Murphy signed a bill to eliminate edTPA as a requirement for teacher certification in New Jersey. The signing of S-896 was welcome news not only for college students preparing to become teachers, but for those currently working in the state's public schools who are experiencing firsthand the impact of the growing teacher shortage.

First imposed under Gov. Chris Christie, edTPA proved to be a cumbersome and unreliable indicator of future success in the classroom. In the current staffing crisis, its elimination will provide immediate benefits to New Jersey's schools and students as hundreds of potential educators will become immediately eligible for their certificate of eligibility or their certificate of eligibility with advanced standing. This will enable them to be employed as teachers without an unnecessary performance assessment.

"This change is a win for students and educators," wrote NJEA's officers President Sean M. Spiller, Vice President Steve Beatty, and Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson in a joint statement. "Years of experience showed us that edTPA was a costly, frustrating, discriminatory obstacle that did nothing to improve educator quality but frequently kept qualified educators out of our classrooms. With the staffing crisis that is affecting every New Jersey school, getting rid of this Christie-era relic was especially important."

### Member action made the difference

S-896 had passed unanimously in the state Senate and Assembly. This, and the governor's signature on the bill, is a testament to the action of thousands of NJEA, NJEA Preservice and New Jersey Retirees' Education Association (NJREA) members.

Over the course of the campaign to end edTPA, members sent over 15,000 emails to legislators and the governor. On social media, members shared over 500 tweets and posts. After the bill passed in the Legislature, members made 540 phone calls to Murphy, asking that he sign the bill.

"We are grateful to the thousands of NJEA members who took the time to call, email and visit legislators and

**“ To support S-896, members sent over 15,000 emails to legislators, made 540 phone calls to the governor, and shared over 500 tweets and social media posts.**

share their stories of why edTPA was a flawed assessment and unnecessary barrier," NJEA's officers said.

In signing the legislation, the governor also focused on the barriers imposed by edTPA.

"As we face a national teacher shortage, we must work to establish effective and efficient solutions to grow this critical workforce on behalf of New Jersey's students," Murphy said. "By eliminating edTPA, we will streamline a process that has previously acted as a barrier in the transition between sitting in a classroom and leading a classroom."

NJEA's officers were quick to note that the elimination of edTPA is only one part of a broader strategy to address the educator shortage.

"We need to continue to listen to the voices of educators," the officers said. "That leadership by professional practitioners is how we will make additional smart reforms and implement progressive policies. Our members understand how to make the profession stronger and our schools more successful by eliminating bureaucratic obstacles and time wasters in order to be laser-focused on teaching and learning."



## Toms River High School South German exchange bridges the best of both worlds



**Toms River High School South German students welcome 14 exchange students and two teachers from Wilhelm-Hauff-Realschule in Pfullingen, Germany.**

Toms River High School South welcomed 14 students and two teachers from the Wilhelm-Hauff-Realschule in Pfullingen, Germany for a two-week stay this past October. The students participated in an exchange program run by Timothy DeMarco and Anne Walsh. Students live with host families in the area and attend High School South.

Cultural excursions are also part of the program, including trips to the boardwalk, Island Beach State Park and New York City. Of course, attending football games and the Halloween parade are on the itinerary, as well as participating in the many school-spirit-related activities High School South has to offer.

The 14 American participants from High School South will then travel to Germany this July for the second half of the exchange. They will spend two weeks living with families, attending school and going on cultural excursions to nearby attractions. The goal of this exchange program, now in its fourth year, is to provide students with a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to experience another culture as no tourist can, to foster cultural understanding and improve language skills.

The exchange started in 2015, when Toms River High School South was chosen by the D.A.I. (Deutsche Amerikanische Institut) in Tübingen, Germany, as the one high school in the entire United States to participate in the program. The exchange was funded under the agreement that both schools would continue to carry on the program every other year. Despite budget cuts, global pandemics,

and at times unstable political climates, the exchange has carried on with no end in sight.

This exchange is particularly personal for DeMarco, as he had the privilege of teaching the German students while on a short-term sabbatical this past May through July. DeMarco was a guest at the Wilhelm-Hauff-Realschule, where he taught a preparation class for the exchange, focusing on the American school system, cultural differences between the two countries, and the local history of Toms River and New Jersey.

DeMarco also had the opportunity to teach English to Ukrainian refugees as well as shadow teachers in a variety of subjects ranging from fifth grade English to geography to bilingual physical education.

"For anyone interested in starting their own exchange program, I cannot recommend it enough," DeMarco said. "It is a lot of work, but seeing the students interact with one another and hearing families share their experiences makes it all worthwhile."

DeMarco recommends researching organizations that help set up exchange programs, but ultimately believes the best program is the one you set up yourself.

"There are organizations that help set up exchanges, such as the German American Partnership Program (GAPP), but I personally recommend organizing one on your own. Reach out to a school in Germany, or wherever you'd like to establish a partnership, and create your own rules. It takes time and effort, but with each exchange it grows easier to organize and run."

## State task force to address public school staff shortages

With support from NJEA, Gov. Phil Murphy signed Executive Order No. 309 on Nov. 11 to establish the Task Force to Address Public School Staff Shortages across New Jersey. The 25-member task force is charged with making recommendations to increase the quantity of K-12 staff across the state and look in detail at issues of retention and recruitment.

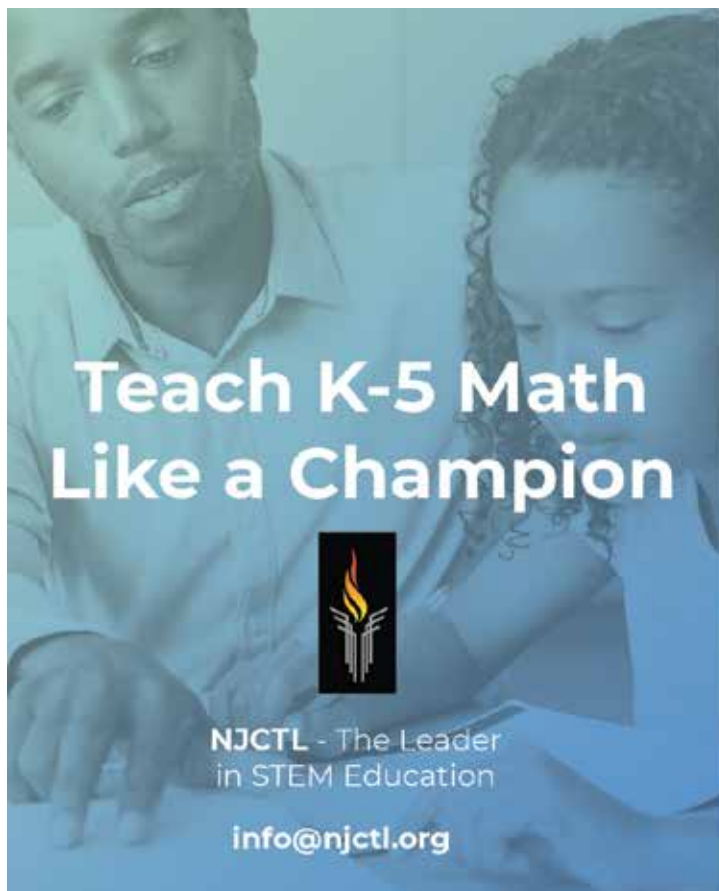
NJEA members are well represented on the task force by a strong and diverse team that has already demonstrated the expertise NJEA members bring to this work:

- NJEA President Sean M. Spiller
- Trina Jenkins, NJEA ESP of the Year and Pleasantville Education Association vice president and paraprofessional
- Henry Goodhue, Hillsborough Education Association president and sixth-grade special education teacher
- Ikechukwu Onyema, East Orange High School chemistry teacher


"Educators play an invaluable role in shaping the lives of their students and ultimately molding our country's future," Murphy said. "As we emerge from the pandemic, we must recognize the impact that teacher shortages in our state and across the nation will have on our economy, the arts and our civil society. My administration remains steadfast in our commitment to identifying solutions to address this shortage, and I am confident that this task force will offer the unique perspectives and experience that this moment requires."

Initial recommendations were due Jan. 31 as the governor intends to include necessary budgetary requests to support recommendations in his February budget address. To meet the deadline, the task force met multiple times in December and January.

In addition to the four NJEA members task force, NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty is leading an association working group to provide feedback to the task force and to analyze and discuss the recommendations that come from the task force meetings.



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# Gov. Murphy signs bipartisan legislation establishing information literacy education

Gov. Phil Murphy signed S-588 on Jan. 4, which requires instruction on information literacy for grades K-12 through the New Jersey Student Learning Standards. With primary bill sponsors Sens. Shirley Turner (D-Mercer) and Michael Testa (R-Cape May), and Assemblymembers Daniel Benson (D-Mercer), Pamela Lampitt (D-Camden) and Mila Jasey (D-Essex), the bill passed unanimously in the Senate and by a vote of 68-8-4 in the Assembly.

S-588 directs the State Board of Education to adopt New Jersey Student Learning Standards in information literacy. The content in the standards will include:

- The research process and how information is created and produced.
- Critical thinking and using information resources.
- Research methods, including the difference between primary and secondary sources.
- The difference between facts, points of view and opinion.
- Accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources.
- The economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information.
- The ethical production of information.

"A primary role of our public schools is to prepare students to be informed, engaged participants in our American democracy," said NJEA President Sean M. Spiller. "At a time when misinformation and disinformation are eroding the foundations of that democracy, it is imperative that students have the tools they need to determine what information they can trust. This law will help ensure that New Jersey students are equipped to separate fact from fiction as they prepare for their role as citizens and future leaders."

The bill requires the commissioner of education to convene a committee, including certified school library media specialists and teaching staff members, to assist in developing the information literacy standards.

"The New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL) applauds Gov. Murphy and the Legislature for bringing to light the need for Information Literacy in education," said NJASL President Ewa Dziedzic-Elliott. "Adding Information Literacy to the current New Jersey Student Learning Standards gives strength to the need for the instruction and implementation of Information Literacy."

NJASL and the New Jersey Library Association (NJLA) have worked with a coalition of statewide partners to see

this legislation to fruition since 2016. NJASL credits NJLA with originating the legislation. The coalition included NJEA, EveryLibrary, Media Literacy Now, Garden State Coalition of Schools, Save Our Schools NJ, New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, New Jersey Association of School Administrators, New Jersey School Boards Association, Computer Science For New Jersey Coalition, and the New Jersey State School Nurses Association.

## APPLY FOR A GRANT TO SUPPORT YOUR SCHOOL'S RACIAL AND SOCIAL JUSTICE PROGRAM



In 2021, Visions Federal Credit Union (FCU) committed a \$1 million grant to NJEA to be used for the benefit of NJEA members and their students. The grant is payable over 10 years, and will help to support the creation of the NJEA Racial and Social Justice Institute, as well as fund an annual Hipp grant to a project that aligns with Visions FCU's work on racial and social justice. The deadline to apply is March 1, 2023.

NJEA, the Frederick L. Hipp Foundation, and Visions FCU are proud to work together to support innovative programs that help NJEA members meet the needs of every child.

To learn more about Visions, visit them online at [Visionsfcu.org](https://visionsfcu.org). To apply for a Hipp grant, visit [njea.org/hipp-foundation](https://njea.org/hipp-foundation).



# Respect

A woman with dark hair, wearing a blue t-shirt with a tic-tac-toe grid and the word 'RESPECT' printed on it, stands in a school hallway. She is smiling and has a lanyard with a badge around her neck. Above her is a large red sign with the word 'Respect' in white. The hallway has white walls, doors, and posters.

**Building  
community, one  
student and one  
member at a time**

## MEET THE 2023 NJEA ESP OF THE YEAR

# Trina Jenkins

By Kathryn Coulibaly

For Trina Jenkins, a paraprofessional at Pleasantville's North Main St. School and the 2023 NJEA Educational Support Professional (ESP) of the Year and 2023 Atlantic County ESP of the Year, community is the key.

"The schools are at the center of everything," Jenkins said. "Students, schools and the community cannot survive independently from one another. Together, they not only survive, but excel."

Jenkins is originally from West Philadelphia and is a proud Class of 1985 graduate of Overbrook High School, but she has made Pleasantville the focus of her efforts since 2000 when she answered an ad in the newspaper announcing that AmeriCorps was looking for service volunteers to work in the schools. The following year, she was hired full-time by the district as a one-on-one paraprofessional in an inclusion classroom.

When her husband, Bernes, suffered a medical crisis, Jenkins reluctantly left the district to be closer to family who could help provide support. Her husband passed away in 2004 at the age of 36, leaving Jenkins a widow with two children to raise. She quickly found her way back to the classroom and the Pleasantville community.

"I wish I would have known about the union when my husband got sick," Jenkins said. "I didn't think I'd ever come back to education, so I withdrew the pension. In hindsight, I wish I had known the financial ramifications of that decision."

### **An advocate for herself and others**

Back in Pleasantville, Jenkins soon found herself the target of an administrator.

"This administrator wanted to get me fired, but what it actually did was ignite my fuel to advocate for myself and others," Jenkins said. "I was inspired to use my voice to stand up for myself, and to confront anyone who tried to attack my character or bully me. Initially, I wanted to pursue a legal case because I felt that the administrator was defaming my character, but ultimately, I decided to use my gift—my voice—to advocate for myself. I was given the opportunity to represent myself at the board's executive session, and I won! Through that experience, I received the courage and opportunity to advocate for others."

Throughout this experience, Jenkins saw the value of her union membership. She acknowledged that the threat she faced was greater than what she could have taken on by herself.

"My association had my back, and it was then that I learned how important it is to have a union. I also wanted to make sure that what happened to me never happened to anyone else. To do that, I knew I had to become an active, involved member of my union."

Jenkins threw herself into advocacy, attending every NJEA conference she could to enhance her skills. She also recognized the role that parent and community support played in her successful efforts to thwart the administrator and keep her job. She became an association representative (AR) and served on Pleasantville's grievance committee, eventually becoming the chair. In addition, she took on the role of coordinating Pleasantville's Pride and Families and Schools Together Work for Children (FAST)

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



Atlantic Co. and NJEA ESP of the year Trina Jenkins walks with students at Pleasantville's North Main St. School.

programs. Pride and FAST are two important community outreach programs funded by NJEA and administered by local associations in ways that best meet each individual community's needs.

### Respect for ESPs

As Jenkins's confidence in her advocacy increased, she worked to ensure that other ESPs felt respected and that the community understood the critical role ESPs play in schools.

"Educational support professionals are an integral part of the whole school family," Jenkins said. "As the saying goes, 'you can't spell rESPECT without ESP.' ESPs are the most unsung heroes. Many of us have diplomas, GEDs, associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees. No, we may not be 'certified,' but we are educated, and we are educators. Never discredit or underestimate an ESP. They are the spine that holds the body of education together. Just as a body can't stand without a spine, neither can a school stand without ESPs."

Jenkins is very proud to be part of ESPAN, the Educational Support Professionals Action Network, a member-to-member affinity group within NJEA that advocates for ESPs while involving the community and

promoting the work they do to the community.

In 2021, Jenkins revitalized the Atlantic County Council of Education Association's ESP Committee. Jenkins organized a County ESP Appreciation Celebration to recognize all of the great things that ESPs do for their students. The first event was held at the county office, but in the second year, it grew to a local winery, and Jenkins promises that next year will be even bigger!

"After each event, the word spreads about the networking, great engagement, and dancing!" Jenkins said.

### An MOC leader and influencer

Jenkins also is very proud to be an influencer and leader in the NJEA Members of Color (MOC) movement, and to bring more awareness to the Members of Color affinity group in South Jersey.

"Every event is like a family reunion—even with members I've never met," Jenkins said.

### Not just a career—a calling

In every part of her life, Jenkins is working to create community, but especially in the classroom with her students.



“**Jenkins worked to ensure that other ESPs felt respected and that the community understood the critical role they play in schools.**”

Jenkins' classroom in North Main St. School is shared with her fellow educators and nine adorable, energetic, and funny kindergarten through second graders. There are bright walls, soothing lighting, abundant artwork, and singing and dancing throughout the day. But you have to have a lot of creativity, patience, and stamina to keep up with these students. Fortunately, Jenkins has these in abundance.

“My work with special needs students is not just a career, but a calling,” Jenkins said. “Our children deserve a learning environment that is supportive, inclusive and consistent. Students thrive in that atmosphere. They are comfortable building a trusting relationship with the adults in their school lives; something they may not have in their home lives.

“The parents rely on us, too, and it is extremely important for paraprofessionals to communicate and build relationships with parents. It's imperative to the well-being of the students; it's part of the whole-child experience. We're not there to overstep the teacher's role, but for the parents to understand that every adult in their child's classroom cares and assists their child. Often, the paraprofessional spends the most time with the students and knows them the best. We are with them getting on and off the bus, at specials, recess and during meals.”

Jenkins' professional experience benefits her as the grandmother of three boys, including twin grandsons who are autistic.

“With my experience in education, I knew all along that they were on the spectrum,” Jenkins said. “I have been like a magnet to autism workshops over the years, and I've always had a special place in my heart for autistic students, but it wasn't until my grand-twins were born that I truly understood my calling: I am a child advocate first—no matter what.”



Top: Jenkins and her husband, Bernes, on their wedding day.  
Middle: Jenkins is a talented makeup artist who loves to create looks.  
Bottom: Jenkins and her family

“My work with special needs students is not just a career, but a calling



Jenkins takes pride in working with Pleasantville's students.



## Serving the community

Jenkins sees the whole child and highly values the impact educators have on the students, families and communities they serve. During the pandemic, Jenkins jumped in to help with food preparation and delivery for students.

"When the pandemic began, I knew we were going to struggle as a community in making sure our students were fed and healthy," Jenkins said. "Right away, I began working with our members in the cafeteria, and we made sure our students were given nutritious food, even at their homes, in some cases. No one asked me to help in this way, but I had to support my colleagues since they were short-staffed. It was very rewarding to pack and deliver meals. I got to see the need firsthand, but I also got to see the sparkle in students' eyes, and the gratitude from the families. Food is known to bring people together, and in this case, it really strengthened our community."

Jenkins's advocacy and engagement are unmatched, and the list of her achievements and responsibilities is almost endless. She is very engaged with get-out-the-vote efforts in her community, writing postcards and phone banking, and traveling as far as Cape May to assist other members' organizing efforts.

As the PEA's vice president of support staff, she is a fierce advocate for members, and she encourages ESPs in her local and county to attend trainings and workshops offered by the local, county and state. She is an elected Atlantic County Delegate to the NJEA Delegate Assembly and has served as a delegate to the NEA Representative Assembly (RA), serving as the Atlantic County Coordinator for the NEA RA in Chicago.

In 2022, Gov. Murphy appointed Jenkins to serve on the Task Force on Public School Staff Shortages.

## A creative streak

With such a busy schedule, Jenkins still finds time to be creative. She is a makeup artist who loves to create. She has done Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer, Maleficent, Elmo, and other looks based on children's books such as Harold and the Purple Crayon.

"I love art, and I find doing makeup to be very relaxing," Jenkins said. "It's almost like adult coloring. I have tons of makeup. I particularly love a brand called The Crayon Case, a school supplies-themed makeup line."

Jenkins is proud to have been named the 2023 NJEA ESP of the Year and Atlantic County ESP of



Jenkins is an active member of her local, county, and state unions.

the Year and knows that her children, Jasmine and Jamill; grandchildren, Tyzhiem, Justice and Jayden are proud of her, but she is sure her departed husband is also celebrating with her.

"At the age of 36, I became a widow," Jenkins said. "My late husband was my best friend and greatest cheerleader in anything I did. When it was announced that I was the 2023 NJEA ESP of the Year, I looked to heaven and envisioned his priceless smile and nod of approval. I can't tell you how many times I've looked to see his image of approval or reassurance, 'you can do it!'"

As the 2023 NJEA ESP of the Year, Jenkins has already been nominated for the NEA ESP of the Year award. She will attend the NEA ESP Conference and is entitled to a Disney vacation, funded by NJEA. Jenkins also will receive an ESP of the Year ring, she will be a featured speaker at the NJEA ESP Conference, and she will be honored at the 2023 NJEA Convention. 🌟



# CodingWithKids

*By Sharon Milano*

The annual CodingWithKids computer science event, coordinated by 2023 Warren County Teacher of the Year and New Jersey State Teacher of the Year finalist Daryl Detrick, has returned to Warren Hills Regional High School for a seventh consecutive year. Detrick proudly supervised 40 of his high school computer science students during this one-night event as they led their planned sessions on coding, robotics and logic problems for 120 middle and elementary students in grades 3-6.

### Evolution of the program

CodingWithKids evolved from an existing program called GirlsCodingWithGirls (GCWG) in which Warren Hills High School girls taught middle and elementary school girls to program and encouraged them to pursue STEM careers. GCWG was started with a National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT) grant won by Warren Hills student Adesola Sanusi in 2014. Sanusi went on to graduate from Harvard University and work at Google. She has since moved to Nigeria to work in the financial sector to give back to the country her family came from.

"In the middle school years, girls incorrectly believe that they are not good at math and science; this program helps to keep them interested during those crucial years," Detrick said.

Since the program's inception, over 510 elementary and middle school girls put in over 5,000 hours of coding plus hundreds of additional hours on their own. Fifty-three of the program's student mentors have pursued courses of study in STEM-related fields, some currently enjoying careers at Google, Apple and Microsoft.

"Programs like CodingWithKids and GirlsCodingWithGirls empower our

---

*Sharon Milano is an eighth-grade social studies teacher at Franklin Avenue Middle School in Franklin Lakes. She is the president of the Franklin Lakes Education Association and an NJEA Communications Consultant. She can be reached at [smilano@njea.org](mailto:smilano@njea.org).*



Warren Hills High School Computer Science Teacher Daryl Detrick talks with elementary school students as they move between sessions during the CodingWithKids event hosted by his students.

**“Our goal isn't to create computer scientists, but to create computational thinkers.”**

students and give them the opportunity to share their passion for computer science with young students,” said Detrick. “Our high school students are great role models for the younger students. All students should have the opportunity to study computer science as it opens doors of opportunity. Our goal isn't to create computer scientists, but to create computational thinkers. It is a skill that will help our students no matter what field they pursue.”

GCWG was the national winner of the 2018 Champions of Computer Science award from Code.org and the Computer Science Teachers Association.



Seniors Julia Bisse and Gabby Fama were first introduced to computer science when they were in elementary school as participants in GirlsCodingWithGirls. For the past four years they have inspired hundreds of young kids as leaders of the Warren Hills Computer Science Club (CS@WH).



### An evening of CodingWithKids

As the evening began, students assembled with parents for an overview about the computer science program at Warren Hills High School. Students in grades 3 to 6 were then divided into six groups of 20. Each group was assigned to a high school student who served as their counselor. The counselor traveled with their respective groups throughout the evening while also assisting students who were presenting workshops.

Upon arriving at their designated rooms, the younger students were immediately engaged in fun, interactive activities. One session featured logical thinking puzzles that did not use computers, such as pentominoes and tangrams, while other sessions featured exercises in coding and robotics.

The “Hour of Code PB&J” session began with students instructing a human computer, “Walter,” in step-by-step instructions to build a PB&J sandwich. Walter executed commands exactly as instructed to illustrate the importance of precise directions to ensure the successful execution of a task. The human computer occasionally got a little sticky when the commands were not clearly articulated. In reality, this was a streamlined version of what desktop programs actually do.

In the robotics rooms, students participated in a workshop

“ I never would have thought I could do this if I didn’t see girls who look like me doing this too.

called “Sphero,” where the objective was to teach students how to use block code. These are preprogrammed codes that enable the younger students to drag and manipulate the movement and color of spherical objects along patterns on the floor by dragging their fingers on an iPad. The other robotic workshop was “Micro:Maqueen”, led by 12th grade student Julia Bisse, where students applied code to microbits to connect to robotic cars which can then execute various functions.

### Student mentors give back to their community

When asked what motivated her to become involved in the CodingWithKids program, Bisse stated that the





program launched her passion for computer science. Now she wants to give back by serving as a mentor to younger students. She first participated in GCWG as a third grader, where she met two of her best friends.

"It was very difficult at first, but I stuck with it for the next four weeks and found it to be very rewarding," Bisse said. "I credit my dad, a software engineer, with getting me to join the program after having met Mr. Detrick."

Bisse said she had so much fun participating in earlier years that she has returned every year since and now plans to go to college for cybersecurity.

"The program opened my eyes because I never would have thought I could do this if I didn't see the girls who look like me and were my age doing this too," Bisse said. Bisse repeatedly referred to GCWG as life changing and hopes to attend Howard University to continue to study computer science along with political science. She hopes to someday work for the FBI or the National Security Agency.

Another standout mentor was 12th grade student Gabby Fama, a 2022 New Jersey runner-up for the NCWIT Aspirations Award for women in computing. Fama started participating in computer science programs as a fifth grader and now helps to organize and plan CodingWithKids, GCWG and other youth programs that the computer club CS@WH (Computer Science at Warren Hills) helps to facilitate.

Fama said that she has stuck with the program because, "I really enjoyed it as a kid. Now that I get to see some of the behind the scenes work that we've put in, and what we do to make it all happen, I just think it's a great program. Carrying this on for future generations is so important to me because it really sparked my love for STEM, which I think we need to do for the future generations."

She said that her goals include going to college to study biomedical engineering and to someday work in the medical equipment field. Her interests include possibly making prosthetics or any type of medical equipment using coding and software.

Fama went on to reflect on the advice she would offer the younger students attending the evening's CodingWithKids event, focusing on a message of perseverance and resilience.

"When you get stuck, or you're working on a problem, whether it's math or science, just keep going and keep working until you get it, because subjects like these are meant to make you want to bang your head against the

wall until you get the answer," Fama said. "That's what computer science is—it's problem-solving and working with a partner, or trouble-shooting to try to get a result. With anything you do, whether it's math and science, or in life in general, keep working and keep finding ways that you can make something work, and, in the end, you'll be happy with the result."

### Pursuing social equity in STEM

Detrick has been a leader in computer science advocacy for the last 10 years and currently serves as the director of the CS4NJ Coalition ([CS4NJ.org](https://www.cs4nj.org)), an organization that promotes computer science for all students in New Jersey to achieve greater equity.

Detrick noted that this past year, the New Jersey Student Learning Standards were updated to require that all students in grades K-8 learn computer science and that all high schools offer computer science.

"The CodingWithKids program gives students opportunities to learn these standards, including females and minorities who are currently underrepresented in the STEM field," Detrick said.

Detrick's work in the field of computer science is a social justice endeavor to address inequities so that all students receive and develop computer skills to prepare them for future jobs, while also developing computational thinking skills that open doors for job opportunities in all fields.

"There is no skill I know that can take so many students from low-income to middle-income in a short period of time as computer science education," Detrick said. "There are currently over 16,000 open computer science jobs in New Jersey and 600,000 in America that cannot be filled."

Detrick has also been a member of the Governor's Computer Science Advisory Board since 2018.

"We appreciate the support of Gov. Murphy and NJDOE as we try to implement quality and equitable CSforAll [computer science for all] in New Jersey," Detrick said. "I am proud of the CS@WH program we have developed over the last 20 years that truly prepares students for life beyond Warren Hills. We are fortunate to have an amazing group of teachers, students and alumni involved, as well as the support of our administration. It is so much more than just classes. It is really a community." 🏡

# WARETOWN REFERENDUM UNITES ASSOCIATION AND BOARD

*By Kathryn Coulibaly*

Waretown's public schools needed help. They were confronted with laying off eight teachers and class sizes expanding to 30 students. Without an increase in taxes, they were in danger of losing local control over their two small-town schools and the education that so many people had sought out in moving to close-knit Waretown, also known as Ocean Township.

The loss of local control would have certainly seen higher per pupil costs thrust on taxpayers. With the second-lowest per pupil expenditures in the county, becoming a sending district any other schools in the county would have led to cost increases, without the ability to control them.

Waretown Education Association (WEA) President Alison Pohlman had been through contentious negotiations with the board, but when the president of the Waretown Board of Education, Shawn Denning, approached her about working together to pass a referendum, she and her members were completely on board.

"We have an excellent district full of highly qualified, dedicated educators," Pohlman said. "We know the value our schools provide to this community, and the caring environment we cultivate in our schools. We didn't want to lose a single member or see our students suffer as a result."

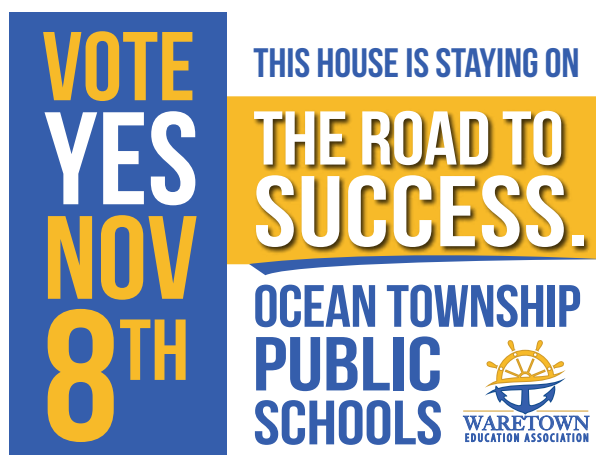
## Planning early and often

Beginning over the summer, the referendum team met to discuss strategies and ideas for how to successfully pass the ballot measure. The team included three board members, Pohlman, Priff Elementary Principal Ariane Solis, the head of the PTO, administrators, NJEA Field Representative Colleen Neil, and Denning.

"At the beginning, people were stuck on hypotheticals, there wasn't much concrete action," Neil said. "So I started

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by telling people to get their calendars out. We were going to plan something every week, up until Election Day."

Neil brought in other NJEA resources, including organizer and political relations strategist Marybeth Beichert, communications support from Stephanie Natera and graphic designer Gregg Poserina, support from field representative Tom Bohnyak, and funding.

The WEA produced lawn signs supporting the schools and passed them out to community members. At back to school nights, there were information sessions so parents could ask questions about the referendum. There was a special board of education information session so members of the community could learn more. Representatives visited the retirement centers in the community to help voters appreciate what was at stake and how it would impact them. Events were also held at the local community center.

In the early fall, the team held a festival at Trailside Gardens, a private garden center across from the elementary school, with pumpkin painting for the kids, funded through NJEA's Pride in Public Education program, and coffee and apple cider donuts. Members of the referendum team and WEA members stood on the street

with signs urging support for the referendum, and parents who visited the festival received materials about the referendum.

### Getting to “YES”

Closer to the election, they organized a door knocking campaign that ran like a well-oiled machine, thanks to Beichert’s expertise.

The WEA put out a mailing to all NJEA members who live in Waretown and Pohlman recorded a “robo call” reminding people to get out and vote yes.

At some of the events, they had people from the county clerk’s office checking voter status so people knew if their voter information was current, or if they needed to take action prior to the election to enable them to vote.

Superintendent Dr. Christopher Lommerin acquired big pieces of plywood and made signs reading “Vote YES,” putting them up all over town.

After the votes were counted, the referendum passed by a vote of 2123 to 2026. While it was closer than anyone would have liked, it showed the incredible odds the team was up against.

At the November board meeting, the president read a proclamation thanking the WEA, President Pohlman, and Neil.

“This campaign really changed relationships,” Pohlman said.

“I’ve always said to our counterparts who think that NJEA—or our local affiliates—are adversaries that we can do so much for our districts if we work together,” Neil said. “People who immediately take a rude or confrontational posture with NJEA staff or union leaders don’t understand that the relationship doesn’t have to be that way; we can help make things happen for the better in these districts when we work together.”

WEA is hopeful that this success will start a new chapter with the board and administration.

“In a million years, the board could not have passed this referendum without NJEA,” Neil said. “I think, at the end of the day, people’s eyes were really opened to the power of collaboration.” 🙌



Top: Alison Pohlman, president of Waretown Education Association, wearing the WEA “Vote YES” T-shirt provided to event volunteers alongside one of the lawn signs, coffee and apple cider donuts.

Bottom: Parents and students enjoy pumpkin painting at Trailside Gardens on the corner of Route 9 and Wells Mills Road in Waretown.

## Best practices from Waretown

Neil encourages local associations to work with their field representative to develop communications resources that can help them in a crisis. Waretown already had a logo and was engaged in Pride activities. These assets helped them move quickly when they needed to.



# UPLIFTING HEARTS, CONNECTING MINDS

SEL DAY IS MARCH 10

*By Jennifer Ly and Maurice J. Elias*

March 10, 2023, is International SEL Day, an annual celebration that promotes social-emotional and character development in our schools and communities. SEL stands for “social-emotional learning.” The theme this year is Uplifting Hearts, Connecting Minds. Since the inception of SEL Day, no state in the U.S. has done a better job than New Jersey in learning through various showcases of efforts in cultivating SEL in their community and schools.

Research has shown, and the New Jersey State Board of Education has affirmed, that students need social-emotional and character competencies as much as they need skills like reading in order to master the many tests of life they will most certainly face. All educators have a collective responsibility to systematically encourage the growth of these skills in students. SEL Day is meant to be a catalyst for those efforts.

The five focal SEL skill areas are self-awareness, social awareness, emotion management, building constructive relationships and responsible decision making. It’s hard to imagine any classroom or school functioning successfully when students lack age-appropriate empathy, the capacity to manage their strong emotions, take others’ perspectives,

set and achieve goals, get along with peers and adults, or solve problems effectively. We have taken these skills for granted in the past. Now it’s time to recognize that we fail to build these skills explicitly and intentionally at our collective peril.

No matter what your role is in a school, there is a place for you to join the celebration of SEL. We have collected different artifacts from schools all across New Jersey and have gathered a few ideas and lessons for you to implement in the classroom between now and SEL Day... and thereafter!

## **Equity and a culture of caring, kindness and helping**

Classrooms are places where everyone needs to be helpful, cooperative, kind and caring. For 180 school days, students enter classrooms wanting to be successful, recognized, valued and supported. They want to belong. Create this kind of supportive environment by reviewing and renewing a collaborative set of classroom rules or norms for how to treat one another.



Observe existing patterns of caring, kindness and helping within your classroom, and pay particular attention to discussing how students can help one another and seek out help from adults in the school. Make it clear that caring and kindness are the norm, not the exception, and that no students are excluded from receiving and providing these attributes.

Teachers can also provide students with equitable opportunities to speak, participate, and lead; to join groups, teams, or clubs; and to be recognized and appreciated. Barriers that perpetuate unequal access and participation should be eliminated to enable opportunities for all students. For further reading on this, check out "Who Do You Call On? Rooting Out Implicit Bias" ([edut.to/3jZn3h0](https://edut.to/3jZn3h0)) and "Addressing Equity Through Culturally Responsive Education & SEL" ([bit.ly/3W8NfTH](https://bit.ly/3W8NfTH)).

### **Activity: SEL Challenge**

An excellent schoolwide event that teachers and staff members can participate in with their students is an SEL challenge. Teachers hand a list of challenges and tasks to the students, and they must complete it as a class. Students keep track of and comment on what they do in a special journal. When the whole school completes the challenge, it gets announced to the school, the parents and the wider community.

The following are some examples that you can include in your SEL Challenge:

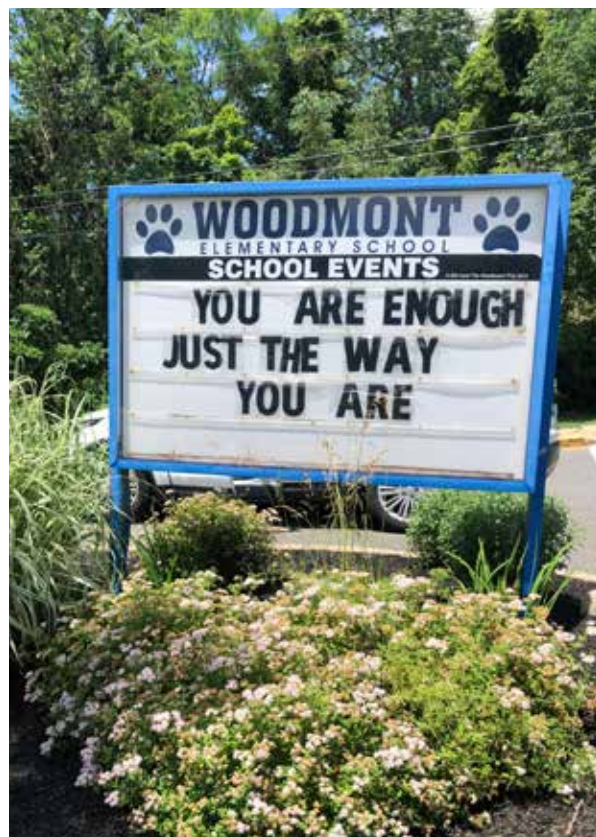
1. Make a thank you card for two people in the school (not a teacher) you are thankful for.
2. Write a paragraph about someone you are reading about in an assigned book that shows an example of good character.
3. Do three kind things for other people in your school over the course of a week.
4. Draw about something that makes you a good person.
5. Practice some kind of mindfulness or meditation for two minutes every day for a whole week.
6. Share a song that reflects the core values/character of your classroom or school.

## **Use SEL to connect minds: Infusing SEL into existing lesson plans**

### **English/Language Arts**

There are a variety of ways that you can implement SEL into your class lessons. Having students watch a film or reading a book that focuses on SEL themes can spark conversations and help students build social-emotional skills.

At Tinc Road Elementary School in Mount Olive, Becca Hopler asked her fourth grade students to read *Where*



For a previous SEL Day, Woodmont Elementary School in Montville posted an affirming greeting on its outdoor message board.

*Oliver Fits* by Cale Atkinson. The book follows the story of a small, curious puzzle piece named Oliver who dreams of being part of a bigger and exciting picture. Oliver embarks on this adventure to find a place to fit in. Being met with different rejections from other puzzle pieces, Oliver pretends to be a different puzzle piece by changing his color and shape in order to fit in with the puzzle. By the end of the book, he realizes that he will not find happiness by pretending to be someone else.

The book illustrates the importance of being true to oneself and not changing aspects of ourselves to fit in. Inspired by the themes that were explored in the book,

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*Maurice J. Elias is director of Rutgers' Social-Emotional and Character Development Lab ([secdlab.org](https://secdlab.org)) and co-author of an ASCD resource for teachers, "Students Taking Action Together: 5 Teaching Techniques to Cultivate SEL, Civic Engagement, and a Healthy Democracy." He can be reached at [maurice.elias@rutgers.edu](mailto:maurice.elias@rutgers.edu).*

*Jennifer Ly, a student at Rutgers University, is a social media intern and the social media liaison for the Social-Emotional Alliance for New Jersey (SEL4NJ).*



Top: Some schools kick off SEL Day with a joyful and calming event first thing in the morning.

Bottom: At Tinc Road Elementary School in Mount Olive, fourth graders decorated puzzle pieces and wrote on them what makes them special.

Hopler developed a lesson plan to help the students reflect on their identities and to understand the value of self-worth.

The students wrote a paragraph about what makes them special. They then decorated and personalized their own puzzle pieces. This exercise is an excellent way to encourage students to recognize that they should stay true to themselves and help them embrace their qualities instead of trying to change them.

For added challenge and to “connect minds,” have students start with a set of completed puzzle pieces that they can individually take and personalize and reassemble.

Here is a framework that can be used for reading ANY book with an SEL lens:

- I will write about this character.....
- My character’s problem is.....
- How did your character get into this problem?
- How does the character feel?
- What does the character want to happen?
- What actually did happen?
- How might the rest of the story go?/  
How else might the story have gone?
- What questions would you like to be able to ask to the character you picked, to one of the other characters, or to the author?

### **Physical education**

In the East Orange School District, Lita King-Morton, a social worker and harassment, intimidation and bullying (HIB) specialist, designed a fun and creative way to help students build their SEL skills in physical education classes. The students are instructed to reflect and write down their short-term and long-term goals for PE for the year. (Of course, this activity can be carried out at any point in the school year.) Then, the PE teachers set up different obstacle courses that the students must complete.

The purpose of the exercise is to encourage students to set goals, as it will help them focus their efforts and find something they can work toward achieving. The activity is an engaging way to help



the students practice perseverance and determination as they are learning how to overcome the obstacles to attaining their goal.

1. Here is the lesson plan:
2. Hand out sticky-notes to students and have them write down two PE goals: one goal for the school year and one personal goal for themselves (this can be modified for a marking period).
3. Once they are finished, have the students stick the note against the wall closest to the finish line.
4. Set up an obstacle course with a starting point and a finish line.
5. Have the students complete the obstacle course.
6. Have the students reflect on the activity by asking them these questions: What are some potential obstacles you might face in achieving your goals? How do you plan to overcome these obstacles? How have you been handling the obstacles thus far? What can help you do better?

### **Visual and performing arts**

The Center for Arts Education and Social Emotional Learning ([ArtsEdSEL.org](http://ArtsEdSEL.org)) is dedicated to the mission of facilitating social-emotional learning in art education. Countless resources, lessons and curricula designed to develop and build SEL competencies are available at their website.

An engaging and inclusive way for students to express themselves is by hosting an SEL-themed arts exhibit or gallery event. The arts exhibit can have a specific character or SEL theme (e.g., gratitude, empathy, problem solving) or the students can choose whatever SEL-related topic they want to explore. They can either identify an artistic work (you can constrain the medium to painting, sculpture, music, theater, etc.), create an artistic work, or both. The products can be displayed at a schoolwide event during the week of SEL Day (or before or after, of course) and teachers, parents and students can walk through the gallery, view the artists' showcase and discuss the works with the exhibitors.

This is a great opportunity for the students to recognize their thoughts and feelings and to reflect on these emotions through the artistic process. Having self-awareness allows the students to create as they are tasked to generate an artistic idea, develop a way to bring their vision to life and then communicate their rationale. Excellent resources can be found at [selarts.org](http://selarts.org).

Note that this idea of a gallery can be carried out in any subject area, as an opportunity for students to display, reflect on, and discuss their work.

At [SEL4NJ.org](http://SEL4NJ.org), you can access issue briefs that give specific guidelines for teaching ALL subject areas through an SEL lens, including more about the areas above.

### **Get started today!**

When it comes to fostering the social-emotional and character development of our students, it's never too late to get started. SEL Day 2023 is the launching pad for an epic journey into a better future for all of New Jersey's schools, educators, and children!

Onward! 🏆

## **SEL4NJ's Guide to Participating in SEL Day 2023**

### ***There are lots of ways to get involved with SEL Day now!***

- Join SEL4NJ and follow SEL4NJ on Twitter ([twitter.com/sel4nj](https://twitter.com/sel4nj)), Facebook ([facebook.com/sel4nj.org](https://facebook.com/sel4nj.org)) and Instagram ([instagram.com/sel4nj](https://instagram.com/sel4nj)).
- SEL Day Weekly Inspiration Newsletter – Go to [sel4nj.org](http://sel4nj.org) to join SEL4NJ and receive the newsletter.
- Sign-up for SEL Day at [SELday.org](http://SELday.org).
- Find all sorts of toolkits and great SEL Ideas at [selday.org/toolkits](http://selday.org/toolkits).

### **Live Zoom presentations for educators on SEL Day**

- On SEL Day, watch SEL4NJ's live presentation, "Creating Schools of Character and Social-Emotional Competency – Lessons from New Jersey Schools" on Zoom. It runs from 10 to 11 a.m. on March 23. The participants are Dr. William Trusheim, Laurie Coletti, Mary Reinhold, Eileen Dachnowicz, Dr. Nathan Fisher, Sulisnet Jimenez and Doug Stech. To access it on Zoom, go to [bit.ly/3W7Y5tc](https://bit.ly/3W7Y5tc).
- Also on SEL Day, watch presentations from educators around New Jersey, sharing their SEL and character innovations. Dip in between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. On SEL day go to [bit.ly/3IGQC15](https://bit.ly/3IGQC15) to join whenever you wish.
- To register for the SEL4NJ SEL Day Summit and get access to links to the presentations after SEL Day visit [bit.ly/3IGQC15](https://bit.ly/3IGQC15).



## KEY RESOURCES HELP NJEA MEMBERS USE HEALTH AND SAFETY RIGHTS

*By Dorothy Wigmore*

"NJEA members have a legal right to safe and healthful working conditions. Your employer, the board of education, is responsible for ensuring that school employees and students are not exposed to hazardous conditions."

That's at the top of the NJEA's health and safety web page.

Legal rights are one thing. Life on the job is another. After all, those rights are the results of struggles and sacrifices by those on whose shoulders we stand. Can the two be bridged? If so, how?

For every workplace, that bridge is built on activism. Over the years, these columns have provided examples of NJEA members pushing back, taking action and using their rights and creativity to get hazards fixed or prevent them from harming school staff and students in the first place.

Whether it's mercury in gym floors, moldy spaces, lousy air, pesticides or chemicals in the lab or art room, New Jersey's health and safety law (the Public Employees' Occupational Safety and Health Act or PEOSH) doesn't

always apply directly. That's where creative use of the law's "general duty" clause and other rules matters.

Ideas about identifying and tackling hazards don't fall from the sky. Success requires support and resources.

NJEA provides support in different ways and now has two key resources to back that up: its Health and Safety Manual and the Health and Safety in the Review booklet, released at this past October's health and safety conference. The how-to manual—online for easy access—has updated links. The booklet of recent Review articles complements the manual with stories about how activists have tackled specific hazards (especially in the pandemic), with extra resources and recommendations for health and safety committees and locals.

### **A textbook for tackling school health and safety**

"It's a textbook of sorts," says Allen Barkkume with New Jersey Work Environment Council (NJWEC). The organization provides health and safety resources and help for NJEA and its members.

"It's high quality information with basic principles directly geared to health and safety in schools, with union health and safety committees and activists in mind," Barkkume adds.

Those committees are essential players in schools.

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*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.*

## “The OSHA 300 Logs are great sources for committees to see patterns in reported harm.”

The manual provides guidelines about setting them up and what they should do—like walk-throughs, reviewing records and relevant board policies and member surveys. Part IV includes checklists, forms and sample letters for these efforts.

“We used those checklists for our walk-throughs and other forms to report things needing repair,” says Nikki Baker, NJWEC’s Healthy Schools Now organizer. She’s talking about her days as a special education instructional assistant and union activist in the Paterson Public Schools District.

“Reporting injuries or illnesses is a big issue,” she says.

Reported illnesses and injuries are supposed to show up on the employer’s “300 logs.” There’s a whole subsection about them in Part IV of the manual, along with an incident report form, a filled-in log example and sample requests related to logs and reports. There’s also information about filing workers’ compensation claims.

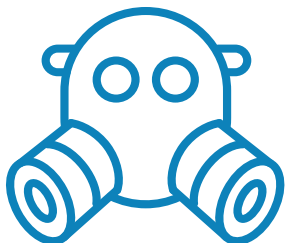
The logs are great sources for committees to see patterns in reported harm. The statistics can be used creatively. For example, body or workplace maps can be marked up with categories of injuries or illnesses using color-coded sticky dots. Plastic layers can be added for different years or months. They become evidence when pushing for solutions.

The manual’s legal rights chapter makes it easier to report hazards behind the harm. There’s a whole subsection about when and how to use PEOH and getting chemical hazard information through the Hazard Communication standard and the state’s right-to-know law.

### Solving problems takes more than “air sucking”

U.S. standards for job-related hazards—like noise, mold, toxic materials or other airborne hazards including the SARS-CoV-2 virus—are woefully inadequate. Many haven’t been updated since the 1970s and 1980s; others just don’t exist. Understandably, people often don’t know this and think measurements are needed to make their case.

“It’s often the last thing you need,” Barkkume says. Industrial/occupational hygienists like him are trained to do air measurements. But they can do more. Barkkume and other NJWEC hygienists help NJEA members connect a hazard



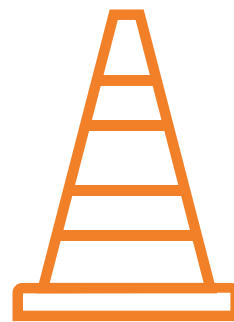
and its harm, do walk-throughs and propose solutions. To them, it’s “fix the hazard, not the worker,” aiming for prevention or hazard elimination. For chemicals, that could mean “informed substitution” with nontoxic or much less hazardous products or methods. (See the OSHA resource.)

Before demanding measurements, check Part V of the manual about the pros and cons of “sampling”—measuring. It’s focused on common school hazards like air quality, mold, asbestos and lead, with questions to ask about why and how sampling could be done.

Member surveys might provide the information you need. The manual has a sample air quality survey and forms to make a complaint that could be based on the survey or members’ reports of hazards, injuries or illnesses. (A booklet article has more details about reporting and documenting hazards and harm.)

If the district hires a consultant to do measurements, locals should demand consultants interested in solving hazards. The manual also lists what to look for in their reports.

The booklet has more examples for committees. The articles cover everything from ventilation to stress to equity issues in the pandemic, and how to deal with heat and cold, violence and pesticides. There are examples of successful union efforts and always recommendations for committees and/or locals with relevant resources. 📄



## Resources

### NJEA

*NJEA Health & Safety Manual*  
[njea.org/download/9266](https://njea.org/download/9266)



### *Health & Safety in The Review*

The booklet is available at NJEA’s health and safety conferences and at the NJEA Convention. Every health and safety article ever published in the Review can be found, sorted by category, at the URL below.  
[njea.org/health-and-safety-news-articles](https://njea.org/health-and-safety-news-articles)

### OSHA

*Transitioning to Safer Chemicals: A Toolkit for Employers and Workers*  
[osha.gov/safer-chemicals/basics](https://osha.gov/safer-chemicals/basics)





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# Collective teacher efficacy and student learning

By Richard Wilson

"Learning Loss." Having found its way into every conversation about schools and the pandemic, we see this buzz-phrase everywhere. We also find the list of usual suspects lining up with simple solutions to this simple phrase. Among others, we find longer school days, extended school years, tutoring programs and mandated professional development on "accelerated learning."

But what if there was a way to deal with not only the disrupted learning, but to actually reimagine and recreate schools that take on all the challenges and inequities that the pandemic exposed?

In 2009, educational researcher John Hattie published his groundbreaking *Visible Learning*, which was a synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses of research exploring the impact of teaching and learning. Using these massive studies, he created a list of the effectiveness of 133 factors affecting students' learning.

In 2018, based on new research, he updated the list, finding that the factor with the greatest impact on student learning was collective teacher efficacy. Simply defined, "teachers' collective efficacy refers to the enhanced confidence to overcome any barriers and limitations and have the collective belief that all students in this school can gain more than a year's growth for a year's input." (Hattie & Zierer, 2018, p. 26)

Is it really that simple? Click our heels three times and say, "We believe, we believe, we believe" and our students will achieve amazing results?

Educators know it is not quite that simple. Organizations and systems need to be built and nurtured to achieve the results that we want. So, how do we build a school system that encourages the kinds of collaboration necessary for educators to come to this collective understanding that will help our students to learn the most they can?

In their book *Leading Collective Efficacy*, Dr. Stefani Hite and Jenni Donohoo review the available research and lay

out five factors that enable systems leading to this mindset of collective efficacy. The factors are interdependent and interconnected.

## Goal consensus

This is the process of educators engaging with one another to come to an agreement about the school's goals. Most important here, in terms of building collective efficacy, is the process of coming to a common understanding and developing a shared vision for the school and its students.

## Empowering teachers

This is about promoting teacher leadership and influence in the school. It is respecting the idea that many of the best decisions that can be made about the practices in a school are made by those who have the most contact with students on a day-to-day basis.

## Cohesive teacher knowledge

This factor involves teachers having an awareness of the teaching practices of others as well as their shared understanding of what constitutes effective assessment and instructional practices.

## Embedded reflective practices

Having the time and space to focus on student learning through authentic assessment and examination of instructional practices is imperative for a community of practitioners to hone their craft.

## Supportive leadership

Each of the factors described thus far are focused on teacher practice. This final factor is the one that makes all the others possible. Supportive leaders create the psychologically safe environment that allows for the risk taking and sharing necessary to create a truly collaborative environment.

In this moment, when everyone is talking about learning from the pandemic and reimagining how schools can take those lessons learned and move forward, we should take a breath, look at what the research, such as the work of Hattie, Hite and Donohoo, tells us about how high performing schools operate, and then move ahead accordingly. 📖

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*Richard Wilson is an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. He is the coordinator of the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy. He can be reached at [rwilson@njea.org](mailto:rwilson@njea.org). For more information about the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy, visit [njea.org/tla](http://njea.org/tla).*

## STAFF NEWS

## HIRES AND PROMOTIONS



NJEA welcomed **BIANCA REY** as a temporary secretary in the UniServ Division on Nov. 1. She will split her time between Region 19 in West New York and Region 20 in Jersey City. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Rey was a service express/guest service agent for Eventi, a Kimpton Hotel property in New York City, for over seven years. Between Eventi and NJEA, she was a stay-at-home mom to her now four-year-old daughter. A proud graduate of Bayonne Public Schools, Rey lives in Union with her family.



NJEA welcomed **MICHELLE RANDAZZO** as a secretary in the Research and Economic Services Division on Dec. 1. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Randazzo held various school district administrative assistant roles—starting in 2018 in Woodbury and most recently in Deptford Township. Randazzo holds a bachelor's degree in professional studies with minors in accounting and Spanish from West Chester University. She lives in Voorhees with her husband, Pat, and their son, Sebastian.



NJEA welcomed **WILLIAM "CHIP" JUNKER** on Dec. 1 as a field organizing specialist in the central zone of the UniServ Division. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Junker was employed by the Barnegat School district for 23 years. For the last two years he served as a districtwide special education instructional coach. He was previously a special education teacher at Barnegat High School. Junker had been president of the Barnegat Education Association since 2016 and a UniServ consultant in the Region 7 office in Toms River since November 2021. Junker holds a bachelor's degree in special education from West Chester University. He lives in Stafford Township with his wife, Paula, and their two children, Ava and Garin.

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# FOOD FOR THOUGHT

## A movement toward linguistic justice

BY BIANCA NICOLESCU

With so much controversy surrounding the right way to teach American history, Florida's "Don't Say Gay" bill and the banning of books in states around the nation, teaching has always been treated as a political game of people fighting for their voices to be heard.

Though we raise our voices to advocate for our students' needs, our educational system does not often implement equitable policies. Rather than uplifting those who are systematically disadvantaged, it is rigged to create imbalances by giving unjust power to the privileged. Social justice movements, like the linguistic justice movement, try to reverse these damaging effects by empowering voices of silenced cultures.

Dr. April Baker-Bell, a leading pioneer in this movement for linguistic justice, emphasizes the importance of incorporating language justice in our schooling, and especially the art of Black language. Language justice would allow us to disrupt privilege and challenge the colonial influences of "White Mainstream English" (WME).

One perspective of the linguistic justice movement is embedded in the history of colonial America. Dr. Baker-Bell explains that during the Transatlantic Slave Trade, European enslavers and African middlemen raided villages to abduct African people as slaves. Africans were abused and isolated from other captives who spoke the same language to minimize rebellions.

Today, many Americans of color are often penalized for using a different language than WME despite its origins in conquest and domination. However, learning about the diverse history of language matters because of its use as a rhetoric of resistance.

We should teach students to write authentically and feel proud of their culture by incorporating diverse linguistics into their language arts studies. Conversely, if schools strike out one's use of language, their authority can be psychologically damaging for students, teaching kids that their history is inferior and has no room in the curriculum.

**“By respecting the connections between students' use of language and their identity, we can continue to encourage their self-agency.”**

### An inclusive space for language

Rather, teachers should provide a space that honors students' language and makes them feel comfortable enough to actively participate in the classroom community. In doing so, teachers might comment on linguistic expectations, but separate this feedback from their grade. Undoing our preconception that some people speak "good" English while others speak a form of English that is "less than," we can uproot grading policies that are grounded in whiteness. In truth, language variation is not the defect of a child; rather our educational system's response to this language is defective. By respecting the connections between students' use of language and their identity, we can continue to encourage students' self-agency.

A separate but unequal approach to language variation is linguistic discrimination. Language is connected to larger systems of oppression and is heavily impacted by race. Racism is connected to linguistic superiority, and more specifically, to white linguistic supremacy. WME harms those who don't conform to what our American education system has established as the standard. As a result, our "whitewashed" linguistic culture becomes exclusive of anyone who does not assimilate. To cultivate a culturally and linguistically pluralistic society, we have to create an inclusive space for all English vernaculars, and this can be sparked in the classroom.

Ultimately, we, as educators, should engage in anti-racist pedagogies, work to actively dismantle our implicit biases and build linguistic consciousness. At this time, we can no longer afford to be polite about unjust education policies, about inequality, and about the inhumane treatment of certain people in our society. We must face uncomfortable truths and come to terms with the unfortunate part of our reality so that generations to come do not share our hardships. 🏠

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*Bianca Nicolescu, a sophomore at The College of New Jersey, majors in secondary math education with a minor in women's, gender and sexuality studies. She is the NJEA Preservice Diversity and Justice co-chair.*



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# RAINBOW CONNECTION

## CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH!

An interview with Adjua Lafleur

By Amy Moran, Ph.D. and Kate Okeson



With seven years in education, currently teaching college preparatory biology at Washington Township High School, Adjua Lafleur is Gloucester County's representative on the NJEA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Committee.

### **What brought you to the SOGI Committee, and why do you do this work?**

I honestly didn't know about SOGI until the 2021 NJEA Convention. SOGI held a brunch and I learned there was an opening for my county. My county association president said I'd be perfect for the committee. I do this work because oftentimes the voices of the BIPOC people within the LGBTQ community are left unheard and ignored. Living with intersectional identities is hard because you have to deal with people in your marginalized communities ignoring your existence and issues. Dealing with racism and anti-Blackness within the LGBTQ community and homophobia/transphobia within the Black community is a hurtful experience that often makes people feel isolated within their own communities. So it is important that people with intersectional identities are represented within this work.

**“There's so much beauty in learning about other peoples' experiences, and learning about other peoples' perspectives allow us to learn more about ourselves as well.”**

### **What do you do to support an intersectional approach to education?**

I try my best to make any school environment where I may be present an inviting one that takes all walks of life into consideration. This could mean hanging up a variety of posters in the classroom, talking to students individually about what would make them feel affirmed during class, addressing and correcting prejudiced behavior, teaching about the contribution of marginalized groups within your content area, and so on. The most important thing to me is how a student feels in my class, and if they feel uncomfortable, it is my job to help change that environment.

### **What do you think students gain from racial, gender/sexuality, and other identities being visible in the classroom?**

They gain a view of the world. Every person is different. We all have different cultures, racial identities, gender identities, ability levels and so forth. We do ourselves a disservice when we are only around people who resemble ourselves. There's so much beauty in learning about other peoples' experiences, and learning about other peoples' perspectives allow us to learn more about ourselves as well.



Use this QR code for book recommendations and resources.

Want to share your ideas? Email [rainbowconnectionNJEA@gmail.com](mailto:rainbowconnectionNJEA@gmail.com).

### What's the future of representative curricula for your content area, in New Jersey and nationwide?

So many people of different life experiences have contributed greatly to the area of biological science. I think it's time we hear the names like Alice Augusta Ball (African American woman and pharmaceutical chemist, 1892-1916), Patricia Bath (African American woman and ophthalmology pioneer, 1942-2019), Alan Hart (transgender physician, radiologist, tuberculosis researcher, writer, and novelist, 1890-1962) and Venkatraman 'Venki' Ramakrishnan (Indian-born British and American structural biologist who shared the 2009 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, born 1952) alongside names like Charles Darwin and Gregor Mendel. Biological science contributions come from more than white cis heterosexual men and it's time we communicate that to our students. 🏠

## Representative curricula

Adjua makes it clear why curricula should be representative in all content areas.

Why is equity in science and all other content areas critical? Because it is imperative that we redirect our attention from occasional "heroes and holidays" approaches and invest our educational resources in serious discussions about who is learning whose histories and contributions, and what has accounted for the persistence of racial, gender-based, and all other inequities in our schools, communities and society at large. Further, it is a call to remember important impacts:

1. The more we read and see comprehensive and inclusive histories and contributions, the more opportunity we create to have serious discussions about inequity.
2. To stop limiting the representations to those focused only on stories of suffering, and refocus on resistance, liberation and joy.

Representation creates moments and places for teachers and students to feel courageous and powerful precisely because of who they are.

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# ECN: BUILDING A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS

BY KEVIN PARKER



When asked to explain the NJEA's Early Career Network (ECN), Haddonfield Education Association (HEA) and ECN member Johnathan Maxson begins with the expected: "The Early Career Network is about networking, connecting with other members across the state, the county, and even just in town."

Then he moves into something more philosophical.

"It's about bringing people together about contracts, sure, but also because they have a common purpose," he says. "If we want to keep education as the bedrock of our democracy, it's important that unions remain intact."

But that networking and sense of common purpose also led to something greater and longer lasting for Maxson and, ultimately, NJEA. In addition to networking, the ECN is creating new leaders for NJEA.

Maxson, a social studies teacher at Haddonfield Middle School, started teaching in 2015. His introduction to the ECN began several years later when, in the spring of 2019, a fellow HEA member extended an invitation to an ECN conference.

The conference was a revelation for him.

"Seeing members from all over the state—early career members—coming together and hearing of the advocacy work they were doing that we didn't realize we were also doing was an inspiration," Maxson recalls.

This became the springboard into multiple leadership positions for Maxson. He is currently both the Legislative Action Chair and Elections Chair for Camden County, and he has just won a seat on the Mt. Ephraim Board of Education.

In addition to crediting ECN for his start, Maxson adds, "Without my time in ECN I wouldn't have realized all the connections. There are so many teachers, members, parents, bus drivers, custodians, etc. that make up the whole puzzle. I wouldn't have realized what makes public education work. A lot of that is unionship."

For Sofia Capinha, Sterling Education Association

**“In addition to helping younger members navigate their difficult first years in the profession, the ECN is also providing a new generation of leadership.**

member and Spanish teacher at Sterling High School, the ECN meant something a little different. Capinha has been a member since 2008 but found herself staying with the ECN as she moved from district to district in search of a permanent position.

"Because I was starting new and in different places, I was a new teacher in the building even if I wasn't a new teacher," Capinha says. "I was always getting value from the ECN meetings. There's such an openness, a willingness to listen to ideas. People were heard when we had our meetings. We created great groups of friends, and I still talk to other members. It was a wonderful consistency when my job would change again."

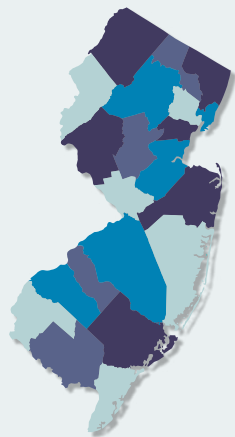
Like Maxson, Capinha moved from being a member of the ECN to a leader of both the ECN and NJEA. Currently treasurer for the Camden County Council of Education Associations, Capinha has also served in leadership positions with the ECN Team South. And, like Maxson, participating in the ECN was the catalyst: "It helped me understand the different parts of NJEA—the difference between UniServ and other staff members—and how organizing works. It helped me see where I could be useful, where I could contribute."

The success and longevity of any organization—unions included—requires a degree of succession, where younger members assume leadership positions as older members step away or retire. In addition to helping younger members navigate their difficult first years in the profession, the ECN is also providing that new generation of leadership.

But there is a place in the ECN—whether they be new to the profession or, like Capinha, new to their schools—even if they have no interest in taking leadership roles. What is most important is participation.

"Don't be afraid to get involved," Capinha urges. "There are a lot of different spaces to get involved in." 🏠

*Kevin Parker is an English teacher at Washington Township High School in Gloucester County and an NJEA Communications Consultant. He can be reached at [kparker@njea.org](mailto:kparker@njea.org).*



# SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

## Workshops and conferences

### highlights

Geography, bilingual education, civics

## SHOWCASE

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

## TEACHING GEOGRAPHY IN NEW JERSEY AND BEYOND

This geography education workshop is offered through Rowan University's Department of Geography, Planning and Sustainability. Its aim is to advocate for geographic education pedagogy in grades 6-12 New Jersey public school curricula. The program will offer interactive, modern, engaging resources in geography education that can be adapted for lesson planning.

**Location:** Rowan University, Discovery Hall, 201 Mullica Hill Rd., Glassboro

**Date/Time:** Saturday, March 25; 9:30 a.m.-1 p.m.

**Registration Fee:** Free

**Registration/Information:** Visit [bit.ly/rowan-geography](http://bit.ly/rowan-geography) to register. The deadline to register is March 22. For more information, email [federmanr@rowan.edu](mailto:federmanr@rowan.edu).

### Workshops:

- Exploring New Jersey's Physical and Human Geography
- Thinking Through Multiple Dimensions of Climate Change
- Mapping the Arctic in the Anthropocene
- Exploring NJMAP: An Interactive On-Line Map for Ecological Resources, Environmental Education and Sustainable Communities

For workshop descriptions, go to [njea.org](http://njea.org), click on "Events," go to March 25 on the calendar and click on "Teaching Geography in New Jersey and Beyond."

## 2023 NJTESOL/NJBE SPRING CONFERENCE

### Strengthening Collaboration

The 2023 conference of the New Jersey Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/New Jersey Bilingual Educators will have two components: an in-person conference and a video library conference.

### In-person conference

The In-Person Conference will take place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in New Brunswick on May 23, 24, and 25. You can register for one, two or all three days. The conference will feature three keynote speakers: Dr. Andrea Honigsfeld, Dr. Edward Fergus and Jacquelyn León.

In addition, you'll select from many presentations approved for the continuing education requirement, network with your colleagues, and obtain the latest information on state and national initiatives. You can also meet with representatives at the sponsors' and exhibitors' booths to find the latest and greatest teaching tools.

Presentation topics will include: General Interest, Content Area Instruction, Bilingual/ESL Pre-K through 12, Higher Ed, Teacher Ed, Adult Ed, and K-12 Administrators, and Dual Language/Biliteracy.

### Video library conference

The Video Library Conference is a select collection of library presentations you will have access to view starting on May 26 using the conference platform. There is no set schedule, and you will be able to view the workshops from May 26 to Sept. 1. By using your unique login, your hours will be tracked so that you can earn professional development hours through Sept. 1. Please note that the select collection of presentations will not include the keynotes or special invited guest speakers.

Register early for a discounted rate. Registration includes one free year of membership.

Visit [njtesol-njbe.org/spring-conference](http://njtesol-njbe.org/spring-conference) for more information and to register.

For other conference questions email Caia Schlessinger, conference coordinator, at [conference-coordinator@njtesol-njbe.org](mailto:conference-coordinator@njtesol-njbe.org).

## MORE TO LEARN

### PROJECT CITIZEN WORKSHOP AT RUTGERS

One of the essential, but often overlooked, components of civic education is providing students with opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions to assume the role of citizen. For middle and high school teachers interested in including this critical part of civic education in their classroom, the New Jersey Center for Civic Education is offering a free, full-day Project Citizen workshop.

Project Citizen is a project-based civic education program for students in grades 5-12 that was developed by the Center for Civic Education in Calabasas, California. It provides the background for students to identify a public policy issue; then research, identify possible solutions, determine the best solution and bring the issue to an appropriate governmental body. Classes of students work cooperatively to effect change in their community. In the process, students develop a knowledge of public policy, an understanding of how to improve the community and a sense of civic empowerment.

Project Citizen materials are available for middle school and for high school grades. The workshop will familiarize teachers with the components and process utilized by Project Citizen and provide the information necessary to implement the program in their classroom. It will also prepare teachers to enter their classes in the annual statewide Project Citizen Showcase should they choose to do so.

Teachers should bring a laptop computer. Additional information regarding parking and other logistics will be sent via email prior to the workshop.

**Location:** Collaborative Learning Center, Livingston Campus Student Center, Rutgers University, Piscataway

**Date/Time:** Saturday, March 7; 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided.

**Registration Fee:** Free

**Registration/Information:** Visit [bit.ly/project-citizen-2023](http://bit.ly/project-citizen-2023).

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- \$1,000 Athletics Grant: Apply by Jan. 15th each year for a California Casualty Thomas R. Brown Athletics Grant. [calcasathletics.com](http://calcasathletics.com)
- \$250 Music and Arts Grant: California Casualty's Music and Arts Grant program will award individual members with a \$250 grant for their classroom or program. Applications are accepted until June 30 of each year. Apply at [calcasmusicartsgiant.com](http://calcasmusicartsgiant.com).

**Optical Academy** – partner in the NJEA Member Discount Program  
Optical Academy provides 10 free pairs of eyeglasses to students in need for every 50 pairs sold. Optical Academy knows that educators often use their own money to ensure a student is able to see and Optical Academy wants to help change that. Any educator who would like to nominate a student in need can submit an inquiry online at <https://optical-academy.com/contact/>

**Security Benefit** – NEA sponsored provider

The NEA Retirement Program, provided by Security Benefit, is offering a new grant program called UBenefit to thank active educators who reach into their own pockets to support schools, students and classrooms. Any NJEA member is invited to complete a quick online form at [UBenefit.org](http://UBenefit.org) to be entered into a random drawing for a chance to be one of 50 recipients of a \$100 grant. Entries must be received by March 31.

**Prudential Insurance, NEA Member Benefits, California Casualty** –

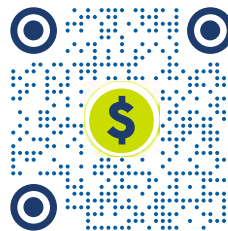
The first-in-the-nation **AID-NJEA** helpline for NJEA members and their families is funded through revenues from these sponsored partners.

**Buyer's Edge** – NJEA sponsored provider

For every solar installation through the NJEA Member Benefits/ Buyer's Edge provider, Buyer's Edge will make a \$250 donation to the NJEA Hipp Foundation. The NJEA Hipp Foundation for Excellence awards grants between \$500 and \$10,000 to New Jersey educators to help bring creative ideas to life. More information can be found at [njea.org/Hipp](http://njea.org/Hipp). Contact NJEA Member Benefits/Buyer's Edge solar provider at 800-558-1920.

**Visions Federal Credit Union** – partner in the NJEA Member Discount Program

Visions will award full funding, up to \$500 for projects submitted by educators at elementary, middle, and high schools in the following counties: Bergen, Morris, Passaic, Sussex and Warren. Visions commits \$20,000 to the program, so multiple projects may win! To learn more or to submit your project, go to [VisionsLovesEducators.com](http://VisionsLovesEducators.com). These grants are awarded throughout the year. Projects should be submitted at least six weeks before funds are desired.



Visit our newly redesigned website at [memberbenefits.njea.org](http://memberbenefits.njea.org) for even more information, resources, and discounts.

Questions? Email Beth Buonsante at [bhuonsante@njea.org](mailto:bhuonsante@njea.org).



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



PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

## RING, RING! NJREA HAS A DEDICATED PHONE LINE

NJREA now has a dedicated phone line. Should you need to reach us with a question or concern, please call us at our new phone line: 609-310-4546.

Here are the menu options:

- Option 1:** NJREA officers
- Option 2:** Pension
- Option 3:** Medicare/Health Benefits
- Option 4:** Prudential Life Insurance and survivor benefits
- Option 5:** Member Benefits program
- Option 6:** NJREA website
- Option 7:** NJREA Newsletter and NJEA Review
- Option 8:** NJEA Political Action Committee
- Option 9:** NJREA Membership (address changes, membership cards, membership status, etc.)
- Option 0:** any other questions

## PURCHASE LIFE MEMBERSHIP IN NJREA WHILE STILL WORKING

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

## GIVE THE GIFT OF NJREA MEMBERSHIP

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

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

## NJREA MEMBERSHIP HAS ITS BENEFITS

When you join NJREA, you belong to one of the largest retired public school employee organizations in the nation. You also maintain your membership with NJEA, NEA-Retired, and your county retired education association, which can be in the county in which you worked or in which you live.

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

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

Members also receive:

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

## RESOURCES AT YOUR FINGERTIPS!

NJREA's webpage provides valuable information for retired public school employees, from information about Medicare to tips on Benefits Coverage While Traveling to Assistance for Survivors. One of the most frequently asked questions concerns the rules governing retired public school employees who would like to work or volunteer in New Jersey's public schools. The information in "Working After Retirement" provides many answers on post-retirement employment.

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



# 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.*

## GLOUCESTER COUNTY REA

**March 28:** Laura Maltman Health & Wellness workshop on "Scams & Frauds on Seniors" held at GCREA Office Suite 108 Lakeside Professional Plaza 190 N. Evergreen Ave. Woodbury, NJ. Light refreshments. No cost to attend. To attend, call Candy Zachowski at 570-710-5514.

## HUNTERDON COUNTY REA

**April 20:** Spring luncheon at the Mt. View Chalet. Cost is \$30. To attend, contact Joyce Kucyn at [kucyn143@comcast.net](mailto:kucyn143@comcast.net).

## MONMOUTH COUNTY REA

**March 8:** Spring luncheon/meeting at Birchwood Manor in Whippany. Cost is \$35 for members, \$53 guest. Topic: Aetna Awards & Member Benefits Fair. To attend, call John Beekman at 973-514-1080 by March 1.

## OCEAN COUNTY REA

**March 16:** March meeting/luncheon at the Clarion Hotel in Toms River. Cost is \$28. To attend, call Barbara DiCicco at 732-773-4917 by March 2.

## PASSAIC COUNTY REA

**March 29:** Spring luncheon/meeting at The Brownstone in Paterson. Cost is \$35. To attend, call Kitty Sausa at 201-410-1325.

## SALEM COUNTY REA

**Feb. 13:** Winter luncheon at St. John's Episcopal Church in Salem. Topic is Salem County Women and the Underground Railroad, presented by Bonny Beth Elwell. Cost is \$17. To attend, call Rosemma Ward at 856-467-4795 by Feb. 6.

## UNION COUNTY REA

**Feb. 28:** Winter luncheon/meeting held at Gran Centurions in Clark. Cost is \$30. To attend, call Pat Alt at 732-382-6261 by Feb. 21.

## SAVE THE DATE

April 27 is the date for the NJREA Spring Luncheon at the Nottingham Ballroom in Hamilton. More information, including the RSVP coupon, will be in the March edition of the NJREA Newsletter.

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## Got a great idea?

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**B-Alive** – Special education students from Warren County's Stillwater Township School practice life skills through the B-Alive program. Through the program, which is funded by the Hipp Foundation, students visit the H.I.L.L.S. (Helping Individuals Learn Life Skills) House at Centenary College where they learn these skills in an authentic home environment. Warren County Special Services School District partnered with Centenary College to provide this unique program for members of the community and schools across the state.

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

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Apply by March 1, 2023 at [njea.org/hipp](https://njea.org/hipp).





# NJEA Delegate Assembly

## Minutes of May 16, 2020

The NJEA Delegate Assembly (D.A.) met Virtually (WEBEX) on May 16, 2020, at 9:30 a.m.

Roll call was taken. There were 126 out of 128 delegates present. Alternates were seated as follows: Kwapniewski for Pontier (Bergen); Avallone for Fletcher (Bergen);

NJEA President Marie Blistan asked for a moment of silence for Cynthia Weil-Panas (Cumberland County) who passed away on March 16.

Blistan congratulated Sean and Lauren Spiller on the birth of a new baby boy.

Blistan called John Zurka, Chair of the D.A. Rules Committee to move recommendations of the D.A. Rules. Motion was moved. Motion carried as amended.

Agenda was adopted with flexibility.

### NEA Director nominations

Nominate: Carolyn McKinney-Croix (Passaic)

### NEA Alternate Director nominations

Gayle Faulkner (Somerset), June Camizzi (Cape May), Chris Cannella (Essex)

### President's report

President Blistan stated that the president's report was emailed to the delegation and asked for any questions. None were asked.

### Vice President's report

President Blistan stated that the vice president's report was emailed to the delegation and asked if there were any questions. None were asked.

### Secretary-Treasurer's report

NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty presented the financial report and answered questions. Beatty reported on the 200,000 Conversations Initiative and presented a PowerPoint Presentation.

### Executive Director's report

NJEA Executive Director Steve Swetsky reported on the work of staff is continuing through the pandemic.

Swetsky referenced the work of the 200,000 Conversations Initiative.

Swetsky spoke to the development of virtual conferences, highlighting the upcoming Summer Leadership Conference and the NJEA Convention.

Swetsky spoke to developments concerning Chapter 78.

## Committee reports with recommendations

### Budget Committee

Vice President Beatty presented the NJEA Budget Report and took questions from the delegation.

Motion was moved. After debate, a motion was made to approve the Budget as amended. Motion carried.

### Constitution Review Committee

Chris Carpenter, committee chair, moved the report. After debate, Motion was carried as amended.

### NEA Activities Report

Tamara Beatty, committee chair, moved the Report. After debate, Motion carried.

### Strengthening Our Locals Evaluation Committee

Lois Yukna (Middlesex) moved the report. Motion carried.

## For the Good of the Order

Rheault (Atlantic) thanked NJEA's Disaster Relief fund for helping a member who lost their home to a fire and recognized Erland Chau, president of ACCEA, who is retiring.

Rosamilia (Essex) informed the delegation that the husband of a local leader who passed from COVID-19. Asked for prayers.

Camizzi (Cape May) recognized Kathy Parker who is retiring as Cape May County president.

Robertson (Essex) congratulated Sean Spiller for becoming mayor of Montclair and thanked NJEA staff for helping to organize her local.

Jennifer Johnson asked how petitioning was going to be handled for officer elections. Blistan replied that the Election Committee would set the rules.

Rheault (Atlantic) moved to adjourn. Motion carried.

## Minutes of Sept. 12, 2020

The NJEA Delegate Assembly (D.A.) met virtually on Sept. 12, 2020, at 9:30 a.m.

Roll call was taken. There were 125 out of 126 delegates present. Alternates were seated as follows: Hurley for Elias (Atlantic); Fandino Diaz for Kozlowski (Morris)

Absent was representative Griffin (Ocean).

Flag Salute recited by delegation.

NJEA President Marie Blistan called for adoption of the Rules of Procedure for this virtual meeting. She called Kathy Paterek, chair of the D.A. Rules Committee to the

microphone to review the new virtual rules.

President Blistan ask for any questions took questions concerning the New D.A. virtual rules

Kathy Paterek responded to questions concerning D.A. rules.

President Blistan called the vote to approve the adoption of the D.A. rules.

Motion was carried.

## ESP of the Year

Blistan recognized Stacy Yanko as the 2020 Educational Support Professional of the Year. Ms. Yanko presented brief remarks.

## Teacher of the Year

Vice President Sean M. Spiller recognized Kimberly Dickstein-Hughes as the 2020 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year. Dickstein-Hughes presented brief remarks.

## President's report

Blistan reported that Gov. Phil Murphy would be a special guest to speak to the delegation. She noted the governor's willingness in working with us and listen to the voices of educators. She further noted the governor's full funding of the pension systems.

Gov. Murphy spoke to the delegation noting our standing as the number one rated public schools in the nation. He also addressed Chapter 78 relief and ensuring that collective bargaining agreements are upheld.

Blistan gave a "State of our Union" address noting challenges of campaigns that sought to cripple our union, privatization battles, disparate treatment of ESPs, diversifying the teacher workforce, and cuts to the Teacher's Pension and Annuity Fund (TPAF). Blistan spoke on expanding NJEA membership and engaging new members.

Blistan noted that despite the pandemic, NJEA members continue to learn through the work of NJEA Professional Development.

## Nondelegate speakers

Dan Cummings (Freehold Regional Education Association, Monmouth County): Cumming discussed why he disagreed with the finding of the NJEA Pension Policy Committee's regarding fossil fuel divestment. The committee found that NJEA should not advocate for a change in the state's investment strategy by divesting from fossil fuels since it would be detrimental to benefits derived by members and their beneficiaries.

## Vice President's report

NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller reported on the

State Board of Education: The board passed a resolution to extend the edTPA qualifying scores for novice teachers. The board acknowledged the League of Women Voters and the right to vote.

Spiller noted that the pandemic has led to questions specifically around indoor air quality with all the conversations around HVAC and everything else that goes along with it.

Spiller recognized the work of WEC. (New Jersey Work Environment Council)

## Secretary-Treasurer's report

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

## Executive Director's report

NJEA Executive Director Steve Swetsky reported on the pandemic. He spoke to how the pandemic redefines normal, redefines our environment, redefines our profession as educators and redefines 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.

Swetsky reported the need to start talking about Chapter 44 and assisting members to understand the different plans.

He spoke of the NJEA REAL Movement and the Members of Color Network in connecting with members

## Committee Reports

The body received reports without recommendations.

### Editorial Committee

Lauren Greenfield, Essex County, presented. There were no questions.

### Election Committee

Diane MacKay, Hudson County, presented. There were no questions.

### Pension Policy

Howard Lipoff, Bergen County. There were no questions.

The body received reports with recommendations.

### Budget Committee

Moved by Jeremiah Salinas, Middlesex County. Motion carried.

### Affiliations Committee

Moved by Peter Blodnik, Essex County. Motion carried.

### Professional Rights and Responsibilities Committee

Moved by Peter Blodnik, Essex County. Motion carried.

### School Finance Committee

Moved by Maryann Kronyak. Motion carried.

Blistan adjourned the meeting without objection.

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# FEBRUARY & *beyond*

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

<b>FEB</b> <b>01</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY</b> Self-nomination for NEA RA opens <a href="https://njea.org/NJEAelections">njea.org/NJEAelections</a>	<b>FEB</b> <b>24-25</b>	<b>FRI &amp; SAT</b> Winter Leadership Conference – North	<b>MAR</b> <b>04</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b> Delegate Assembly meeting
<b>FEB</b> <b>01</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY</b> Executive Committee meeting	<b>FEB</b> <b>28</b>	<b>TUESDAY</b> Self-nomination for NEA RA closes <a href="https://njea.org/NJEAelections">njea.org/NJEAelections</a>	<b>MAR</b> <b>04</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b> ACCESS Model Statewide Conference
<b>FEB</b> <b>18</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b> NJEA FAST Showcase	<b>MAR</b> <b>03</b>	<b>FRIDAY</b> Executive Committee meeting	<b>MAR</b> <b>18</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b> Celebration of Women

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

## Celebration of Women

Please join us for a gathering in which participants will engage in interactive discussions and activities that center the question, **“Do you know where your voice belongs?”** This gathering will serve as an exercise in remembering the power we all possess and a refocusing and reimagining of how we turn our passions into purpose.

Region	Location	Date
Northwest	Caffè NaVona - 147 US-46, Rockaway	March 6
Central	Region 11 - 91 Fieldcrest Avenue, Suite A3, Edison	March 7
Northeast	Region 21 - 70 S Orange Ave., Suite 250, Livingston	March 8
South	Region 3 - 15000 Commerce Pkwy, Suite A, Mt. Laurel	March 9

To register for the event, visit [njea.org/celebrationofwomen](https://njea.org/celebrationofwomen). Registration is first come, first served, as capacity is limited. Those attending a Gathering will have early registration access to the Celebration of Women luncheon on March 18. *More information to follow.*

# We're more **POWERFUL** Together

In this month's edition of the *Review*, Trina Jenkins, the 2023 NJEA Educational Support Professional of the Year, shares how she found strength through her union when her job was threatened early in her career.

"I was inspired to use my gift—my voice—to advocate for myself," she recalled. "I was given the opportunity to represent myself at the board's executive session and I won! Through that experience, I received the courage and opportunity to advocate for others."

Her voice and her courage have taken her to places she may not have imagined back then. This past fall, Gov. Phil Murphy appointed her to the Task Force to Address Public School Staff Shortages. On that task force, Jenkins, along with 24 other appointees, will make recommendations for strategies to solve the school staffing crisis.

In this month's Early Career Network article, Haddonfield Education Association member Johnathan Maxson says that unions are about people having common purpose.

"Seeing members from all over the state—early career members—coming together and hearing of the advocacy work they were doing that we didn't realize we were also doing, was an inspiration," he said.

In this month's professional development column, NJEA staff member Richard Wilson shares research demonstrating that collective efficacy—educators' collective belief that all students can make extraordinary leaps in learning—has the greatest impact on student achievement.

Sometimes working together isn't about union advocacy alone. In Waretown, the local association and the school board worked together—along with the PTO, administrators and NJEA representatives—to support passage of a ballot measure that would reduce class sizes and save jobs.

As UniServ Field Rep Colleen Neil said after the measure passed, "We can help make things happen for the better in these districts when we work together."

While strong and inspiring NJEA leaders like President Sean M. Spiller, Vice President Steve Beatty, and Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson are indispensable, our true power as a union comes from the legions of members who stand with them.

**“ Make sure that your voice, like that of 2023 Educational Support Professional of the Year Trina Jenkins, is part of the voice of NJEA.**

Nothing in this edition of the *Review* illustrates that more than the successful conclusion of the campaign to end edTPA. While it directly affected college students preparing to become teachers, it also affected active NJEA members who saw positions going unfilled in their schools.

NJEA, NJREA, and NJEA Preservice members sent more than 15,000 emails to legislators and the governor to end edTPA. On social media, members shared over 500 tweets and posts. After the bill passed in the Legislature, members made 540 phone calls to Murphy, asking that he sign the bill.

When NJEA sends a call to action to members, it could be easy to think, "What difference will my one phone call or email to a legislator make?" Fortunately, that's not the question NJEA members ask. Instead, we act. And quickly that one email becomes part of an avalanche of emails. That one phone call is the next, in a seemingly endless barrage, that keeps legislators' phones ringing off the hook.

Politics isn't the only place where we are stronger together. There are many ways to be involved in your association to improve the working conditions for our colleagues and the learning conditions for students. Your local association Pride and FAST chairs are likely looking for your help. Your local health and safety committee and your local professional development committee may need a hand. Your leadership is looking for newer members who will become our future leaders.

We are stronger together, and you are as important to the success of every level of NJEA as your association officers. Make sure that your voice, like that of 2023 Educational Support Professional of the Year Trina Jenkins, is part of the voice of NJEA. 🗣️

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