

NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

REVIEW

APRIL
2023

njea.org



an education and advocacy resource

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*Information
Literacy in a
Polarized Era*

REVIEW

APRIL 2023



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NJEA and the CURE Insurance Arena co-sponsored a children's book drive during the Hot Wheels Monster Truck Live Glow Party. Ten donated books were equivalent to one monster truck ticket. The **East Windsor Education Association** (Mercer) facilitated the book drive at the arena and delivered the books to EWEA Pride/FAST Chair Angela Castaneda and her class (shown here). Jason Pukel, a Jersey City educator and NJEA member who lives in East Windsor, worked with the CURE Insurance Arena and EWEA.



Members from the **Hunterdon Central Regional High School Education Association** made a strong showing at the Equity Alliance Conference in January. From left: School secretary Kai Dennis, teacher Amaly Elmenshaw, and paraprofessionals Katherine Beggiato and Nicole Seitz.

FEATURES



22 | INFORMATION LITERACY IN A POLARIZED ERA

In an era when political polarization has become so extreme that people no longer agree on basic facts, we create spaces in our classrooms and libraries where shared facts from sources with minimal bias can be identified so that productive and respectful debate can ensue.

BY KELSEY MAKI



26 | HERE WE GROW

Special education teachers Catherine Slutzky and Robyn Ivey are known in Bergen County's Northern Valley Regional High School District for their innovative projects and resourcefulness. During the 2021-22 school year, Slutzky and Ivey brought their students to Greens Do Good, a Vertical Farm in Hackensack that supports and employs people with autism. The trip inspired them to apply for a grant from the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



28 | ESPAN: POWER BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

The Educational Support Professional Advocacy Network (ESPAN) is an NJEA affinity group composed of educational support professionals (ESPs) and their allies. New Jersey public schools are ranked first in the nation and thrive because of all educators, including ESPs. Too often, ESPs feel overlooked despite the vital work that they do, but through ESPAN they are demonstrating their power beyond the classroom.

BY ANGEL BOOSE

32 | WORLD LANGUAGE LEADERS



It's well established that New Jersey's public schools are the best in the nation. But did you know that our public schools also lead the nation in the percentage of students learning a world language? But what is the value if a student can sprechen Sie Deutsch, parler français or hablar español, for example? The truth is, quite a lot. And the value can be measured socially, emotionally, creatively, economically and physically.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



36 | SUMMER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The 2023 NJEA Jack Bertolino Summer Leadership Conference offers a broad menu of seminars that equip members to become stronger association advocates. This year, 28 in-depth workshops are offered as well as numerous electives.

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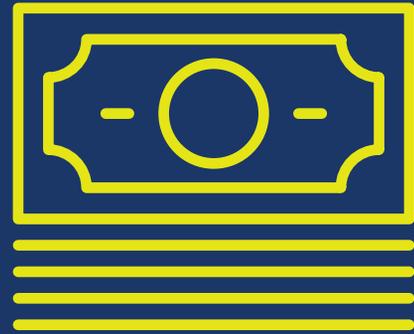
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What's next at NJEA

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The governor's budget

The number \$1 billion

The amount that could be invested in public education and property tax relief if the corporate business tax surcharge is not allowed to expire.

Source: New Jersey Policy Perspective, njpp.org.



GOOD NEWS

New Jersey is first state to require information literacy instruction

As previously reported in the NJEA Review, thanks to bipartisan legislation signed by Gov. Murphy this year, New Jersey became the first state in the nation to require instruction in information literacy.

Source: State of New Jersey, "Governor Murphy Signs Bipartisan Legislation Establishing First in the Nation K-12 Information Literacy Education." (bit.ly/3Jjz75F)



Persephone Walker, a library media specialist at Burlington City High School, with students Shakur Anderson, Joseph Carlin and La'Donna Mitchell. Walker is a fierce advocate for school libraries and their indispensable place in the lives of students and educators—including their role in supporting information literacy education.

PHOTO BY
Jennifer Marsh

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REVIEW

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President: Sean M. Spiller | Vice President: Steve Beatty | Secretary-Treasurer: Petal Robertson
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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. The division produces the *NJEA Review* and njea.org; manages the Hipp Foundation and assists local and county affiliates with internal and external communications.

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*

School libraries are foundations of democracy

Public schools have many responsibilities, from providing students with an academic education and helping them to meet their personal and professional goals, to developing them as citizens, to instilling a lifelong love of learning. Intrinsic to all of these goals is guiding students to develop critical thinking skills.

While there has always been debate about what should be in the curriculum and what materials, including books, should be available to students, that debate has recently taken a very dark turn. It now takes the form of mean-spirited attacks on public school employees and attempts to severely restrict students' access to information and to punish—and even prosecute—school staff for teaching and allowing age-appropriate content in classrooms and libraries.

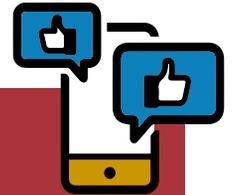
When we hear about a proposed bill in Missouri that would “penalize librarians for providing youth access to materials deemed age inappropriate” with fines or jail time, we are alarmed in New Jersey. A similar bill was introduced in Tennessee, although that effort died in committee. In Florida, there is outrage over classrooms and school library shelves emptied of books in order to comply with recent legislation and directives from the Florida State Board of Education. Each book must be vetted and approved before it is returned to the shelves. Staff who fail to comply risk losing their teaching certificate and/or being charged with a felony.

We are all connected, and the politically motivated attempts to restrict access to information are a dangerous precedent to allow, and they harm us all.

In New Jersey, we are fighting these battles at the local level, but we know how quickly things can change. The more states that follow these examples, the more students are robbed of their right to a high-quality public education.

Every staff member is part of the work we do in New Jersey to provide an excellent education for every child, but on this subject, school librarians/media specialists deserve special recognition for their expertise and commitment to the principles of public education. So, in April—School Library Month—I particularly salute the many librarians across our state who are both educating our students and upholding our democracy.

In Unity,



SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

The theme of last week's 2023 NEA National Leadership Summit was "Joy, Justice, Excellence: The Strength of Educators. The Brilliance of Students. The Power of Community." As always, the summit was informative and inspirational, but nothing was more inspirational than our NJEA members who continue to dedicate themselves and lead the way for educators across the nation as we advocate for students and schools everywhere.

On Mar. 13, NJEA President Sean M. Spiller shared photos from the 2023 NEA National Leadership Summit, which he attended with NJEA members from across the state. He praised the summit, and he shared how the NJEA members who attended the conference with him left him feeling inspired and motivated to continue to advocate to improve public schools.

STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: We have the #1 public schools in the nation for a reason—the deep commitment to the success of every student, from every background, every color and every ZIP code. And when we ground ourselves in the mission to ensure our kids have every support they need, the magic can happen as the nation's best educators inspire their students to create, innovate and lead. Recognizing that educator working conditions are our students learning conditions, we applaud Gov. Phil Murphy for a budget that continues his steadfast commitment to public educators, our students, and our schools.

On Mar. 2, NJEA Vice President Beatty celebrated Gov. Murphy's announcement of another, historically pro-public education state budget. Beatty pointed to the important link between the success of New Jersey's public schools and the budgetary choices of political leaders.

PETAL ROBERTSON

Facebook

@petalfornjea How did you spend International Women's Day? I got to spend it with the women of the Northeast at our Passion and Purpose gathering. The room was packed, and hearts were full. Thank you to Thomas Hardy and Verlerencia Waring for taking care of all the logistics.

On Mar. 8, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson attended this year's Passion and Purpose gathering for women held in NJEA's Northeast Zone on International Women's Day. She shared photos of NJEA members at the session, which was designed to empower all participants and celebrate the achievements of women past and present.

OFFICERS ONLINE

KNOW. LEAD. ACT.

DA ELECTS THREE NEA DIRECTORS



From left: Brenda Brathwaite, Theresa Fuller and Peter Moran were elected to three-year terms on the NJEA Board of Directors.

At its March 4 meeting, the NJEA Delegate Assembly (DA) elected three members to represent New Jersey on the NEA Board of Directors. Brenda Brathwaite of Atlantic County and Peter Moran of Hunterdon County were reelected, and Theresa Fuller of Somerset County was elected to her first term. They will each serve a three-year term beginning Sept. 1.

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.



2023 ESP of the Year Trina Jenkins addresses the Delegate Assembly on March 4.

Based on its membership, NJEA is entitled to nine NEA State Directors. The current directors are Brenda Brathwaite of Atlantic County, Laurie Gibson-Parker of Camden County, Anita Kober of Hudson County, Robert M. La Morte and Susan McBride of Bergen County, Peter Moran of Hunterdon County, Barbara Rheault of Atlantic County, and Stacy Yanko of Sussex County. There is currently one vacancy.

In addition, the NEA Board of Directors has at-large positions to ensure representation from educational support professionals (ESPs). These members are elected to three-year terms at the NEA RA. Two of these 19 nationally elected NEA Directors are NJEA members from Cumberland County: Temika Langston-Myers and Ashanti Rankin.

CELEBRATE RETIRING MEMBERS

As NJEA members retire, they deserve as much recognition as we can give them for their years of hard work and dedication to New Jersey's public school students.

One such recognition is the NJEA Years of Service Certificate. These free certificates can be used to celebrate retiring members and those who have achieved other career milestones.

If your local association would like to order these certificates to present to your members, download the request form below and return it to Nora Lenahan at the email address on the form.

Upon receipt of the form, it will take approximately two weeks to produce the certificates and send them to you. You will receive a presentation folio and the 2023 NJREA Membership brochure.

For any questions, email Nora Lenahan at nlenahan@njea.org.

Give the gift of NJREA membership

NJREA offers the option to purchase the first year of membership as a gift for retiring members, something many local associations choose to do as a retirement gift and in appreciation of members' service. Visit njea.org/give-the-gift-of-njrea-membership for more information.

Learn more about NJREA and the benefits of membership at njea.org/njrea.

IS YOUR MEMBERSHIP RECORD ACCURATE?

You can update your information at njea.org

Did you receive this edition of the *NJEA Review* in your own mailbox, or did your parents hand it to you after it arrived at their house? If you are not receiving emails from NJEA, the email address in your membership record may need to be updated.

Fortunately, you can update your membership record from your computer or smartphone.

Log onto njea.org using the PIN found on your membership card and your password. Your default password, unless you've changed it, is the last four digits of your Social Security number. If you can't find your PIN, but you do receive emails from NJEA, use that email address in place of your PIN.

If you are on a laptop or desktop computer, hover your mouse over your name in the upper-right hand corner and click on "Profile. If you are on a mobile phone, tap the menu, expand "My NJEA" and click on "Profile." From there you can edit any old information.

Note that NJEA recently updated the sex and gender categories. You may wish to review these to reflect how you identify yourself.

When you're done, click "Save."

If despite your best efforts, you cannot get through the steps above, email NJEAREview@njea.org with your new information. You can also "go old school" and mail the change of address to NJEA Review, P.O. Box 1211, Trenton, NJ 08607-1211.



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NJEA Convention, November 9 – 10, 2023

PROMOTE YOUR WRITING IN

Authors' Alley

Authors' Alley is an area at the NJEA Convention that provides pre-service, active and retired NJEA members a chance to showcase materials they have published that enhance and add value to the teaching profession or can serve as useful educational resources for teachers and parents.

Members interested in exhibiting in Authors' Alley must be willing to offer members advice on how to go about publishing their works. Member authors will be responsible to exhibit on both days of the convention – during all show hours – displaying and selling their published works and conversing with members. The cost to participate in Authors' Alley is \$50.

Submissions must meet NJEA criteria. Please send copies of your published materials with the application. Any media that correlates with your book such as CDs, bookmarks, workbooks or giveaways must be included with your application and approved. In addition, it is not necessary to resubmit previously approved books; however, the title(s) must be listed on the application. Your fee will be refunded if we cannot fulfill your request.

Space is limited. For more information call Felicia Davis at 609-310-4260. To reserve your spot, complete and submit the registration form below, along with your check and copies of your published materials by April 30, 2023.



**I AM
INTERESTED**

in being a vendor at the 2023 NJEA Convention at the Atlantic City Convention Center, Nov. 9-10. I understand that I must be an active NJEA member, student NJEA, or NJREA member to participate in Authors' Alley, and I agree to participate for the entire convention. Enclosed is a \$50 check payable to NJEA Authors' Alley.

Name _____

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Published materials _____

RETURN TO: Felicia Davis, NJEA-PDII, PO Box 1211, Trenton, NJ 08607-1211

COOL STUFF



STUTTERING AWARENESS WEEK IS MAY 8-14

To someone who stutters, many things in life are easier done than said—the opposite of the old adage. As the Stuttering Foundation notes, this play on words summarizes how the fear of speaking keeps many people from being heard. The foundation offers resources for those who stutter, their parents and their educators. For more information visit stutteringhelp.org.



CLEAN OCEAN ACTION'S 35TH ANNUAL SPRING STUDENT SUMMIT

Apply Now for May 17 or May 18

The Clean Ocean Action Spring Student Summit provides school students (grades 5-8) from eligible central and northern New Jersey schools a free opportunity to experience hands-on, marine environmental education at Sandy Hook on May 17 and 18. Designed to meet New Jersey Student Learning Standards and reinforce STEM concepts, the Student Summit is an opportunity for students to receive a unique, educational program that combines peer-to-peer learning with outdoor connections to the sea and environmental stewardship.

Two participate complete each section of the 2023 Spring Student Summit Application and return it with a \$100 refundable deposit check to Clean Ocean Action by April 14 (extended from April 7). The application and additional information can be found at cleanoceanaction.org. Click on "Education Programs," then select "Student Summit."

Questions? email Kristen Grazioso at Education@CleanOceanAction.org.



LAW FAIR/LAW ADVENTURE – YOU BE THE JURY!

Experience what it's like to serve as a juror 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. Click on the link for Law Fair or Law Adventure at njsbf.org/mock-trial.



NJSBF LAW AND DISABILITY CONFERENCE

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation, in partnership with the Community Law Health Project, will hold its annual Law and Disability Conference on Thursday, May 4 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. virtually and in person at the New Jersey Law Center in New Brunswick. This free, half-day, interactive conference addresses important issues related to the disabled community, their families, caregivers and supporting organizations. Go to njsbf.org/law-and-disability-conference for more information and to register.



KNOCK OUT OPIOID ABUSE

A conversation about athletes and opioids featuring Ray Lucas former Rutgers and NFL quarterback

The opioid epidemic affects every community in New Jersey. Learn about the risks of prescription opioids for student athletes and how you can be part of the solution to address the opioid crisis in your community. The event takes place Wednesday, April 26 from 10 a.m. to noon at Jersey Mike's Arena at Rutgers University.

For more information and to register your school, visit KnockOutOpioidAbuse.DrugFreeNJ.org.



NJ FAMILYCARE COVERS ALL KIDS

All children can apply for NJ FamilyCare. Cover All Kids is an initiative to reach all uninsured children in New Jersey under the age of 19. It provides NJ FamilyCare coverage to all income-eligible kids in New Jersey. This past January, New Jersey expanded coverage to all income-eligible children, regardless of immigration status.

Tell the families you work with to go to nj.gov/CoverAllKids to learn more and apply.

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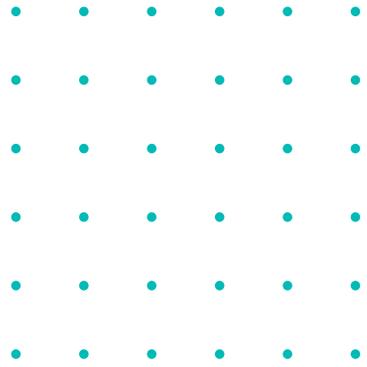
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What you should know about mandatory reporting to the IAIU

By Kaitlyn Dunphy, Esq.



The Institutional Abuse Investigation Unit (IAIU) is the child protective service unit within New Jersey's Department of Children and Families (DCF) that conducts investigations into allegations of child abuse or neglect occurring in school settings. You may know DCF by one of its former names, the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP) or the Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS). While the name has changed over the years, what has not changed is the dedication NJEA shares with the state for protecting our students.

All school employees are mandatory reporters of instances of suspected or known child abuse or neglect. If an individual believes that a minor has been injured in a way that does not appear to be accidental, abused or neglected, the individual should report what they have observed. The report should be made to the school district according to the district's policy, which will often designate who the report should be made to. In addition, NJEA members should immediately report the suspected abuse to the state by calling 1-877-NJABUSE (652-2873).

NJEA recommends that members call the state to report any suspected abuse immediately, and to not

leave school for the day until that report has been made. Because every school employee is a mandatory reporter, you should not rely on anyone else to make that report on your behalf, even if it is your coworker, your boss or even your union representative. There are potential criminal consequences for failing to report suspected abuse, and above all else, it is essential to make the report to ensure that the student is protected.

Anonymous reporting allowed

The report to IAIU may be made anonymously if the caller does not wish to give their name. If an individual makes an anonymous report, they should confirm that they are given a validation number. This number can be used to prove that you made the report in case there is a question later about whether there was a failure to report.

Sometimes individuals are concerned about making a report because they are not sure whether what they have observed is abuse or neglect, or whether there is a harmless explanation for what they witnessed. As long as a report is made in good faith, reporters are protected from civil and criminal liability for reporting suspected abuse. School districts also cannot retaliate against employees who have made a report in good faith.

Further, it is the IAIU's job, not the member's, to investigate and make a determination about what occurred. After an initial report and preliminary investigation, sometimes the IAIU determines there is no further cause to investigate. Otherwise, the IAIU will investigate the allegations and make a determination about whether there was abuse or neglect.

If you are contacted

If you are called by an IAIU investigator for an interview, you should ask the investigator whether you are being interviewed as a target of the investigation or as a witness. Tell them you are happy to cooperate in the investigation, but you cannot speak to them at this time and take down their contact information so an interview can be scheduled for a later date. You should then reach out to your local leadership, who can put you in touch with your NJEA UniServ field representative. Your field representative will be able to assist you with next steps, which may include a consult with a NJEA network attorney. 📞

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

NJEA Report

Educational support professionals are the unsung heroes of public education

By James Frazier

An indispensable part of every student's educational success comes from the work of the unsung heroes of our school communities. These are our education support professionals, known to us as ESPs.

ESPs are the individuals who ensure the entire school system works effectively and runs smoothly throughout the school year. They are the backbone—or better yet—the foundation of our school communities. Without a strong foundation, a building will crumble. These inspiring individuals include our custodians and maintenance staff, secretaries and clerical staff, food service workers, paraprofessionals, security staff, and IT department professionals, to name a few.

Who can imagine, for example, a school building without our secretarial/clerical/administrative assistant office staff? When you need to deliver something important to your child, it's the main office staff that comes to the rescue. They are essential to the everyday workings of any school building.

ESPs make a difference for children

I'm sure everyone has stories about the impact a favorite ESP has made in their lives. Mine was a custodial-maintenance person who worked at my elementary school.

Being a person of color and growing up in the 80's, there weren't many individuals in my school community who looked like me or my classmates. I remember how this individual would spend time with us, bringing sporting equipment out for us during recess. As growing children who seemed to have bottomless stomachs, he would give us extra milk or treats. I am certain others in my school were positively influenced by having him in our lives. Many may have seen him as a father figure.

His small gestures of kindness and his compassion

James Frazier is a school security officer in Union Township Public Schools and the president of the Union County Education Association.

for our well-being have remained with me to this very day. In fact, it has shaped my 26-year career as a school security officer and how I interact with my students. That my students always feel heard and are able to relax and learn in a safe environment is my priority. The key for me is to build trust.

ESPs benefit the whole community

Many ESPs live in the communities where they work. They are taxpayers whose own children attend the schools in the district. In addition, many ESPs volunteer in their communities as coaches, scout troop leaders, elected officials, and as PTA/PTO members and leaders. They are members of community social clubs and religious institutions. They truly are an integral part of the community.

Despite this, ESPs often hold two or three jobs just to make ends meet for themselves and their families, because ESP salaries alone cannot sustain them. It is time to pay our ESPs a living wage.

Tragically, many school boards balance their budgets on the backs of these unsung heroes. Many ESPs are denied full-time hours, which usually means they're not provided health insurance. If health insurance is provided, sometimes it only covers the individual and not the entire family. This affects not only ESPs' families, but whole communities because earnings that could be spent to support local businesses are used instead to cover family health care costs.

Furthermore, many school districts have turned to privatization of ESP work. Doing this has had a serious impact on the quality of education our students receive and has contributed to diminishing our school infrastructure. School districts need improvements, not cuts.

Think about those fond memories and stories of your youth. Think about the impact individual ESPs have made in your life. Then, demand that your local school district leaders compensate these unsung heroes fairly and equitably.

A living wage and RESPECT are essential for all ESPs.

NJEA recognizes COUNTY **ESP**s OF THE YEAR

In addition to NJEA Educational Support Professional (ESP) of the Year Trina Jenkins,
NJEA congratulates the 2023 County ESPs of the Year.



Atlantic

Trina Jenkins,
Paraprofessional
Pleasantville
Education Association



Gloucester

Cori Burton, Secretary
Delsea Education
Association



Bergen

Linda Kerwin,
Paraprofessional
Bergenfield Education
Association



Hudson

Denise Tejada,
Paraprofessional
West New York
Education Association



Burlington

Sandra Wilcox,
Bus Driver
Burlington County Special
Services Education
Association



Hunterdon

Estela Dominguez,
Custodian
Delaware Valley Regional
Education Association



Passaic

Bassam Merza, Custodian
Wayne Custodial
Maintenance Association



Cape May

Deborah Young,
Paraprofessionals
Lower Township
Elementary Education
Association



Mercer

Kevin Megill Jr.,
Computer Technician
East Windsor Regional
Supportive Staff
Association



Salem

Russell Richardson,
Custodian
Penns Grove-Carneys
Point Regional School
Employees Association



Camden

Pamela Clark,
Administrative Assistant
Camden Education
Association



Middlesex

Arlene Baum, Secretary
North Brunswick
Education Association



Sussex

Carla Brunelle,
Paraprofessional
Newton Education
Association



Cumberland

Jane Caine, Secretary
Bridgeton Education
Association



Morris

Sandy Andrews,
Paraprofessional
Education Association
of Mount Olive



Union

Lyn-Kristine Cornacchia,
Paraprofessional
Union Township
Education Association



Essex

Antionett Hall,
Paraprofessional
Orange Education
Association



Ocean

Robin Linke, Secretary
Jackson Education
Association



Warren

Nichole Shenewolf,
Paraprofessional
Phillipsburg Education
Association



Visions gives special thanks to our educators. That's why we established the **Visions Loves Educators Classroom Funding Program** that awards up to \$500* for projects outside their school's budget. This is just one small way we can give back as Visions also offers the **Student Loan Eraser** and **Educator of the Year Award** to those who strengthen the next generation and our communities!

Committed to
Our New Jersey
Communities



Visions has partnered with the NJEA and committed \$1 million over the next 10 years in support of their members and mission. The NJEA has started by focusing these resources on building Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in New Jersey Public Schools.

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Visions FCU invests in educators

It's that time of year when educators start making plans for 2023-24. Those looking to add some special projects or programs to the mix now have a funding option.

The Visions Loves Educators Classroom Funding Program is back for its seventh year. Nearly a decade ago, Visions recognized the need for educators in Northern New Jersey to fund classroom projects not covered by school budgets. Research has shown that educators take nearly \$500 out of their own pockets to bring special programs and projects to their classrooms.

So, Visions established their Classroom Funding Program in 2016, to help all educators—not just Visions FCU members—enhance their lesson plans without having to kick in personal funds. The credit union contributed more than \$55,000 to classrooms, including several school districts in Northern New Jersey, in 2022 alone.

How does it work? Visions awards full funding, up to \$500, for projects submitted by full-time educators at the preschool, elementary, middle and high school levels within its service area. Because of the popularity of the program, Visions has dedicated \$50,000 to the program this year so a large number of projects will get funded. The credit union is now accepting applications at visionsloveseducators.com.

"Our educators give so much to their kids and our communities," Visions' Director of Branding and Public Relations Tim Strong said. "This is just one small way we can give back to them."

Project Education

Visions Loves Educators is just one piece of Visions Cares, a larger initiative that highlights all of the credit union's community involvement. This includes support of Project Education, a collaboration with NJEA that benefits all members and their students. Visions has committed \$1 million to be dispersed over a 10-year period, which began in 2021.

The grant has already supported the creation of the NJEA Racial and Social Justice Institute under the NJEA's Human and Civil Rights Division. The goal of the partnership between Visions and the NJEA Racial and Social Justice Institute is to stand in solidarity in teaching on the issues of systemic racism, institutional racism, environmental racism, colorism, homophobia and all other forms of inequity. The

“ The credit union contributed more than \$55,000 to classrooms.

institute will provide high-quality training and workshops for educators, students, families, and communities. It will also work to support local initiatives in public schools and county colleges.

"Visions truly does care to the extent that we feel our commitment to community is very unique," Strong said. "Our commitment to educators has been a priority for many years now and one that we'll keep going well into the future."

Educator of the Year, Student Loan Eraser programs

In 2022, the credit union introduced its Educator of the Year award and Student Loan Eraser program as part of Visions Loves Educators.

Visions honors educators who go above and beyond to support their classrooms and communities. Each recipient of the Educator of the Year award gets \$2,000 as a token of appreciation and a special celebration with their school.

The Student Loan Eraser Program is designed to offer help where educators need it most. Visions recognizes the long nights and many years of education that bring them to be the classroom leaders they are today. That's why Visions encourages all educators—not just Visions FCU members—to apply for the Student Loan Eraser Program. Twenty recipients will be selected each school year and \$1,000 will be awarded to each of them for repayment of their higher education costs.

Learn more about these programs and much more at visionsloveseducators.com.



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Bill would boost educator tax credits

With national attention on addressing staffing shortages across public education, a bill sponsored by U.S. Sen. Cory Booker offers one sound approach to make entering and remaining in the profession more attractive.

The RAISE Act, which stands for the “Respect, Advancement, and Increasing Support for Educators” Act, introduced in 2022, lets educators keep more of their hard-earned money by providing refundable tax credits of up to \$15,000 per early and K-12 educator. The bill also doubles the educator tax deduction to \$500 to help offset the money that teachers inevitably spend out of their own pocket each year on supplies for their classroom and students.

“Educators are constantly asked to do more and more without any significant increase in their compensation, and often at their own expense,” Booker said. “The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these hardships, leading many teachers to leave the profession. This legislation would help support educators by using the federal tax code to put more resources back in teachers’ pockets. It’s time to reward our society’s unsung heroes by increasing teachers’ take-home pay.”

Despite their essential role in supporting students to engage in our democratic society and to flourish individually,

compensation is not commensurate with educators’ critical responsibilities and required skills. According to research by the Economic Policy Institute, public school educators on average earn about 20% less than similarly educated professions. That’s why it’s critical for bills like the RAISE Act to become law to help level the playing field.

The refundable tax credits would be provided on a sliding scale, with a base of \$1,000 per educator up to \$15,000 for those in high poverty school districts. By being refundable, this ensures that the educator will receive the entire credit, regardless of the amount of tax owed in any given year.

The bill also provides NJEA-supported language to respect collective bargaining and ensure that the tax credit cannot be used unfairly in labor negotiations. The bill would also provide a \$3 billion annual increase in funding for recruitment, retention, professional development, class-size reduction initiatives.

The bill is an important step in attempting to rectify the pay inequities suffered by educators both in New Jersey and across the country. NJEA, along with NEA, supports the bill and hopes to see it move in the new Congress.

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Together, we’ll do this.

INFORMATION LITERACY IN A POLARIZED ERA

by Kelsey Maki

Our cultural context: A few facts

- Fact: Throughout history reasonable people have disagreed on the best solutions to problems.
- Fact: Disagreement pushes people to construct persuasive arguments from a shared set of facts.
- Fact: Political polarization has become so extreme that people no longer agree on basic facts.
- Fact: Our work as educators is exceedingly difficult in a polarized, post-truth era.

Information literacy: A global goal

According to UNESCO, “[i]nformation literacy empowers people in all walks of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals.” Yet, recent research shows the information literacy skills of many adults to be lacking.

Scholarship cited in “Information Literacy: Bridging the Gap Between Theory and Practice,” asserts that “many people’s information literacy ability to judge the

validity and reliability of information, and to organize and synthesize the retrieved information for immediate and future use is poor, in spite of their self-perception of competence. The skill gaps in evaluating the validity and reliability of digital information are significant to the point of many naively sharing misinformation.” (See bit.ly/3L0phrS)

Legislation in New Jersey

New Jersey has responded to this crisis with the Information Literacy for K-12 Education standards. The guidelines will include, at a minimum, the following:

- 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 opinions.
- Accessing peer-reviewed print and digital library resources.
- The economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information.
- The ethical production of information.

Kelsey Maki is an associate professor of English at Brookdale Community College and current course coordinator for English 122: Writing and Research. She is a member of the BCC Faculty Association and can be reached at syntaxsurfing@gmail.com.



All is politicized

Despite the clear deficits in information literacy among the adult population, New Jersey's law has been cast in a negative light by some conservative mass media outlets. Earlier this year, Candace Hathaway wrote in *The Blaze* that "[t]he legislation has some parents and critics concerned that news organizations with certain political leanings will be labeled more trustworthy than others, ultimately leading to indoctrination."

The Blaze, which was founded by former Fox firebrand Glenn Beck, clearly has a conservative agenda, and although the article contains no evidence to support its claim of "indoctrination" by educators, Hathaway is nevertheless correct to raise the fraught question of what, exactly, counts as a "fact" in our current hyperpartisan political environment?

Humility as a shared starting point

In such divisive times, it seems sensible to start from a position of humility and apply elements of a "growth mindset" to our teaching practice. Acknowledging that our position as educators requires us to continue learning and adjusting our understanding is a potentially powerful lesson for our students.

In "The Pessimistic Meta-Induction from the History of Science," published in *Edge* in 2011, journalist Kathryn Schulz wrote, "the idea behind the meta-induction is that all of our theories are fundamentally provisional and quite possibly wrong. If we can add that idea to our cognitive toolkit, we will be better able to listen with curiosity and empathy to those whose theories contradict our own."

In "Information Literacy: A Contradictory Coupling," published in 2003 in the *Library Quarterly*, Christine Pawley noted the conflicting purposes of information literacy, which consist of "a promethean vision of citizen empowerment and democracy, and ... a desire to control the 'quality' of information." Pawley argues that "this tension can be productive and should be explored." Another similar tension is inherent in our position as teachers, as our role casts us as *authorities* in our content areas, but we must be careful not to appear too *authoritative*, lest it discourage critical thinking and individual agency on the part of our students.

Critiquing binaries and other difficult dance moves

Teaching critical thinking in the context of information literacy asks educators to perform a delicate dance: We push students to question and analyze their sources while simultaneously asking them to have faith in shared facts and expertise.

Often, the teaching of information literacy begins and ends with educators reviewing basic distinctions between

“ Our work as educators is exceedingly difficult in a polarized era.

high quality vs. low quality, primary vs. secondary, and popular vs. scholarly sources. Yet, these binaries are problematic and reductive. Additionally, students often mistakenly assume that primary sources are always superior to secondary sources and scholarly sources are always superior to popular sources, when, in reality, primary sources are only as reliable as the person who composed them, and an increasing number of "scholarly" sources found on the open internet are of questionable quality and come from predatory publishers. Beall's List catalogs an impressive list of predatory publishers at beallslist.net.

When it comes to information literacy, the nuances of the above categories seem far less relevant than the problem of misinformation on social media, as this is where our students acquire information about the world.

Social media and misinformation

We all know that there are extreme partisans of all political persuasions who spread misinformation and disinformation online. However, to approach the issue from the "neutral" standpoint of "both sides make mistakes" is to misrepresent the research, as recent scholarship has shown misinformation and "junk news" to be a bigger problem within certain partisan social media circles.

In an article titled "Polarization, Partisanship and Junk News Consumption over Social Media in the US," published in 2018, an international panel of academics from prestigious universities found "that the distribution of [junk news] is unevenly spread across the ideological spectrum ... by demonstrat[ing] that (1) on Twitter, a network of Trump supporters shares the widest range of known junk news sources and circulates more junk news than all the other groups put together; (2) on Facebook, extreme hard right pages—distinct from Republican pages—share the widest range of known junk news sources and circulate more junk news than all the other audiences put together; (3) on average, the audiences for junk news on Twitter share a wider range of known junk news sources than audiences on Facebook's public pages."

In this study, "junk news" is defined as meeting at least three of the following six criteria: lack of professionalism, emotional style, lack of credible sourcing, publication bias, or being wholly counterfeit.

More recently, in 2021, Cybersecurity for Democracy (C4D) published a summary article titled “Far-Right News Sources on Facebook More Engaging” that analyzed the spread of misinformation on social media during the 2020 election, showing that “[c]enter and left partisan categories incur a misinformation penalty, while right-leaning sources do not.” As this research indicates, misinformation is more prominent on the far-right side of the political spectrum, but to share this information with students is to risk being perceived as a partisan who is attempting to “indoctrinate” students.

The false equivalency of AllSides

To avoid accusations of partisanship, many educators introduce websites such as AllSides, which compare headlines and articles from across the ideological spectrum. The main flaw, however, in sites like AllSides is that they create a false equivalency between sources on the left and sources on the right.

In the 2017 study “Partisanship, Propaganda, and Disinformation: Online Media and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election,” researchers at Harvard University found that “the structure and composition of mass media outlets on the right and on the left are quite different.” Bruce Etling and his colleagues explain that conservative and liberal media outlets are “rooted in different traditions and journalistic practices.” For example, conservative U.S. mass media outlets tend to be “highly partisan.” Whereas, liberal outlets tend to uphold the “traditions and practices of objective journalism.”

Additionally, the media landscape itself is not equally divided: “The center of gravity of the overall landscape is the center-left. Partisan media sources on the far-left are ... of lesser importance than the major media outlets of the center-left. The center of attention and influence for conservative media is on the far right. The center-right is of minor importance and is the least represented portion

“ Our role casts us as authorities in our content areas, but we must be careful not to appear too authoritative.

of the media spectrum.”

This research indicates that the mass media information landscape does lean left, but the left-leaning sources tend to be more objective. AllSides, however, makes no effort to address this distinction. Their ratings, which are crowdsourced, only address perceived bias, while neglecting the important consideration of journalistic integrity.

Additionally, one must question the accuracy of AllSides’ crowdsourced ratings, as publications like *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Economist*, which are fiscally conservative, are now listed as “center” sources. Perhaps even more egregious, *The New Yorker*, which has a high level of factual reporting according to Media Bias/Fact Check (see sidebar) is positioned as a “far left” source, whereas *One America News (OAN) Network*, which has a low level of factual reporting, is listed as a “far right” source. While both sources do have a clear ideological bias, the quality of content within these outlets is vastly different.

While AllSides can be a useful tool in comparing partisan representations of news, both students and educators should question the validity of its ratings and seek to evaluate the journalistic integrity of all outlets listed on this site.



Skepticism and civil discourse

Our students' natural inclination may be to become cynical and conclude that it's impossible to locate a shared set of facts and engage in civil discourse with people who hold opposing viewpoints. But to encourage information literacy, we must not only ask students to read across the ideological spectrum, we must make sure they're prepared to approach all information from the cognitively demanding position of a skeptic.

In *They Say / I Say*, published in 2010, Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein assert that in our "increasingly diverse, global society, this ability to engage with the ideas of others is especially crucial to democratic citizenship." Graff and Birkenstein also promote the importance of listening, a practice not often prioritized during debates. In the introduction to their seminal text, Graff and Birkenstein assert that "the underlying structure of effective academic writing—and of responsible public discourse—resides not just in stating our own ideas but in listening closely to others around us, summarizing their views in a way that they will recognize, and responding ... in kind."

It's important that we create a space in our classrooms where shared facts from sources with minimal bias can be identified so that productive and respectful debate can ensue. Our goal as educators must never be to indoctrinate our students, but we do have a responsibility to avoid false equivalencies and share the general consensus of experts concerning the current state of our information landscape.

We must provide our students with the tools and skills that will help them locate high-quality information and construct their own arguments. In the end, the future of productive debate and civic engagement may very well depend on the information literacy skills of this next generation of American voters. 🇺🇸

Information literacy tools

While there is no single, "perfect" fact-checking tool currently available, these sites are good starting points. (Beware of "fact-checkers" with a clear bias.)

- **Media Bias/Fact Check** allows you to search media sources to determine their bias and level of factual reporting. The information is researched by a nonpartisan staff. (mediabiasfactcheck.com)
- **FactCheck.org**, run by the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, dispels the myths and falsehoods surrounding current events. It's a comprehensive and lauded site. (factcheck.org)
- **PolitiFact.com**, which is run by the Poynter Institute for journalism, analyzes the veracity of statements made by politicians, with an occasional Facebook post thrown in for good measure. It won a Pulitzer Prize and is considered nonpartisan. (politifact.com)
- **Snopes** is the go-to site for debunking internet rumors and should be your first stop for pop-culture shares that sound outlandish. (snopes.com)
- **NewsGuard** is an online tool that can be added as an extension to your internet browser to determine the purpose and legitimacy of a news source. (newsguardtech.com)
- **Real or Satire** is a site where you can check whether a source is serious or engaging in parody, as purpose can sometimes be obscured or difficult to determine. (realorsatire.com)
- **Hoaxy**, coordinated by Indiana University, gives you a real-time picture of online engagement with information trending on social media. It shows a graphic of real users vs. bots. (hoaxy.osome.iu.edu)
- **Consumer Reports** is a magazine and online resource that independently evaluates products and does not accept money from advertisers. It is a nonprofit organization. (consumerreports.org)
- **Kaiser Family Foundation** is a credible nonprofit organization focused on researching health issues and social safety nets. (kff.org)
- **Quackwatch** is run by Dr. Stephen Barrett, and it represents an "international network of people who are concerned about health-related frauds, myths, fads, fallacies, and misconduct." (quackwatch.org)
- **Campus Election and Engagement Project** prepares nonpartisan guides that tell you where political candidates stand on a variety of issues. (bit.ly/civic-cep)

Here we



A school garden project

By Kathryn Coulibaly

Special education teachers Catherine Slutzky and Robyn Ivey are known in Bergen County's Northern Valley Regional High School District for their innovative projects and resourcefulness when it comes to creating educational opportunities for their students.

During the 2021-22 school year, Slutzky and Ivey brought their students to Greens Do Good, a Vertical Farm in Hackensack that supports and employs people with autism. Greens Do Good is a fully operational hydroponic farm. Greens Do Good staff, particularly Jessalin Jaume, were invaluable in getting the students involved in planting, harvesting and learning about the life cycle of plants. Slutzky and Ivey were inspired to create a school garden where their students could take more ownership and engage with the plants every day.

Slutzky and Ivey applied for an NJEA Frederick L. Hipp grant in spring 2022 and were awarded \$3,562 for approximately 35 students on the autism spectrum between the ages of 16-21 to learn vocational skills and healthy living habits.

Taking what they learned from Greens Do Good, Slutzky and Ivey researched what they would need and wrote the grant to maximize every penny. In addition, staff from Cleatus Farms in nearby Northvale made suggestions about products and materials and set up two large grow centers, complete with lamps, to help them get started.

NJEA Frederick L. Hipp grants are open to any public school employee in New Jersey and are intended to promote great ideas and innovative projects that benefit public school students. The grants range from \$500 to \$10,000.

Kathryn Coulibaly is the associate editor of the NJEA Review and provides content and support to njea.org. She can be reached at kcoulibaly@njea.org.

Repeat Hipp Grant winner

Slutzky was already familiar with the NJEA Hipp Grant program. In 2019, she was awarded a \$2,850 grant for a project called Access to the Links that paired teenagers with autism and their peers to play golf. Connecting through sports was a great way for the students to interact with neurotypical students and build community. The high school golf team worked with a golf pro to build their skills and they, in turn, taught what they had learned to the students with autism. Together, the students developed their skills and created a feeling of camaraderie. While the program was disrupted by the global pandemic, students and staff saw many benefits. Slutzky would like to continue the program and expand it to the other high school in the district. She is currently in search of a Bergen County area golf pro to participate.



Like the vertical farm at Greens Do Good, Northern Valley Regional students use hydroponics to support their garden.

A learning process

Thanks to Slutzky and Ivey's efforts, Here We Grow has bloomed to include a greenhouse and additional stations for growing plants. The produce that they grow is used to teach students about healthy eating and for meal preparation at the school. Additional produce is available for staff, families and the community to purchase. They have recently expanded the business to include salad dressing that staff can use on their school-grown salad.

Space is one of the largest challenges they face. The classroom is packed with supplies and growing stations, including a small greenhouse. They plan to expand the outside to include a larger greenhouse and garden. Ideally, they would like to extend their growing—and learning—season from March through December. They also would like to create outside learning areas that everyone in the school can access, and possibly begin to keep chickens and build a chicken coop.

"This has been a learning process; we're learning what we can grow in this space and outside," Ivey said.

The students are very involved in the garden project. They check the pH daily, transplant seedlings when it's necessary, harvest the crop, market the produce to staff and much more.

"It's nice to see the students take ownership over the garden," Slutzky said.

As a result of their success with the Hipp grants, Slutzky has written other grants, including Bergen County municipal grants and the Realtors Care Foundation. In addition, a relationship has been built with the Norwood Environmental Commission.

"These projects give our students excellent vocational skills, and gardening has been proven to benefit everyone physically and from a mental health perspective," Slutzky said. "We're excited to continue to expand our efforts and to get even more people involved."

Garden projects benefit everyone

According to research compiled by Cornell University, garden projects enhance the quality of life for everyone, from expanding access to fresh food, providing exercise and other health benefits, encouraging multigenerational cooperation, making our spaces more beautiful, benefiting the environment, bridging the gaps between people and so much more.

From an academic perspective, school garden projects



Northern Valley Regional teacher Catherine Slutzky and her students celebrate their grant from the Hipp Foundation.

help boost learning and life skills and integrate the curriculum with practical experiences. Students who participate in garden projects develop "a wide range of academic and social skills."

For students on the autism spectrum, school garden projects are especially beneficial. According to Autism Awareness Centre, Inc., garden activities can address gross and fine motor skills. Moving dirt and rocks, digging, pulling weeds, raking, watering, planting, pinching plants and picking vegetables can all teach a variety of skills as well as build muscle, endurance, and dexterity.

Gardening also is a calm activity that provides opportunities to follow instructions, cooperate and socialize. There is something for everyone to do in a garden, and this builds confidence and self-esteem.

Apply for an NJEA Hipp Grant

Grants from the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education help educators bring creative ideas to life. The only foundation of its kind in New Jersey, the Hipp Foundation supports initiatives to promote great ideas—whether they come from teachers, secretaries, custodians, paraprofessionals, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, or any other member of the school community.

More than \$2.3 million in grants for innovative educational projects that represent a bold, fresh approach by public school employees has already been awarded. Apply for a Hipp grant and bring your innovative ideas to life. The annual deadline is March 1 each year. The portal will open on July 1, 2023 for the coming year. Grants range from \$500 to \$10,000. Learn more at njea.org/hipp.



The Educational Support Professional Advocacy Network

Power beyond the classroom

by Angel Boose

The Educational Support Professional Advocacy Network (ESPAN) is an NJEA affinity group composed of educational support professionals (ESPs) and their allies. New Jersey public schools are ranked first in the nation and thrive because of all educators, including ESPs. These educators cultivate and meet the needs of the whole student, promoting quality education and fostering positive learning environments in the roles of custodian, maintenance service, food service, secretary, health and student services staff, paraprofessional, security service, skilled trade, technician, transportation, and more.

Through ESPAN, ESPs are demonstrating their power beyond the classroom. Too often, they feel overlooked despite the vital work that they do. They know the best way to advocate for their students and to garner support for the work they do is to be a part of the democratic process both in the public and association spheres. ESPAN aims to ensure elected officials, association leadership and all NJEA members understand the intricacies and importance of their duties.

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

How ESPAN began

ESPAN evolved out of the South Jersey Anti-Privatization Coalition, which organized almost 10 years ago as a group called South Jersey United. As a part of the group, members went to school board meetings to speak on behalf of ESPs who were in jeopardy of losing their jobs.

“Advocating on behalf of those members propelled us to want equity for all educational support professionals,” said ESPAN Captain Temika Langston-Myers of Cumberland County. Langston-Meyers is also an NEA Director. Members spoke out against PARCC testing and the ramifications of its unfunded mandate, which for ESPs meant privatization.

“A call to action was made by the members of South Jersey United and soon members across the state began to support our colleagues, speak on their behalf and attend board meetings,” said Middlesex County Education Association President Lois Yukna, who is also an ESPAN captain. “ESPAN was formed to engage members across the state and protect their careers.”

ESPAN Captain KelleyAnn Morris from Camden County notes how successful ESPAN has been in protecting members’ jobs.

“Over the course of several years, ESPAN fought 33 attempts at privatization, and won every single one,” Morris said.

Gloucester County Education Association President Chrissy Kosar, an ESPAN captain, at an ESPAN information table.



Empowering and engaging ESPs

ESPAN aims to empower ESPs to get more involved in the work of NJEA, as it is not just a “teacher union” but a union for educators in all roles.

“ESPAN has provided valuable lessons on using networking and sharing leadership roles. It has given me a voice to address concerns with other leaders and my own members,” said Amy Tighe, an ESPAN captain from Salem County. “I don’t believe I would have been so vocal about issues if I had not done it with ESPAN.” Tighe is also the president of the Penns Grove-Carneys Point Regional School Employees Association.

Langston-Myers believes experiences like Tighe’s are ESPAN’s goal, and she hopes the gifts and talents of ESPs will shine as they become more engaged with the union. Those shared gifts and talents will make NJEA a more diverse and even stronger statewide leader.

“ESPAN is a passion for me. I love the work we do,” said Morris. “I especially enjoy watching ESPs when they realize they do have a voice in our union and the power is within themselves to effect change and move the union forward.”

“**ESPAs are demonstrating their power beyond the classroom.**”

Taking action

ESPAN’s mission is to unite, organize, promote and advance ESPs so that with their union they will uphold their rights, protect their benefits and elevate their careers. ESPAN members are accomplishing this mission through three main goals they set last summer.

“I am currently working on goal number two,” Langston-Myers shared. “This goal is to promote the full inclusion of all ESPs and educate members in the local, county, state and national organizational structures and provide opportunities for growth.”

Organizing to elect pro-education candidates is a top priority for NJEA, and ESPAN captains and members make a concerted effort to make their presence known in the legislative and political arenas. Leading up to the 2022 United States House of Representatives elections,



ESPAN is committed to having a presence at every NJEA Conference. Here at the Equity Alliance Conference are Chardae Ingram (then a Paulsboro secretary, now an NJEA secretary) and Irvington teacher Fayette Weatherington (chair of the NJEA Human and Civil Rights Committee) at the ESPAN information table.

for example, ESPAN was an integral part of campaigning for the reelection of Tom Malinowski to New Jersey's 7th Congressional District. Although Malinowski did not win, ESPAN attended legislative gatherings and hosted multiple phone banking events collectively making over 1,200 phone calls to get out the vote.

"Everything we do in schools is governed by the Legislature—every aspect of public education," said Chrissy Kosar, Gloucester County Education Association president and an ESP captain. "People see NJEA and think 'teacher.' It is extremely important for support staff to get involved so politicians and others know all the layers of education."

Morris agrees. "I want educational support professionals to know that their local, county, state and national associations also serve them," said Morris.

In an effort to increase the engagement of ESPs at all levels of the association, members are encouraged to attend workshops, conferences and trainings. They are also encouraged to seek appointments to committees, become association representatives, run to become delegates to the annual NEA Representative Assembly, and run for elected office at any level of the association.

“ Over the course of several years, ESPAN fought 33 attempts at privatization, and won every single one.

"I have helped empower many ESPs and built their confidence by showing them what I, as well as ESPAN, have done," Tighe said. "I have shared tips and strategies on how to run for positions, and not just within their locals. ESPs need to know they have just as many opportunities as teachers and that they matter to NJEA."

Expanding ESP influence in NJEA

Among ESPAN's long-term goals is to see more staff at NJEA come from among the ranks of ESP members. Nearly one out of every four NJEA members is an ESP. To more effectively advocate for them, it will be valuable to have more NJEA staff who understand from personal experience the work ESPs do.



ESPAN at its 2022 NJEA Convention information booth. From left: Jacqueline Kruzik, KelleyAnn Morris, and Adam Sheridan.

“To grow momentum as an association, we need the support of the ESPs,” said Kosar. “It is difficult to be a leader as an ESP in a local—there is classism centered on the ESP name. ESPs include people of color, the LGBTQ+ community and more. If you are an ESP and a member of another minority group, you have double the battle.”

“Teachers and ESPs can and should work together for the betterment of our union,” said Morris, who is a teacher but a fervent advocate for ESPs. “As a teacher, I work to show ESPs that the institutionalized barriers can be removed—that there shouldn’t be ‘ours’ and ‘theirs’—and that the classification divide shouldn’t stop them.”

ESPAN has been making its presence known across the state. It has dedicated itself to being visible at events, setting up a table, disseminating information and ESPAN ‘swag,’ and engaging members in one-on-one conversations to build support for their cause. Their cadre of captains from across the state are dedicated to promoting the mission of ESPAN.

How to get involved

Every county has at least one ESPAN captain. ESPs can contact their county president, who can connect them with their county captain.

For more information, visit njea.org/espan, email nj.espan@gmail.com, or visit the Facebook page “Educational Support Professional Advocacy Network.” Look for the yellow, black, and white logo.

Any NJEA member, regardless of membership category, can join ESPAN.

“If you join the Facebook page, you can get a free ESPAN T-shirt, which can be picked up at any NJEA event,” Kosar said. “There is a lot of information available through the network on how to make your union work for you.”

If you are interested in supporting its work, contact ESPAN today. 🏠

NJ's public schools lead the nation in WORLD LANGUAGE LEARNING

By Kathryn Coulibaly

It's well established that New Jersey's public schools are the best in the nation. But did you know that our public schools also lead the nation in the percentage of students learning a world language?

According to the American Councils for International Education in *The National K-12 Foreign Language Enrollment Survey Report*, New Jersey far outperforms all other states in the percentage of students enrolled in a world language class. More than half of all New Jersey K-12 students are studying a world language.

By far the most popular language is Spanish, with more than 300,000 students enrolled *en clase*. *La deuxième* is French, with more than 60,000 students.

But what is the value if a student can *sprechen Sie Deutsch*, *parler français* or *hablar español*, for example? The truth is, quite a lot. And the value can be measured socially, emotionally, creatively, economically and physically.

The social benefits of a multilingual person and culture

As E.M. Forster wrote in *Howard's End*, "Only connect!" What better way to connect with the other 8 billion people on earth, 75% of whom do not speak English, than to learn another language?

New Jersey is one of the most language-diverse states in the United States, which is historically a language-diverse nation. Speaking another language enables people to communicate with family members in other countries, assist new arrivals to our country, enjoy movies, music and TikToks created in another language, and impress friends and family members by ordering delicious food in interesting restaurants.

In addition, learning another language can facilitate travel, opening up new opportunities to see and experience the world.

Kathryn Coulibaly is the associate editor of the NJEA Review and provides content and support to njea.org. She can be reached at kcoulibaly@njea.org.



How multilingualism benefits a person emotionally

You don't need to leave home in order to change your perspective. Learning another language can help you see your own country through new eyes. It can expose you to different points of view by allowing you to consume media from different countries and experience their point of view, allow you to explore new neighborhoods and cuisines, and talk to people whose history and culture may be very different from your own.

Some studies have shown that speaking another language may make you more empathetic and open to a more "global mindset." Some people have even said that they felt like "a different person" when they spoke in another language.

Get creative when you leave your mother tongue behind

Anyone who has ever learned a language remembers the frustration of being unable to fall back on their tried-and-true words and phrases, and the breakthrough moment when they discovered new favorite words that unlocked thoughts and feelings they had never expressed before. There are some things that just cannot be expressed within the limitations of a single language. How fortunate we are that we are able to learn and discover "*le mot juste*."

Ten most common languages spoken at home in the U.S., apart from English

Spanish
Cantonese and Mandarin
Tagalog
Vietnamese
Arabic
French and Louisiana French
Korean
Russian
Haitian Creole
German

Source: Visualcapitalist.com

American Sign Language as a world language

American Sign Language (ASL) is federally recognized as a world language and has been linguistically proven as a language since 1964 at Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C.

Since 1997, more than 45 states have passed legislation allowing ASL to fulfill a world language requirement, for hearing as well as deaf students. At least 19 New Jersey public high schools currently teach ASL, and more are sure to follow. One of those is Ocean City High School where 2017-18 NJ State Teacher of the Year Amy Andersen teaches ASL in a program that now includes more than 200 students a year!

The economic benefits of multilingual people and states

The ability to communicate in more than one language is a significant competitive advantage. It is one of the top eight skills required of all occupations, regardless of sector or skill level, and the demand for bilingual professionals is rising.

Research indicates that the return on investment of speaking another language is 2:1; that is, for every dollar spent learning one of the most in-demand languages, such as Mandarin, French or Arabic, you can expect a \$2 return. A study in the United Kingdom estimated that, "if pupils in the U.K. could increase their learning of Arabic by about 10%, this would correspond to GDP growth of up to £12.6 billion over 30 years. A similar boost in Mandarin would see a £12.3bn gain to the economy, with French and Spanish producing £9.5bn and £9.7bn respectively," according to The Horizons Tracker.



Who's our competition?

Best in U.S. for world language education

New Jersey
Washington, D.C.
Wisconsin
Maryland
Vermont
Delaware
Connecticut
New Hampshire
New York
Massachusetts

When did "world" language replace "foreign" language?

By Ashley Warren, FLENJ Vice President of Membership

While the term "foreign" language is still used in older research and in some national discourse, many educators have moved away from the term in favor of world languages.

World language educators have made the shift because using the term "foreign" to refer to the languages that we teach can send an inaccurate and stigmatizing message. Most of the languages that we teach are not foreign, especially in New Jersey. With the exception of some classical languages, these world languages are alive, thriving and evolving all around us. These languages are spoken in our communities by our neighbors.

The NJDOE has made this change as well. See for yourself at bit.ly/njed-fw.

Our organization (FLENJ) will likely vote to amend our name later this year. While we'll keep the "F" in FLENJ, the F will not stand for "foreign" if the referendum passes.

“ The ability to communicate in more than one language is a significant competitive advantage.

Change (and improve) your brain

Learning another language actually increases your brain size! In addition, brain scans of bilingual individuals found denser grey matter within the brain's left hemisphere. More grey matter indicates a healthier brain. Studying another language also strengthens communications and processing signals in the brain, which helps it function at a higher level.

Some studies have also found that bilingual children performed better in short-term recall tasks than children who only spoke one language. In addition, your ability to focus your attention and your ability to plan and anticipate events are improved by learning another language.



Language study also trains your brain to focus on a single task while tuning out distractions.

Finally, there is some evidence that speaking at least two languages can delay age-related conditions such as Alzheimer's disease. While further research is still being carried out, it is clear that learning another language challenges all areas of the brain. The great news is that you are never too old to learn a second (or third, or other) language.

The liberation of making mistakes

Sticking to the same language all of one's life can lead people to a certain rigidity of thought, but learning another language necessitates making mistakes. There will be false conjugations, embarrassing turns of phrase, mistranslations that lead to hilarious misunderstandings. All of that can be very liberating—and humbling—and that is good for the ego.

There are so many reasons to learn another language, at any age. These findings hold true for native speakers of English and for students whose first language is not English. New Jersey is a national leader in so many areas, we must continue to lead the nation in our embrace of other languages and the rich cultural diversity that makes our state the best and most interesting in the nation! 🇺🇸

Connect with Foreign Language Educators of NJ (FLENJ)

The Foreign Language Educators of NJ (FLENJ) are one of NJEA's affiliate groups. They are the premier state organization dedicated to world language education, and they support the New Jersey community of world language professionals by advancing policy and practice.

At present, FLENJ is in the process of exploring an update to the organization's name, with the aim of modifying the "F" in FLENJ from "foreign" to a more inclusive term. More information to come as members and board members weigh in on the proposed change! Learn more at flenj.org.



Don't just **dream** of retirement, build it.



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online investing tools
or
Partner with a
financial professional
to help reach
your goals

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The NEA Retirement Program ("NEA Program") provides investment products for retirement plans sponsored by school districts and other employers of NEA members and individual retirement accounts established by NEA members. Security Distributors and certain of its affiliates (collectively, "Security Benefit") make these products available to plans and accounts pursuant to an agreement with NEA Member Benefits ("MB"), which markets the NEA Program. NEA and MB are not affiliated with Security Benefit. Neither NEA nor MB is a registered broker/dealer. All securities brokerage services are performed exclusively by the local sales representative's broker/dealer and not by NEA or MB. NEA Retirement Specialists, when making recommendations to an NEA member, offer only Security Benefit products. RT330223

2023



**2023 NJEA Jack Bertolino
Summer Leadership Conference**



Session I – Aug. 5-7, 2023 (Saturday—Monday)

Session II – Aug. 7-9, 2023 (Monday—Wednesday)



Hilton East Brunswick
Three Tower Center Boulevard
East Brunswick, NJ

The 2022 NJEA Jack Bertolino Summer Leadership Conference will offer a broad menu of workshops that equip members to become stronger association advocates. Most workshops offer 7.5 hours of training. A longer workshop providing additional hours of training is available for newer presidents and other local officers.

If you are an NJEA member, you are eligible and encouraged to attend. You will find topics among the 28 workshop offerings that will prepare you for your current or future roles, sharpen your leadership skills, and show you how your local can develop to its full-functioning capacity.

There are two sets of three-day programs:

- Workshop I – Aug. 6-8 (Saturday to Monday)
- Workshop II – Aug. 8-10 (Monday to Wednesday)

Not all of the 28 workshops are offered in each workshop period. The workshop descriptions provided on the following pages indicate when any given program is scheduled. To accommodate educational support professional members (ESP) who may wish to limit use of vacation or personal time, Workshop Number 20 runs from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon.

For all other workshops, registration begins on Day One at 1 p.m. The first program, a “mini-course,” begins at 4:15 p.m. Day Three ends with a brunch, which is served at 10:30 a.m. following the final workshop session.

This year’s summer leadership conference will take place at Hilton East Brunswick. The conference is dedicated to developing association advocate representatives. Accordingly, no professional development credit is given for attendance in any seminar.

How do I register?

If you are an NJEA member, you are eligible and encouraged to attend this summer leadership conference offering 28 advocacy workshops. You will find topics that will prepare you for your current or future roles, sharpen your leadership skills and show you how your local can develop to its full-functioning capacity.

The purpose of this article is to alert members to this training opportunity and describe the 28 workshop programs available this year, but to register you need to talk to your local and/or county association president.

Local and county association presidents will receive registration brochures with detailed information on the 2023 NJEA Jack Bertolino Summer Leadership Conference. You must contact your local president and consult that brochure to learn more about lodging, daily schedules, accommodations for members with special needs, and registration.

Registration forms can also be found at njea.org/slc.

Special needs

If you have a special physical or communication need or other disability that may require assistance or accommodations to permit or facilitate your attendance and participation, or if you have any questions or concerns about housing arrangements, please contact NJEA by June 1 at slc@njea.org or at 609-599-4594, ext. 2270.

Scholarships

Scholarships are available for first-time attendees. See your local and/or county president for more information.

Health and safety protocols

SLC is planned to be an in-person conference this year. However, all arrangements are subject to change in response to public health directives. Registrants will be notified of the health and safety protocols well before the conference so necessary precautions can be made to meet the requirements, if any.

Pricing and payment

Conference costs for all attendees include workshop materials, self-parking, organized meals and coffee breaks, entertainment, taxes, and service fees. Pricing for members staying overnight includes hotel accommodations and taxes.

The pricing is as follows:

- Commuter – \$275 per session
- Double Occupancy – \$325 per session
- Single Occupancy – \$450 per session

Since an additional training occurs in October for Workshop No. 1—Now That I’m President, What Do I Do?—the costs are higher for it. Pricing for Workshop No. 1 is Commuter – \$400; Double Occupancy – \$500; Single Occupancy – \$675.

Checks must be made payable to “NJEA/SLC” and returned with registration material to: NJEA Summer Leadership Conference
c/o WSFS Bank

PO Box 13661
Philadelphia, PA 19101-3661

Which workshop(s) should I take?

NJEA offers many advocacy conferences with a large array of workshops. Selecting which to take can be a daunting task. Whether you are currently serving in a leadership position or you have aspirations to become involved in some capacity within your local association, there are trainings that can help develop and hone your skills. To guide you, positions within the association are listed on the next page, followed by workshops that would be beneficial to you.

You will discover that being an officer is not the only position within your association, and there are opportunities to get involved in other ways. Additionally, we have included a track for those exploring future leadership. Please note that not all of these workshops are offered at the Summer Leadership Conference and may be offered at other conferences throughout the year. These courses are not listed in any particular order and are not mandatory to serve in any position. Not all of the workshops offered at the Summer Leadership Conference are listed on the next page, so please review all workshop listings before making your selection.

PRESIDENT

Now That I'm President,
What Do I Do?..... 1
Vital Skills for Local Leaders 2
Basic Collective Bargaining 11
Advanced Collective Bargaining 12
Basic Salary Guides 13
Advanced Salary Guides 14
Bargaining Health Benefits *
Legal Issues Affecting
School Employees..... 8
PERC Law..... 9
Advocating for Women's Rights
in the Workplace..... 21
Basic Grievance Processing..... 6
Advanced Grievance Processing 7
Successful Organizing 101 *
Leadership Development 101 – A
Beginner's Guide for Association
Leaders..... 3
Engaging All Members *
How to Be a Powerful
Public Speaker 27
Organizing Around Evaluation..... 23

VICE PRESIDENT

Basic Collective Bargaining 11
Basic Grievance Processing..... 6
Legal Issues Affecting
School Employees..... 8
PERC Law..... 9
Managing Conflict Effectively 16
Leadership Development 101 – A
Beginner's Guide for Association
Leaders..... 3
Organizing Around Evaluation..... 23
How to Be a Powerful
Public Speaker 27
Successful Organizing 101 *

TREASURER

Basic Treasurer's Training..... 4
Advanced Treasurer's Training..... 5
Membership Chair Training..... 19

ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE (AR)

AR – Key to a Strong Organization10
Managing Conflict Effectively 16
Basic Grievance Processing..... 6
Legal Issues Affecting
School Employees..... 8
Basic Collective Bargaining 11
Organizing Around Evaluation..... 23
Successful Organizing 101 *
Leadership Development 101 – A
Beginner's Guide for Association
Leaders..... 3
Advocating for Women's Rights
in the Workplace..... 21

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Membership Chair Training..... 19
Effective Membership
Conversations *
Moneywise Members..... 28
Successful Organizing 101 *

NEGOTIATIONS TEAM

Basic Collective Bargaining 11
Basic Salary Guides 13
Using Excel in Bargaining *
Bargaining Health Benefits *
Advanced Collective Bargaining 12
Advanced Salary Guides..... 14
Your Job, Your Benefits, Your Future..... *

GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE

Basic Grievance Processing..... 6
Legal Issues Affecting
School Employees..... 8
PERC Law..... 9
Advanced Legal Issues *
Advanced Grievance Processing 7
Managing Conflict Effectively 16

ESP

AR – Key to a Strong Organization10
Engaging All Members *
Basic Collective Bargaining 11
Basic Grievance Processing..... 6
Successful Organizing 101 *
Advocating for Women's Rights
in the Workplace..... 21
ESP: You Are Essential, You Matter!
20
Leadership Development 101 – A
Beginner's Guide for Association
Leaders..... 3
Legal Issues Affecting
School Employees..... 8
Advocacy Boot Camp *
How to Be a Powerful
Public Speaker 27

EXPLORING LEADERSHIP

Managing Conflict Effectively 16
Understanding Your Union: Govern-
ance Fundamentals with an Equity
Lens 17
Engaging All Members *
Successful Organizing 101 *
Leadership Development 101 – A
Beginner's Guide for Association
Leaders..... 3
How to Be a Powerful
Public Speaker 27
Advocacy Boot Camp *

EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Organizing Around Evaluation..... 23
Evaluation and the Association: Ensuring
Advocacy for Professional Growth *
Managing Conflict Effectively 16

LEGISLATIVE ACTION TEAM (LAT)

Effective Political Advocacy Through
Your LAT *
Unleashing the Potential Political
Power of Your Local Association.... *
Calling All Policy Wonks! 22

*Workshops not offered at 2023 SLC; please check future NJEA conferences.

Workshops

1. Now That I'm President, What Do I Do? (offered Sessions I & II)

PART 2 – 10/6-10/7 – 1-½ Day Workshop

For: Newly elected presidents

The job of an effective local president is the most challenging you'll ever face in your association. This workshop is designed to help newly elected presidents identify those challenges, develop strategies to deal with them, and build a strong, effective association. We will discuss advocacy topics so you leave empowered and with all the information you need to lead your association.

This training begins prior to the start of the conference at 1:15 p.m. Participants should plan to arrive by 12:45 p.m.

** Since an additional training occurs in October, the costs are higher for this workshop.*

Commuter: \$400

Double Occupancy: \$500

Single Occupancy: \$675

2. Vital Skills for Local Leaders (offered Sessions I & II)



For: Local association presidents and leaders

This workshop is redesigned to include not only presidents but members of your executive committee, as well. As local leaders one of the most vital roles you play is that of organizer. In this workshop you will learn skills from the presenters as well as from each other that will enhance your organizing skills to make your association not only survive but thrive! With the lens focused on membership, advocacy, and communication, you will work to create an organizing plan to implement in your association.

3. Leadership Development 101 – A Beginner's Guide for Association Leaders (offered Session II only)

For: All members

Learn the ABCs of being a local treasurer. Understand the fiduciary responsibilities of this important association role. Learn about building a budget and fiscal issues, implementing time management tools, taking the fear out of treasury audits and payroll, and laying the foundation for a computerized treasury. Lastly, understand the benefits of the Local Association Financial Assistance Program (LAFAP) form and learn how to complete a LAFAP through our online system.

4. Basic Treasurer's Training (offered Sessions I & II)

For: Local treasurers

In this workshop, you will learn the ABCs of being a local treasurer, including the fiduciary responsibilities of this important association role. We will cover building a budget and fiscal issues, implementing time management tools, taking the fear out of treasury audits and payroll, and laying the foundation for a computerized treasury. Lastly, we will go over the benefits of the Local Association Financial Assistance Program (LAFAP) form and learn how to complete a LAFAP through our online system.

5. Advanced Treasurer's Training (offered Session II only)

Prerequisite: Treasurers who have completed Basic Treasurer's Training

This course is designed for the experienced treasurer interested in using Quicken® to maintain the association's books and conform to Local Association Financial Assistance Program (LAFAP) reporting requirements.

Enrollment limited to 18 participants (one per local). Computers will be provided.

6. Basic Grievance Processing
(offered Sessions I & II)

For: Any member who is new to grievance processing as either an association representative (AR) or as a grievance committee representative

This workshop will provide an introduction to the basic vocabulary, essential tools, complete process, and changing laws of grievance work from the local association level through court appeals. Problem-solving ideas and strategies will be reviewed through case studies illustrating specific solutions to real problems.

Participants need to bring a copy of their collective bargaining agreement.

7. Advanced Grievance Processing
(offered Sessions I & II)

Prerequisite: Basic Grievance Processing or experience in processing grievances

Learn the skills needed for the local association to present grievances effectively at the board of education level—and learn why such presentations are necessary. Case studies and role playing will be utilized in group activities in order for participants to present a grievance to a board of education. Participants will be instructed in the following concepts prior to preparing their cases: past practice, clear versus ambiguous contract language, just-cause standards, management rights, maintenance of benefits, and duty of fair representation.

8. Legal Issues Affecting School Employees
(offered Sessions I & II)

For: All members

This workshop is an in-depth review of pertinent provisions of school and labor laws and administrative and legal decisions affecting members. We will examine the impact of school and labor laws on employment, analyze techniques for proper forum selection for dealing with disputes (i.e., role of PERC, the commissioner of education, courts, and agencies), review decisional law and legislative enactments, recognize statute applications/interpretations through case-by-case determination, and examine, analyze, and review association roles.

9. PERC Law
(offered Sessions I & II)

For: Negotiators, grievance committee representatives, and other association leaders

To assist in negotiations and representation, this workshop will focus on unfair labor practices and court cases outlining negotiability/arbitrability disputes including discipline, transfers, extracurricular assignments, and duty of fair representation. What constitutes past practice, just cause, and relief from unilateral changes in working conditions will be explored in depth.

10. AR – Key to a Strong Organization
(offered Sessions I & II)

For: Association representatives; open to all members

Learn the fundamentals and develop skills to become an association advocate. This program concentrates on contract enforcement, basic school law, member benefits, membership promotion, emerging instructional issues, legislative action, and your state and national association.

11. Basic Collective Bargaining
(offered Sessions I & II)

For: New and inexperienced negotiators

Master the essential phases of bargaining with particular emphasis on the role of laws in the negotiations process; organization of and preparation for negotiations; negotiations tactics and techniques; the use of mathematics in negotiations; the 2010 bargaining law; impasse resolution including mediation, fact-finding, and superconciliation; job actions and communication; and ratification.

12. Advanced Collective Bargaining (offered Sessions I & II)

For: Experienced negotiators who have completed Basic Collective Bargaining or members who have actively participated in the bargaining process as a member of a team

Advanced Collective Bargaining workshop topics include hot topics at the table, how to get to where we want to go, salary guides (alternative methods of distribution), what to do when the going gets tough, legislation affecting bargaining, and bargaining health benefits.

13. Basic Salary Guides (offered Session I only)

For: New local negotiators preparing for successful salary negotiations

Methods of costing, analyzing, and understanding salary guides will be presented. Successful salary negotiation techniques such as developing comparisons, member input, district's ability to pay, planning salary guide workshops, and planning a successful ratification will be emphasized. Challenges facing ESP and inclusive local associations will be stressed. We will discuss current issues of importance and present successful strategies.

Participants must bring their current scattergram and collective bargaining agreement, including all salary guides.

14. Advanced Salary Guides (offered Session II only)

Prerequisite: Basic Salary Guides

The workshop will give participants an understanding of how salary guides are constructed and calculated. Participants will construct a base-year cost-out and salary guides for three additional years on an Excel spreadsheet. Knowledge of how a spreadsheet functions is essential. This training will expand on issues raised in Basic Salary Guides, as well as explore additional concerns and techniques.

**Enrollment limited to 18 participants (one per local).
Computers will be provided.**

15. Health Benefits and Pensions for Your Local (offered Session I only)

For: All members

Become your local's go-to person for all your members' health benefits and pension questions. Learn the ins and outs of what you need to know when assisting your members in understanding health plan options, minimizing out-of-pocket health care costs, premium sharing contributions, preparing for retirement, understanding their pensions, and more.

16. Managing Conflict Effectively (offered Session II only)

For: New local negotiators preparing for successful salary negotiations

This workshop is designed to increase personal and association effectiveness in dealing with conflict in a positive fashion. Participants will learn a variety of techniques that enhance this process by developing new strategies for identifying and handling conflict. Discussion will focus on what causes conflict and how better communication can help prevent or resolve conflict.

17. Understanding Your Union: Governance Fundamentals with an Equity Lens (offered Session I only)



For: All members

Knowledge is power. Understanding the organizational structure of our local, state, and national affiliates help to empower both new and seasoned union members. In this training, participants will unpack their understanding of the fundamentals including knowing your constitution and bylaws, and equity-centered policies.

18. Honest Conversations Around Undoing Racism
(offered Sessions I & II)



For: All members

Participants will engage in honest conversations around race and racism and the role of educators in understanding and undoing these systems of oppression. Conversations will be based on topics broached in the interviews of Ta-Nehisi Coates and Bryan Stevenson. Finally, there will be an introduction/review of anti-racist principles that we hope will guide participants in their work and journey to becoming anti-racist educators.

19. Membership Chair Training
(offered Sessions I & II)

For: All membership chairs: novice and experienced

During this course, we will examine the calendar of yearly responsibilities, as well as best practices and new techniques to help you meet those requirements. The course will be broken into four parts that will include redesigning your new employee orientation, how to make the membership ask, authentic engagement and follow-up, and member retention.

20. Educational Support Professionals (ESP): You Are Essential, You Matter!
(offered Session I only*)



For: ESP members

Join fellow ESP members and experts on ESP issues in this lively workshop where you'll gain the tools necessary to build your career and safeguard your interests. Just as you play an essential role in your school, your contribution to this workshop will ensure its success. Don't miss out!

**This workshop has a special schedule. Registration is at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, Aug. 4 and the workshop concludes with lunch on Sunday, Aug. 6.*

21. Advocating for Women's Rights in the Workplace
(offered Session II only)



For: All members

Participants will explore issues that impact women in the workplace. Topics will include having a "leave chair" to guide members when planning leaves of absence; educator rights around infertility, adoption, building a family, and breastfeeding/pumping at work; the financial issues that arise around building a family; and more. This workshop is being offered in collaboration with the NJEA Women in Education Committee.

22. Calling All Policy Wonks!
(offered Session II only)

For: All members

Are education issues and education policy on your mind? Do you consider yourself a wonk? Learn about the policy-making process and hear from experts on current issues facing public education. Hear from lobbyists and policymakers who work on education policy and join the discussion on why we need to be part of the organizing and lobbying process in order to achieve good outcomes.

23. Organizing Around Evaluation
(offered Session II only)

For: All members

After nearly a decade under TEACHNJ and AchieveNJ, evaluation continues to present challenges for individual members and local associations. This session will provide an overview of the evaluation statute and associated regulations, and will engage participants in developing organizing strategies that promote fair, effective, and transparent evaluation practices that reinforce strong instruction.

**24. Teacher Leadership:
Organizing and Advocating
for Instructional Practice**
(offered Session I only)



For: All members

Teacher leadership is the process by which teachers as individuals or collectively influence their colleagues, administrators, and school districts on issues of teaching and learning. This workshop will explore the Teacher Leader Model Standards, which have been adopted by the state of New Jersey as the basis of the teacher leader endorsement. Ways in which members can organize to influence professional practice with their colleagues, in their schools, and in their school districts will also be explored.

**25. Advocating and Organizing
Around School Culture:
Strategic Thinking and Planning**
(offered Session II only)



For: All members

Schools continue to reacclimate to in-person learning, addressing challenges that pre-existed the pandemic as well as challenges that have emerged or been exacerbated by the last few years. This workshop will focus on ways that local associations can organize and advocate around various issues related to school culture. We will guide participants on convening relevant stakeholders, diagnosing challenges, and accessing, understanding, and utilizing relevant school and district data in order to develop action plans.

**26. Digital Communication Tools with
NJEASites**
(offered Session I only)

**For: Association editors and webmasters
with an NJEASites website in the newest
Ocean theme**

This session will cover how to customize your website and build pages using Page Builder with custom NJEA Modules. Other topics covered include creating posts, events, galleries and forms, sending email with Sedy Creator, text messaging tools, and other digital communications resources.

**Enrollment limited to 18 participants (one per local).
Computers will be provided.**

27. How to Be a Powerful Public Speaker
(offered Session I only)

For: All members

Learn how to look and sound your best when presenting to a group. Participants review techniques for preparing and delivering a speech. Each participant will be videotaped for a self and group feedback.

Enrollment limited to 18 participants (one per local).

28. Moneywise Members
(offered Session II only)

**For: Member Benefits coordinators and all
members**

This training will encompass all programs and services offered through NJEA Member Benefits. Attendees will learn more about the full referral service of AID-NJEA and important financial matters including life insurance, income protection, supplemental retirement income, and member discounts on everyday items and services.



How's your voice today?

By Dorothy Wigmore

It can start with a “frog” in the throat or laryngitis. It can end a career as a teacher.

Whether it's called “teacher's voice,” hoarseness (dysphonia), voice disorder, voice fatigue or vocal harm, the condition is quite common among teachers and others working with students. Yet, it's unlikely to be on a list of job-related hazards.

Vocal music teachers are most likely to suffer, followed by others with activities that really depend on the voice, such as drama and performing arts. Those with the smallest classes face fewer problems.

That's from a 2004 study. Teachers' voice problems have been studied internationally for at least 35 years. In 1987, the British Voice Care Project started workshops for teachers. Later, the organization found that teachers were eight times more likely to have voice-related health conditions than other those in other jobs. Half of newly qualified teachers experienced voice loss in their first year at work in a Greenwich University study.

U.S. studies in the 1990s showed “teacher's voice” interferes with job satisfaction, performance and attendance. In 2010, Johns Hopkins School of Medicine said up to 47% of American teachers had “some degree of voice abnormality on any given day,” 20% reported missing work thanks to voice problems, and the condition forced some to leave the profession. The American Academy

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

of Otolaryngologists says more than half of all teachers develop a voice disorder at some point.

It's also expensive. A 2001 Harvard University study conservatively estimated therapy, surgery and substitute teachers alone cost \$2 billion just in the U.S.; the study excluded workers' compensation, job loss and other results. A 2016 study of 14,256 Miami teachers found absenteeism costs from voice disorders were about \$1 million.

Students also have an interest. Studies show their learning and academic performance is negatively affected by teachers' voice problems.

What are the symptoms?

Your voice depends on two vocal cords—folds of tissue inside the larynx (voice box) sitting atop the windpipe (trachea). They vibrate as air passes over them, producing sounds.

An overworked voice sounds different. It can be hoarse or strained, tire easily, break occasionally. It's harder to talk. Pitch can become lower, the singing range reduced and overall voice quality lessens. The throat can be sore. There may be polyps or nodules on the vocal cords themselves.

What's causing these problems?

Like other tissues, our vocal cords need rest.

Yet teachers talk for a full work day. They also often have to raise their voice, thanks to room acoustics (often overlooked), room or class size, or projection distance. It's also common for noises from inside or outside the classroom (e.g., ventilation, class bells, traffic) to cause “speech interference.”

“ Teachers are eight times more likely to have voice-related health conditions than those in other jobs.

There are other hazards too. Low humidity increases throat irritation and infection risk. Changing room temperatures, upper respiratory infections and airborne hazards—like mold and dust—also contribute, along with muscle tension in and around the larynx. A 2021 Finnish study linked poor school air quality to teachers’ “voice disorders.”

How can vocal harm be prevented?

Like any health and safety hazard, prevention is possible. Health and safety committees should have this topic on their to-do list. Start with conversations or surveys of

members, followed by acoustic surveys as needed (with outside help). These surveys go beyond measuring noise levels to include how sounds travel in a particular space. Consider voice-related harm in air quality discussions. Encourage and support anyone with “teacher’s voice” to tell the committee and employer and make a workers’ compensation claim.

Effective solutions eliminate the hazard. They require looking at classroom size, design and layout. For example, some materials—on walls, ceilings, furniture, floors — absorb sound better than others, some reflect it more. Ceiling acoustical materials can help, especially with high ceilings. Movable screens and furniture can reduce sound reflections. Ventilation equipment noise can be reduced with special duct inserts, checking for and fixing vibration sources and installing quieter fans. Classroom layout matters. Long lines of desks make it hard to project; circular arrangements make it easier.

For new construction or renovations, there are national standards and guidelines about classroom acoustics and ventilation, another reason for committees to be involved in planning.

Portable microphone-amplifier devices let users be heard without raising their voice. Stick to wired ones that can be used anywhere, not just in a room with speakers.

Those with a voice problem need assessments and/or treatment from health care professionals (e.g., medical specialists, speech-language pathologists). Committees and local associations should support easy access.

While “vocal hygiene” is less effective than other methods, individuals still can:

- Rest their voice whenever possible (e.g., between classes).
- Use gestures to illustrate and emphasise points.
- In physical education, give instructions by gathering students together and avoid screaming/shouting (use gestures).
- Drink water regularly during the day (avoid caffeine).
- Move around the room to talk to students.
- Increase/decrease/vary intonation, voice intensity, with pauses.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association also recommends these strategies:

- Get students' attention before delivering information.
- Pay attention to visual communication for complex information.
- Review key points.
- Help students learn about and practice active listening.
- Involve students in managing noise levels. 📢

Resources

American Academy of Otolaryngology

“Clinical practice guideline: hoarseness (dysphonia) update” (and patient handouts):
bit.ly/3kPqMyH

Acoustical Society of America

Classroom acoustics booklets
bit.ly/41L2ir3

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Classroom acoustics (with links to U.S. standards)
bit.ly/3EYba2A

British Voice Association

Voice care articles
bit.ly/3SStolq

Hazards magazine

Voice lessons
bit.ly/3ITX2sf

Institute of Acoustics and Association of Noise Consultants

Acoustic design of schools, 2015
bit.ly/3L2g6ax

NJEA

“Noise harms a lot more than our ears”
njea.org/noise-harms-a-lot-more-than-our-ears

Science and Literacy

The 9 best voice amplifiers for teachers to be heard in any size classroom and outdoors [2023 Edition]
bit.ly/3muAze3

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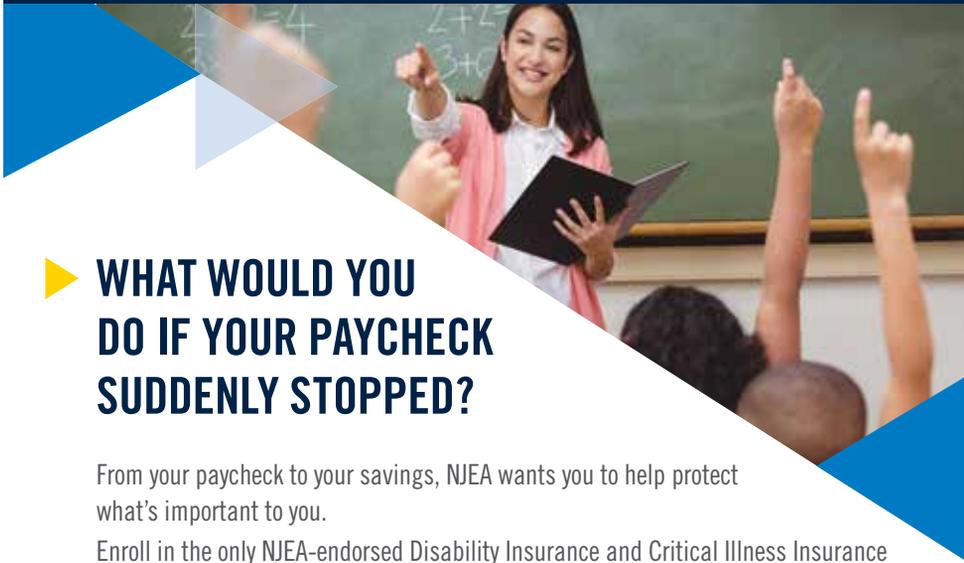
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DIVERSITY AS A TEACHER

BY JEANNIE PINCUS

Diversity in the classroom is about embracing, acknowledging and welcoming all differences. This also includes diversity among teachers, support staff members and administrators. Having a diverse educator workforce is essential to positive outcomes for the diverse student populations in our schools.

Growing up Hispanic/Latin in a rural area where the majority of the area population was white had a tremendous impact on my decision to pursue a career in education. As a young Hispanic/Latin student, I did not have support from my teachers to pursue a career, let alone college.

I didn't even have familiar faces that looked like mine. Anyone who looked like me worked in custodial or kitchen positions. I felt like I didn't belong because I didn't see any teachers who understood my cultural background. I was uncomfortable speaking in class when teachers called on me for fear of being laughed at because I had an accent.

Because of my language barriers, I was placed in ESL to learn English. I was also forced to go into speech therapy to get rid of my accent, and my parents stopped speaking Spanish to me because they wanted me to become more "Americanized." As I was completing high school, I noticed that minority students such as myself did not receive proper guidance for college preparation. We were left to figure out our futures alone.

After a career as a paraprofessional in Egg Harbor Township School District, Jeannie Pincus is now an elementary education major focusing on disability studies and holistic health at Stockton University. She is the NJEA Preservice Diversity and Justice co-chair.

“ Our students are looking for a sense of belonging.

Once I became an adult, it was imperative to me that I become an educator so students could see a familiar face in me. My Hispanic heritage is one of the representations our schools need. A multicultural environment should include teachers of diverse backgrounds. Our educational system should reflect our society, which is rich with a variety of cultures.

While we have more diversity among teachers in some urban areas, we need these talented teachers in every district. A diverse educator force helps students everywhere and should not be limited to specific school districts.

Minority teachers can be significant role models for our students. Students who identify with their teachers tend to perform better academically. Another positive impact minority teachers bring to our schools is they can help reduce discipline disparities because with our common backgrounds, we are able to relate to our students with fewer biases.

The diversity gap is a challenge our school system. We need to find ways to get more minority teachers in our schools. Our students are looking for a sense of belonging, so let's show our students they can see themselves in their teachers. 🌱



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SCHOOL LIBRARIES ARE FOR EVERY PERSON IN EVERY SCHOOL

By Kate Okeson and Amy Moran, Ph.D., with Martha Hickson, MLIS



Martha Hickson, MLIS, is a librarian at North Hunterdon High School in Annandale.

MLIS, librarian at North Hunterdon High School in Annandale, a few questions about the state of school libraries. Her responses, edited for length, are below. The full article with complete responses and links can be found in the digital version of this interview at njea.org/rainbowconnection and through the QR code found on this page.

RC: How do libraries/media centers provide safe spaces for LGBTQIA+ students?

MH: A commitment to safe spaces is built into the standards of the American Association of School Librarians, requiring school libraries to demonstrate “understanding of and commitment to inclusiveness and respect for diversity in the learning community.” Libraries maintain collections and display resources that represent students’ lives so that every kid can see that their story matters. Whenever I create a display in our library, I make sure that the books and their covers look just like the diverse kids who walk through the doors. When we show that we value the stories, we show that we value the people.

April is School Library Month. Libraries and media centers are essential resources—places to connect and find refuge. Today, they are under attack for showing the whole of humanity as explored and recorded in literature and other texts. LGBTQIA+ topics, those that affirm and explore gender and sexual identity, remain some of the most challenged texts.

“Rainbow Connection” asked Martha Hickson,

RC: How can teachers better utilize school libraries to support the LGBTQ+ curriculum inclusion mandate in their classrooms?

MH: School librarians are every teacher’s research and resource partner. We don’t know everything, but we sure know how to find everything. When teachers are looking for content to support any area of the curriculum—including LGBTQ+ inclusion—a meeting with the school librarian should be their first stop. We know the materials in our library collections and the coverage in our databases, so we can quickly point you to high-quality, student-friendly resources for use in your instruction. Once your librarian knows that you’re following a topic, we’ll continue looking for related resources as we make future purchases for the library.

RC: What trends are you noticing in libraries/media centers around our nation?

MH: In terms of library materials, I feel that we truly are living in a golden age of literature for all children and young adults. Because of movements like “We Need Diverse Books,” (diversebooks.org) publishers are issuing the works of diverse authors and authentic voices so that libraries can be more responsive than ever to the needs of readers.

When I first started working as a high school librarian 18 years ago, we had only a handful of LGBTQ+ titles in our collection. Over the years, there’s been an explosion of fiction and nonfiction centering the LGBTQ+ experience. As a result, our collections are now much more robust,



For Rainbow Connection’s full interview with Martha Hickson, and for other resources, follow this Q-R Code.

which is great for LGBTQ+ kids and families, and their peers, too.

However, from Jan. 1 to Aug. 31, 2022, the American Library Association documented attempts to ban or restrict more than 1,651 books, which broke the 2021 record. More than 80% of the books targeted over the last two years address themes related to the LGBTQ+ community or people of color, with the books being falsely labeled as pornographic or promoting CRT.

These book-banning attempts are organized by far-right extremist groups who sometimes launch personal attacks on librarians, accuse us of being pornographers and sex offenders, or even propose criminal penalties. This climate drives many librarians to retire early or leave the profession altogether.

RC: At "Rainbow Connection," we encourage school communities to band together in support of the vital, life-affirming work our school librarians do! 🏡

Think ahead for graduation ceremonies

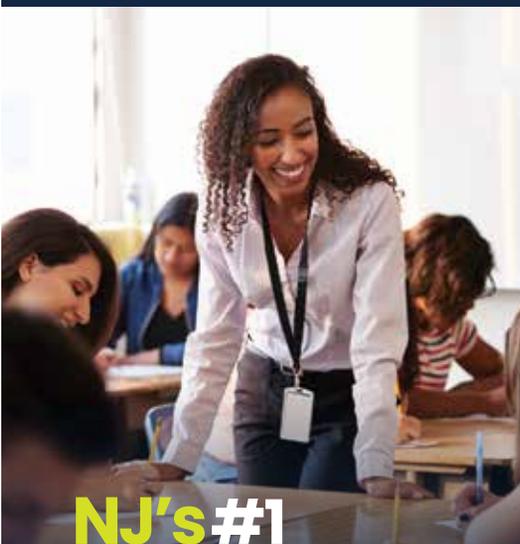
Graduation and other commencement exercises are right around the corner. What does your district or building practice with regard to student organization, procession, and gowns or robes? Are these decided and implemented according to gender? In recent years, a growing majority of schools have moved to single-color gowns for all students, reducing pressure and anxiety and minimizing dilemmas faced by transgender and nonbinary students.

Questions for potential colleagues

Does your district consider inclusive classroom practices when interviewing potential employees? It's time to expect educators and educational leaders to demonstrate knowledge of and the capability to implement LGBTQIA+ inclusive curricula and all representative curricula. Urge your building and district leaders to ask candidates how they've created inclusive classrooms and lead a discussion that asks a candidate to talk about building capacity around inclusive education at all levels—personal practice, team and department work, and districtwide.

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SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

Workshops and conferences

highlights

School social workers, civic competence,
and environmental education

VIRTUAL NJASSW SPRING CONFERENCE IS MAY 16

The New Jersey Association of School Social Workers (NJASSW) provides opportunities for professional growth and supports high standards for school social work practice.

The theme of the 2023 NJASSW Spring Conference is School Social Workers: Bringing Hope and Understanding to Students and Community. It will be held virtually on May 16 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

Attendees will earn five professional development hours/ five clinical CEUs.

Connie Palmer, LCSW, will deliver the keynote address, titled, "How are you doing?" Workshop titles include Behavioral Threat Assessment, Cultivating Positive Parent Partnerships, and Supporting Students Coping with Loss. The program will be held virtually on a Zoom platform.

Registration and fee

NJASSW Member – \$45

Nonmember – \$55

Student/Retiree – \$30

Group Rate – \$35/per person*

*Groups of five or more from the same school district are eligible. Contact NJASSW at davisma@aol.com for group registration instructions.

To register and for more information, including the conference schedule, visit njassw.org.

26TH ANNUAL BARNEGAT BAY ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATORS ROUNDTABLE

Note: An incorrect fee was listed for this event in the March Review. The fee is \$35.

The Ocean County Soil Conservation District invites you to its 26th Annual Barnegat Bay Environmental Educators Roundtable at the Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education. The roundtable takes place on Wednesday, April 19.

Classroom teachers, environmental educators and nature enthusiasts are invited to participate in this in-person, indoor/outdoor, professional development event that takes place during afterschool/evening hours.

Attendees can register for field trips or interactive workshops designed to spur a new appreciation of our soil, native woodlands, natural resources, plants, wildlife and local history of the Barnegat Bay watershed.

Roundtable highlights include a light dinner, field trips, workshops, free educational resources, door prizes and a special keynote program.

Location: Lighthouse Center for Natural Resource Education

Date/time: April 19; after school/evening hours (see registration link for a detailed schedule)

Registration/information: Visit OCSCD's Environmental Educators Roundtable at soildistrict.org/environmental-educators-roundtable for a complete description of programs and registration information. Call 609-991-1534 or email education@soildistrict.org for further details.

SUMMER INSTITUTE TO DEVELOP TEACHING STRATEGIES PROMOTING CIVIC COMPETENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY AMONG UPPER ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

A free five-day summer institute of professional development for upper elementary teachers (grades 3-5) in Title I schools will be held Sunday, July 16 through Friday, July 21 at the National Conference Center, East Windsor, N.J. A two-day follow-up workshop will take place in Philadelphia in the fall. The New Jersey Center for Civic Education and the Pennsylvania Council for the Social Studies are offering the institute.

Using the *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* materials, participating teachers will gain background knowledge and understanding about the American system of government, as well as resources and teaching strategies for promoting civic competence and responsibility among upper elementary students. The *We the People* student texts include critical thinking exercises, problem solving activities and cooperative learning techniques. The content may be integrated into a U.S. history, civics or English language classes.

Teachers will earn fifty-two hours of professional development as well as free classroom sets of *We the People* student textbooks. Teachers who participate in the 52 hours of professional development, provide a minimum of 40 hours of *We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* civics instruction in their classroom during the 2023-24 school year, and participate in a research survey (pre- and post-tests for teachers and students) will receive a \$500 stipend.

The application deadline is May 15, 2023. But don't wait! The program can only accommodate 25 teachers.

To apply, go to bit.ly/we-the-people-njpa.

For questions for more information, contact Arlene Gardner at arlenega@sas.rutgers.edu or 908-447-0497.

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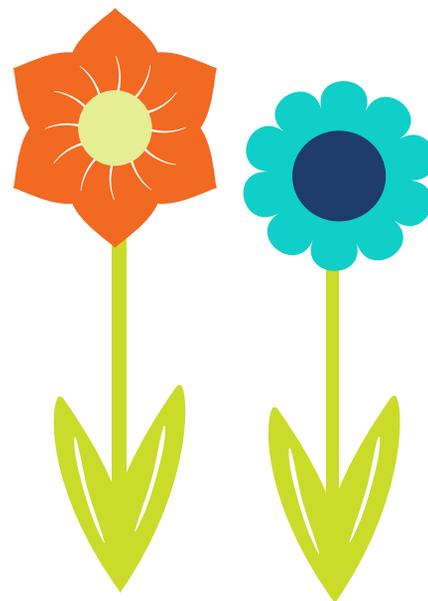
Go to memberbenefits.njea.org and select "Access Discounts" under the "Discounts" tab.

Use NEA Discount Marketplace powered by Rakuten to get the deepest discounts and earn cash back on more than 3,500 retailers, like:

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Go to neamb.com/marketplace. Sign up for a Rakuten account or link an existing one. Shop the "Home and Garden" category.

Questions? Contact NJEA Member Benefits at 609-599-4561, ext. 2222.



Visit our newly redesigned website at memberbenefits.njea.org for even more information, resources, and discounts.

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



FACEBOOK: Follow [@NJEAMemberBenefits](https://www.facebook.com/NJEAMemberBenefits) on Facebook for discounts and services that save you money.



KNOWING WHAT TO DO UPON THE PASSING OF A FAMILY MEMBER

The death of a loved one is a traumatic event. Dealing with your own feelings as well as those of the family, in addition to making all the necessary arrangements, can result in overlooked details and additional confusion.

It's helpful to plan ahead so that family members know what to do and are not left trying to figure things out in the midst of grieving.

Contacting the NJ Division of Pensions and Benefits

The New Jersey Division of Pensions and Benefits provides guidance to assist family members when a loved one passes who was vested in a New Jersey public pension. The following is excerpted New Jersey Division of Pensions and Benefits Fact Sheet No. 10 which can be downloaded at bit.ly/njpb-fs10.

The member's family or survivors should notify the Division of Pensions and Benefits at 609-292-7524 and provide the following information:

- The full name of the deceased person.
- The decedent's Social Security, pension membership, or retirement number.
- Date of death.
- The name, mailing address, and telephone number of the person handling the decedent's affairs.

Once a member's death is reported, the division reviews the member's account to determine what benefits, if any, are due. The division informs the named beneficiary or beneficiaries by letter of the benefits payable and sends the necessary claim forms.

The processing time for paying a claim depends upon when the Division of Pensions and Benefits receives the following items from the beneficiary:

- A certified death certificate; a photocopy is not acceptable.
- All claim forms, properly completed.
- Any uncashed pension checks sent to a deceased retiree (any monies due will be reissued to the beneficiaries or the estate).

Additional advice

In addition to notifying the New Jersey Division of Pensions and Benefits, NJREA and NJEA have created

some suggestions that are general and should be adapted to your situation through family conversations and conferences with legal and/or financial advisors.

- Locate the family's important papers.
- Request several copies of the death certificate (there may be a fee). You will probably find that those who request a death certificate require an original.
- If a spouse/member was actively employed, or on a leave of absence and had not filed an application for retirement, contact the board of education where the decedent had been employed. The board will process the Division of Pensions and Benefits paperwork for life insurance benefits and for the return of pension contributions.
- If a spouse/member applied for retirement and their death occurred prior to the date of retirement, contact the New Jersey Division of Pensions and Benefits at 609-292-7524. The division will contact the beneficiaries named in the application for retirement to either select the retired or active death benefit.
- If a deceased member was retired and covered by the School Employee Health Benefits Program (SEHBP), the surviving spouse/domestic partner should request a retired change of status application, if they wish to continue coverage under the SEHBP.
- If the deceased was enrolled in Medicare Part B, notify Social Security.
- If the deceased had an NEA Group Life Insurance plan or NEA Dues Tab Insurance, contact that office at 800-637-4636.
- If death was due to an accident, and/or covered under the NJEA-endorsed Disability Insurance Program, contact Prudential at 800-727-3414.
- If the spouse/member was ever in the military service, notify the Veterans' Administration. There may be death benefits.

This is certainly not exhaustive list. Families should consult with an attorney and/or tax professional.

Around the counties

For questions, call your county REA. For trip details, check your county newsletter.

ATLANTIC COUNTY REA

May 2: Spring meeting/luncheon at Greate Bay Country Club. Cost is \$32. To attend, contact Chic Brandt, 609-774-3452 or chic8852@aol.com.

BURLINGTON COUNTY REA

May 18: Spring meeting/luncheon at Marco's at Indian Springs Country Club in Marlton. Cost is \$25. To attend, call Donna R. O'Malley at 609-268-0838 by May 3.

CAMDEN COUNTY REA

May 4: Spring meeting/luncheon at Adelphia Restaurant in Deptford. Cost is \$30. To attend, call Barbara Haase at 856-627-3391 by April 20.

CAPE MAY COUNTY REA

May 11: Spring business meeting/luncheon at The Flanders in Ocean City at 11 a.m. Cost is \$32. To attend contact Chic Brandt at 609-774-3452 or chic8852@aol.com.

CUMBERLAND COUNTY REA

May 3: Spring meeting/luncheon at New Jersey Motorsports Park in Millville (GPS: 8000 Dividing Creek Rd.). Sarah Favinger, NJEA staff, will provide a pension update. Cost is \$30. To attend, call Irene Savicky at 856-863-8424 by April 14.

ESSEX COUNTY REA

May 17: Spring meeting/luncheon at Hanover Manor in East Hanover. Cost is \$38. To attend, call Andrea Boseman at 973-676-2368 by May 10.

GLOUCESTER COUNTY REA

May 9: Spring meeting/luncheon held at the Four Star Event Catering in Wenonah. Cost is \$30 with check payable to GCREA. To attend, call Candy Zachowski at 570-710-5514.

HUDSON COUNTY REA

May 3: Spring meeting/luncheon at La Reggie Restaurant in Secaucus. Cost is \$37. To attend, call Donna Middlebrooks at 973-610-7129 by April 20.

June 7: June celebration party at San Carlo Banquet and Caterer in Lyndhurst. Cost is \$37. To attend, call Donna Middlebrooks at 973-610-7129 by May 18.

HUNTERDON COUNTY REA

April 20: Spring meeting/luncheon at the Mt. View Chalet. Cost is \$30 and bring a donation for the food pantry. To attend, email Joyce Kucyn at kucyn143@comcast.net by April 10.

MERCER COUNTY REA

May 10: Spring luncheon at Mercer Oaks Golf Club. Cost is \$32. To attend, contact Iris Tonti at iristonti@msn.com or 609-915-3986.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY REA

June 8: End-of-year luncheon and scholarship awards ceremony at the Grand Marquis in Old Bridge. Cost is \$43. To attend, contact Susan Jaysnovitch at teachtheinternet@aol.com or 732-925-1606 by June 1.

MONMOUTH COUNTY REA

April 18: Spring meeting/luncheon at Jumping Brook Country Club in Neptune. Meeting will be a member benefits fair. Cost is \$35. RSVP to Lois Lyons at MCREAinformation@gmail.com by April 7.

June 13: June meeting/luncheon at Doolan's Shore Club in Spring Lake. Cost is \$35. Topic: philanthropic recipients. To attend, contact Lois Lyons at MCREAinformation@gmail.com by June 2.

MORRIS COUNTY REA

May 10: General membership meeting/luncheon at Birchwood Manor in Whippany. Cost is \$35 for members, \$53 guests. The luncheon includes a musical program. To attend, call John Beekman at 973-514-1080 by May 1.

June 7: Scholarship awards meeting and luncheon at Birchwood Manor in Whippany. Cost is \$35 for members, \$53 guests. The scholarship awards ceremony will take place. To attend, call John Beekman at 973-514-1080 by June 1.

June 10: General membership meeting at Madison Community House in Madison. Cost is \$35. Guest speaker is Debra DeRosa, a psychic/medium. To attend, call Cheryl Doltz at 973-818-1353 by June 9.

OCEAN COUNTY REA

May 11: May luncheon/meeting at Jack Baker's Lobster Shanty. Cost is \$28. To attend, call Barbara Miller at 732-854-2253 by May 1.

PASSAIC COUNTY REA

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

SALEM COUNTY REA

May 22: Spring luncheon at St. John's Episcopal Church in Salem. The guest speaker is Bill Hamilton discussing "The Wonders of DNA." Cost is \$17. To attend, call Rosemma Ward at 856-467-4795 by May 15.

SOMERSET COUNTY REA

May 3: Spring luncheon at Somerville Elks Lodge. Cost is \$25. To attend, call Kathy Kapp at 908-722-7715 by April 27.

UNION COUNTY REA

May 16: Spring membership meeting and luncheon held at Gran Centurions in Clark. Cost is \$30. To attend, call Pat Alt at 732-382-6261 by May 9.

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Questions? Contact:

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APRIL & beyond

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

APR 14-15	FRI & SAT Higher Education Conference	APR 22	SATURDAY Communications Tools Workshop	MAY 12-13	FRI & SAT Carol Watchler LGBTQIA+ Advocacy Conference
APR 15-16	SAT & SUN Higher Education Collective Bargaining Summit	APR 27	THURSDAY NJREA Spring Luncheon	MAY 19	FRIDAY Executive Committee
APR 22	SATURDAY Transform Conference	APR 28-29	FRI & SAT NJEA Early Career Conference	MAY 20	SATURDAY Delegate Assembly

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

Save the date! NJEA Radical Imagination Summit for Educators July 13, 2023

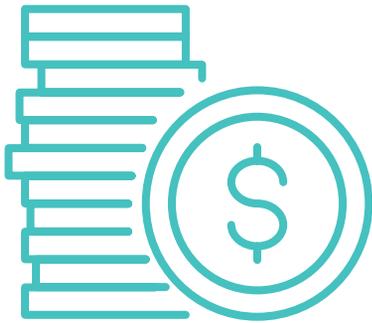
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GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED BUDGET HAS MUCH TO CELEBRATE



Gov. Phil Murphy unveiled a fiscal year 2024 budget on Feb. 28 that includes record funding for schools, a full pension payment, preschool expansion, support for student mental health and initial steps toward addressing the educator shortage crisis in New Jersey's public schools.

The proposed school funding increase of \$830 million brings the total increase under Murphy to more than 30% across six years of budgets. The additional \$110 million for preschool brings the state's total commitment to preschool to over \$1 billion. The full pension payment is the third consecutive one, something no other governor has done in over three decades.

New Jersey students are better off today and New Jersey will be stronger for years to come because of the investments that Murphy and the Legislature have made in the last five budgets and the increased investment contained in this budget.

Everyone benefits when schools are well-funded. The high quality of New Jersey's public schools—ranked the best in the nation—attracts employers to the state and makes New Jersey a great place to raise a family.

The struggle for full funding for every district

Not every school district is celebrating, though. Every budget season in New Jersey brings an unwelcome reminder of the damage former Gov. Chris Christie did by ignoring New Jersey's school funding formula while underfunding our public schools by billions of dollars. By ignoring the funding formula, Christie created a situation where most districts received far less than the formula called for while some received more than the formula allowed.

For the last six budgets, including the one just proposed, the state has increased overall state aid for schools and is working to get every district to the full state funding amount called for under the law.

“ **The full pension payment is the third consecutive one, something no other governor has done in over three decades.** ”

While that is good news for most districts, it has been a painful process for districts that had previously been receiving more than the funding formula called for. As a result of S-2, a law passed in July 2018 to resolve the disparities of the Christie era, these districts have seen annual decreases in state aid.

This is year six of a seven-year process that was designed to give affected districts the opportunity to replace lost state aid with local sources of funding, and it has been difficult every year. With state aid being reallocated according to the formula, those districts have been forced to either increase local funding, make painful cuts or enact disruptive district reconfigurations.

While NJEA supports getting every district to the full state funding it deserves under the law, we have consistently advocated for measures to protect districts that are seeing reductions under S-2. Those measures include additional money in the state budget, called stabilization aid, to help districts facing drastic cuts to staff or services. Given this year's surprisingly large funding loss to most districts burdened by S-2, we have advocated for immediate relief to provide districts the assurances they need now while the state finalizes its budget in June.

NJEA has also called for greater flexibility in the property tax cap and has called on local boards of education in districts affected by S-2 to budget to the full amount allowed each year, especially during this readjustment period.

While there is much still to be done, particularly for the districts affected by S-2 and to address public school staff shortages statewide, New Jersey's educators, their students, and the schools in which they work and learn together are better off, thanks to a governor who is committed to keeping our schools the best in the nation.

TOREY CHATMAN
Class of 2013

B.A. in Psychology

Ed.D. Education Leadership
Specialization: Higher Education

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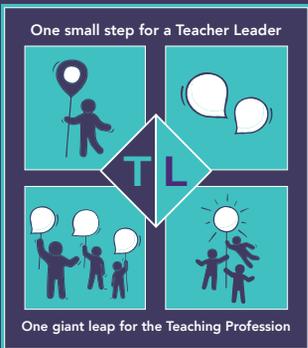




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