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LEFT: Ridgefield Park EA members showed up in force at the April 5 meeting of the Ridgefield Park Board of Education to protest a budget proposal that cuts staff at all grade levels and privatizes instructional assistants. Here, RPEA member Bernadette Calocino, a high school health and physical education teacher, describes how the cuts will cause harm to the district.

ABOVE: From foreground, NJEA members Dan Epstein, Patty Bland, and Brian Adams prepare to observe the screening of gubernatorial candidate Kim Guadagno on March 20 for a possible endorsement in the Republican primary. For the outcome of that screening, see Page 12.

BELOW (LEFT): Local presidents meet to discuss critical issues of common concern during the Presidents' Roundtable at Winter Leadership Central on March 24-25.

BELOW (RIGHT): Thomas Whitaker, a teacher at Columbia High School in Maplewood, speaks during EdCamp Revolution, which was held on April 1 at his high school. NEA provided national coverage of the event. Read more at bit.ly/edcamprev.





Chrissy Romano-Arrabito of Hackensack EA joins fellow educators and students for EdCamp Revolution at Columbia High School. *Rethinking Schools* encourages the kinds of practices found at EdCamp. Read about the publication on Page 19.

FEATURES



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Rethinking Schools is a publication by and for teachers that elevates the voice of educators. Learn how it started, how its influence has grown, and how you can subscribe.

BY STAN KARP



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Educators can use children's literature to help students understand scientific concepts and processes. Find out about some exemplary selections from an elementary school teacher and an assistant professor.

BY SARAH ANDERSON AND
SUSAN DOUGHERTY



30 INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Has your school hosted an international exchange student? Have you ever considered being a host family? What about sending your own child overseas for a school year or a semester? Learn about AFS-USA and the programs it offers.

BY HEATHER MCBRIDE



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There were too many photos to fit into the April edition of the NJEA Review. See photos from more schools here.

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ON THE COVER:

Sarah Anderson's third-grade class at Campbell Elementary School in Metuchen, enjoys a reading of Why is My Dog Bigger Than Your Dog?

PHOTO BY
PATRICK RUMAKER

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Editorial Director Steven Baker
Editor Patrick Rumaker
Associate Editor Kathryn Coulibaly
Art Director Jennifer C. Marsh
Graphic Designer Tara Esposito
Advertising Liz Murphy

EDITORIAL & PUBLISHING OFFICES

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NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

REVIEW



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Change is constant—and so is the dedication of NJEA members to their students

Education is always about change. School years begin, school years end; new standards are adopted, old ways are adapted. Through it all, one thing is constant: the commitment of our members to engage and grow in order to provide every child with an outstanding public education.

This issue of the *Review* contains even more resources to help you meet the challenges—and changes—that you confront every day. In “Getting Ready for the Next Generation Science Standards” on Page 24, you’ll learn more about the standards and get valuable recommendations for children’s books—both fiction and nonfiction—to help you meet them.

In “Rethinking Schools: 30 Years of Teacher Activism” on Page 19, you’ll get a look at the origin of *Rethinking Schools*, a teacher-run publication that launched a cadre of teacher activists fighting back against ill-conceived school reform proposals while giving them the voice to propose their own, research-based strategies for improvement. The publication, which began in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is still being read by educators across the nation, including New Jersey.

Finally, “Bringing the World to Your Classroom” on Page 30 looks at how international exchange student programs can benefit your school and your family. The new perspective that international students bring can cause us to question our assumptions while opening the door of understanding to new cultures and religions.

Even as the school year winds down, our members never stop working and advocating for students. Thank you for all that you do for public education.

Sincerely,

Wendell F. Steinhauer



NJEA President Wendell Steinhauer presiding at the March 18 Delegate Assembly meeting in Plainsboro.

Wendell's Picks

Twitter

@BurlCountyEA: Jersey Jazzman waking up the travel weary teachers with an energetic Friday night speech at the BCEA Overnighter! #unionstrong @NJEA

My home county association, Burlington County EA, tweets a shout-out to Mark “Jersey Jazzman” Weber, who delivered a compelling keynote address at BCEA’s overnight. Mark tweeted back, thanking BCEA members for their hospitality and the great time they showed him.

Deadline

Voter registration for Primary Election Day

If you need to register to vote—or you need to change your address or other voter information—make sure to do it before May 16 so that you’re all set to vote on Primary Election Day, which is June 6. Voting in the Democratic primary? NJEA PAC has endorsed Ambassador Phil Murphy in the Democratic gubernatorial primary.

Go to njelections.org for a voter registration form.

Opportunity

International exchange students

Have you ever thought about hosting an international exchange student? Would you like your students, colleagues and parents to know more about programs that bring international students to our schools and send our students overseas? Read “Bringing the World to Your Classroom” on Page 30.

Our students

Teen Arts Festival

The New Jersey State Teen Arts Festival, held May 31 to June 2, celebrates teen artists spanning the art forms of music, dance, creative writing, theater, visual art and everything in between. Don’t miss this exciting celebration of our talented students. Go to www.njteenarts.com for all the details.

Know. Lead. Act.

Delegate Assembly moves association business

This article is a summary of the March 18 meeting of the NJEA Delegate Assembly (DA), NJEA's highest policy-making body. Once available, approved minutes of DA meetings are printed in the *NJEA Review*. Minutes of DA meetings can also be found online at njea.org/da.

The March 18 meeting of the NJEA Delegate Assembly (DA) began on an emotional note with an invocation delivered by Somerset County Delegate Laura Bochner. After reading Emma Lazarus' "The New Colossus," Bochner asked delegates to hold their hands aloft as torches.

"Everyone has heard these famous words written by Emma Lazarus, which are inscribed at the base of the Statue of Liberty," Bochner remarked. "The torch, which is held in the Statue of Liberty's right hand holds much significance, both to those in the past, as well as today."

"Ladies and gentlemen—you are the ones who hold the torch for our public school students. You are the ray of light that helps point them in the direction of their future. In fact, in some cases, you are the only light and ray of hope

that a child sees in a day.

"And as you lift your hand high I charge you and challenge you to continue to hold this torch for the wonderful students of our New Jersey public schools. And with this in mind, please now place that torch over your heart and join me in the pledge to our great nation."

Delegates elect NEA Directors

NJEA sends nine representatives to the NEA Board of Directors, who are elected for three-year terms and are elected on a rolling basis. Directors are limited to two terms and are elected by the DA at its March meeting. This year, three seats were up for election. Three one-year term seats for NEA Director-Alternate were also up for election.

Incumbents Gary Melton Sr. of Atlantic County and Ann Margaret Shannon of Union County were nominated for re-election. Anita Kober was of Hudson County was nominated to serve her first term. With no additional nominees, Melton, Shannon and Kober were elected by acclamation.

For NEA Director-Alternate, Richard D'Avanzo of Union

County, Ryan Griffin of Gloucester County and Jack Kimple of Hunterdon County were nominated and with no additional nominations were elected by acclamation.

Certain NEA Directors are elected to at-large positions at the NEA Representative Assembly. New Jersey's James Frazier and Ashanti Rankin serve as NEA Directors representing educational support professionals.

Delegates approve committee recommendations

NJEA's more than 50 committees have been engaged in a multiyear project to streamline NJEA's resolutions and policy positions to ensure they are consistent, up to date, and more easily accessible. At the March 18 DA meeting, delegates approved the policy recommendations of six committees: the Constitution Review Committee, the Educational Support Professionals (ESP) Committee, the Government Relations Committee, the Leadership Committee, and the Working Conditions Committee.

Delegates also approved

six recommendations from the Strengthening Locals Evaluation Committee, with considerable discussion concerning adjustments to the formula for the Local Association Financial Assistance Program (LAFAP). The adjustments address the conditions under which LAFAP payments may be increased or decreased.

Delegates consider New Business Items

New Business Items 1 and 2, both brought forward by Delegate Chris Canella of Essex County, proposed that NJEA develop of a comprehensive LGBTQ+ advocacy and training program. The motions were referred to the appropriate committees, noting that those committees could include the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee, the Budget Committee, and the Professional Development Committee.

New Business Item 3 called upon NJEA to take the lead in calling for statewide day of action on May 1, International Workers Day, with a list of suggested actions. The motion carried.

Bergen County delegate Esther Fletcher addresses the DA.



NJSEA President Ellen Bacon speaks at the DA meeting.



NJEA leadership recognizes ESP of the Year Lois Yukna.



Building bridges with the community through joint initiatives

By Petal Robertson, Vice President, Montclair Education Association

In order for your local association's effectiveness to grow, it is essential to develop collaborative relationships with all stakeholders. It is important that local association leaders be in the know with parents and students. The members of the Montclair Education Association (MEA), believe that the community is a necessary extension of our local association, and we design our programs and communications with that in mind.

MEA's members who live in town are our greatest ambassadors. With more than 250 of our members living in Montclair, we formed the Montclair 250. This group bridges the gap between parents and the association and helps us plan events with the community.

Our annual Wrap and Roll event is the best example of this.

Each year, MEA applies for an NJEA PRIDE in Public Education grant to purchase gift wrapping essentials for families in need. We invite members of other labor unions in town, including the Montclair police force, to join our members, students, administrators, parents and PTA members. Each group has a unique role in making the event successful.

The district's student assistance counselors along with our PTA members work to identify those who would benefit from the clothing and gifts donated at Wrap and Roll. Then we meet together at Wrap and Roll and enjoy an afternoon of wrapping, dancing, food and camaraderie. Our building principals and police officers later hand-deliver the wrapped presents to the families by visiting their homes.

At events like this, there is no "side." We all come together in service of our school community.

When community members hear about the local association,

some may think mainly about negotiations and contracts. By holding events like Wrap and Roll, community partners have an opportunity to work with our members on a grander scale because, after all, negotiations and contracts are just a small part of what our association is all about. Now, parents and community members come to us as often as we go to them, and it is common for MEA members to team up with parents around organizing projects that will benefit everyone. As a result of organizing efforts such as Wrap and Roll, we have been able to work with our local police department, the NAACP, town council, and the Montclair Fund for Educational Excellence as well as parent organizations such as Montclair Cares About Schools.

If your local association is just beginning to get involved in the community, start small.

Build a strong internal leadership team that celebrates a shared vision and a passion to go beyond the boundaries of traditional union work. In MEA, we ask each of our members to donate one hour of their time to participate in community events such as Wrap and Roll.

You don't have to always create your own events. Many events already taking place in your school and community of which your members can volunteer to be a part. This helps to build a rapport between association members and parents. By the end of the year, you are sure to have parents and the community at your association events.

Petal Robertson can be reached at probertson@meanj.org.



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The AID-NJEA helpline has served NJEA members and their families for over 10 years. NJEA members and their families have access to this free and confidential service 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Educators and school counselors are on the line from noon until 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and until 6 p.m. on Fridays to provide peer-to-peer support and information to callers. In addition, University Behavioral Health Care provides mental health professionals who answer the helpline during all other hours for 24/7 coverage.

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- Help from a staff of Education Support Specialists experienced in education and trained in behavioral health
- Immediate personal response — a “real voice” with no buttons to push
- Access to thousands of resources from the AID-NJEA Information Directory
- High quality help by telephone with personal, family and school-related demands.

Whether you are a new teacher, a support staff member, or a retired school employee, AID-NJEA has people on the line who can provide guidance and information to help.

Dial 866-AID-NJEA (243-6532) or email helpline@njea.org.

AID-NJEA is a partnership between the New Jersey Education Association and Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care.



Where are the election results?

While NJEA elections for NJEA president; NJEA secretary-treasurer; representatives to the NJEA Executive Committee, NJEA Delegate Assembly, and NEA Representative Assembly; and for positions as NJEA Delegate Assembly-Alternates concluded on April 14, the date fell after press time for the *NJEA Review*.

Election results were posted on njea.org after the election and will be reported in the June edition of the *NJEA Review*.

Changing school districts? Salary guide placement is negotiable

Did you know that placement on a salary guide is negotiable for members moving from one school district to another?

According to Statute 18A: 29-9, “Whenever a person shall thereafter accept office, position, or employment as a member in any school district of this state, his initial place on the salary schedule shall be at such point as may be agreed upon by the member and the employing board of education.”

In other words, if you are leaving School District A for School District B, you have the right to negotiate placement on your new salary guide with the board of education. Some locals have contract language to this effect. Contracts may require the board to give full credit to an employee moving from one district to another while other contracts may spell out limitations.

So if you are accepting employment in a different school district, you may want to contact the local president there before you agree on salary guide placement.

Nontenured? Know your rights and responsibilities

By May 15, all nontenured teachers must be notified of re-employment. If the school board fails to notify the nontenured teacher, he or she is entitled to continued employment for the next year.

In addition, many locally negotiated contracts include similar requirements for educational support professionals (ESP).

If a nontenured teacher wishes to accept employment, he or she must notify the board in writing on or before June 1. ESP staff members should consult their collective bargaining agreements to determine if they have similar response requirements.

Members who have been notified of their nonrenewal should contact their local president.

SELFIE OF THE MONTH

Ten of NJEA's 13 members participating in the NJEA apprentice program spent a weekend studying public speaking. They snapped a selfie at the podium. Front: Cindy Matute-Brown. Center from left: Angela Coxen, Shari Mendelson, Lisa Palin, Alice Barnes-Vasser, Twanda Taylor, Martha Martinez, and Keri Giannotti. Rear from left: Lisa Simone and Pamela Fadden.

Attending a local, county or state training or meeting? Working a PRIDE event? Send your selfies to njeareview@njea.org. Be sure to identify where the picture was taken and the members who appear in the photo. 📸

COOL STUFF

Have you authored a book or educational materials?

Authors' Alley is an area on the NJEA Convention exhibit floor that provides preservice, 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 authored works. Submissions must meet NJEA criteria.

The 2017 NJEA Convention will take place on Thursday, Nov. 9 and Friday, Nov. 10, in Atlantic City. 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.

The application to reserve your space in Author's Alley be found at njeaconvention.org. Slide over "Program" and click on "Author's Alley." The application must be printed, completed and returned with your submission(s) and check for \$50 made out to NJEA/Author's Alley. For questions, call Cindy Vannauker at 609-599-4561, ext. 2263.

NJEA must receive your space reservation by June 30, 2017.

New Jersey State Teen Arts Festival slated for May 31-June 2

May 31 marks the opening day of the New Jersey State Teen Arts Festival! The festival is the culminating celebration and statewide showcase featuring the highest caliber teen artists in New Jersey. The New Jersey State Teen Arts Festival celebrates teen artists spanning across the art forms of music, dance, creative writing, theater, visual art and everything in between.

All New Jersey students and teachers are invited to attend. In addition to a spectacular celebration of the arts, teachers can join professional development workshops and students can take master class workshops and explore a college fair. Additionally, all students and teachers are welcome to observe the showcase performances and art displays of the presenting teen artists.

To participate in the showcase and adjudication process, students must be nominated by their home counties. Counties without a local teen arts festival can submit students for virtual nominations.

The New Jersey State Teen Arts Festival will take place 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on May 31 through June 2 at Ocean County College in Toms River.

The deadline to register is May 22.

To learn more visit njteenarts.com or contact festival organizers at info@njteenarts.com.

A+ Effort

BCEA president honored as a trailblazer

Bergen County Education Association (BCEA) President Sue McBride was honored on March 27 as a Trailblazing Woman in Labor and Business by the Bergen County Board of Chosen Freeholders, the Bergen County Commission on the Status of Women, and Bergen County Executive James Tedesco III. McBride was among 19 women to share the honor, which also included New Jersey State Teacher of the Year Argine Safari, who teaches at Pascack Valley High School in Bergen County.

"I am both honored and humbled to have received this award," McBride said. "It is a privilege to have been recognized alongside such remarkable women, especially Bergen County's own, Argine Safari. I remain committed to fighting for our members and our outstanding public schools."

McBride has been a teacher in Glen Rock public schools for 28 years, teaching at the primary and middle school levels. A former president of the Glen Rock Education Association, she also served her local association as chair of the negotiations team and as vice president for middle and high school.

Prior to becoming the president of BCEA, McBride had served as 1st and 2nd vice president. She was the editor of the *BCEA Reporter*, arranged professional development programs, and coordinated legislative activities. She also serves as a Delegate Assembly member and Executive committee member of the NJEA.

The expertise and selfless dedication of our public school employees makes Bergen County's public schools among the best in New Jersey and among the best in the nation," McBride said. 🌟



New Jersey Teacher of the Year Argine Safari (l) and BCEA President Sue McBride (center) shared the spotlight in Bergen County as Trailblazing Women in Labor and Business. With Safari and McBride is Norah Peck, Bergen County Interim Executive County Superintendent.

NJEA REPORT

NJREA hosts town hall meeting with Ambassador Phil Murphy in Paterson

More than 200 NJREA members attended a town hall meeting with Ambassador Phil Murphy, the NJEA PAC-endorsed candidate for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination.

The event was the brainchild of the NJREA leadership, who are working to give their members as many opportunities as possible to meet Ambassador Murphy. Understanding the limits of his schedule, NJREA has organized three regional meetings. The first was the event held in Paterson on March 30. The second, in Berlin, was held on April 24, which fell after press time. A date and location for the central meeting has not yet been determined.

Sue Maurer, NJREA's Government Relations Chair, is one of the organizers of the town hall meetings.

"Our members need to meet the people who are running for governor," Maurer said. "They need face-to-face contact and the ability to voice their concerns and get answers from the candidates. Meetings such as this one give them that opportunity."

Judy Perkins, acting president of NJREA, hopes members gain a broader perspective on the challenges facing the next governor of New Jersey.

"I hope our members will understand Ambassador Murphy's financial background and how advantageous that will be to him and to us as we tackle our state's financial crises," Perkins said. "For the 11th time under Gov. Christie, the state's credit rating has been downgraded because of his failure to resolve the pension funding crisis and keep his promises to our members. Our next governor can and must do better."

NJEA's Government Relations Director Ginger Gold Schnitzer explained why NJEA PAC did not endorse in the Republican gubernatorial primary. She explained that while the Democratic field coalesced quickly in the fall, most Republican candidates did not announce their intention to run until January or later.

Only Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno and Joe Rullo successfully fulfilled the requirements for consideration by the NJEA PAC Screening Committee, and the 125-member PAC ultimately decided that neither earned the endorsement for the June 6, 2017 primary.

NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Sean M. Spiller introduced Ambassador Murphy, and Vice President Marie Blistan also gave remarks.

Ambassador Murphy, who in October was endorsed for the primary, criticized Gov. Christie for the tone of his administration, coincidentally, on the same date that two Bridgegate co-conspirators were sentenced to federal prison.

"Where has the name-calling and vilifying gotten us?" Murphy asked. "It's gotten us nowhere."

Murphy promised a different tone, and a better working relationship with NJEA and NJREA.

"I'm thrilled to be with NJEA and NJREA. As my late mother said, you're known by the company you keep. And I am thrilled by the company I am keeping!"

Murphy cautioned that even though he supports public education and public school employees, the state faces many serious issues.

"We've got big challenges," Murphy said. "We've got to undo the carnage from the Christie administration over the past seven years, and the pension crisis that has been brewing since the 90s. I will do everything in my power to have your back. But it won't be easy."

Murphy went on to answer questions on vouchers, charter schools, high-stakes testing, Chapter 78, the pension's stalled cost of living adjustment, college affordability, and comprehensive criminal justice reform, among other issues. He thanked the retirees for their time and attention, and promised that they would have a voice in his administration.

"As active and retired members, your input matters," he concluded.



Ambassador Phil Murphy met with members and an NJREA town hall in Paterson. From left: NJREA Treasurer Carol Kadi, NJREA 1st Vice President Judy Perkins, Ambassador Murphy, NJREA Secretary Joan Wright, and NJEA Vice President Marie Blistan.

NJEA PAC votes not to endorse in Republican gubernatorial primary

The NJEA PAC Operating Committee met on March 27 to consider endorsing a candidate in the Republican gubernatorial primary. The meeting followed a March 20 meeting of the NJEA PAC Screening Committee, at which members met with Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno and reviewed a questionnaire submitted by Joe Rullo.

According to NJEA policy, the screening committee can only consider candidates who either submit a questionnaire or meet with the committee. No other Republican candidates met the criteria to participate in the screening process.

After deliberation, the screening committee submitted a recommendation to the PAC Operating Committee not to endorse either candidate in the Republican gubernatorial primary. The PAC Operating Committee agreed with that recommendation and voted not to endorse any Republican candidate for the June 6, 2017 primary.

NJEA's Government Relations Director Ginger Gold Schnitzer addressed the committee's decision.

"Our goal in participating in the gubernatorial primary election process this year, for the first time, was to give our members real choices on Election Day," said Schnitzer. "Our members are tired of voting for the candidates who have been chosen for them. They want to take an active role in choosing the candidates on both sides of the ballot. While they were able to enthusiastically endorse Ambassador Phil Murphy, unfortunately the Republican candidates fell short of the mark on too many issues to earn our members' support. We are proud of the work our members did throughout the primary endorsement process. We will continue to work for the election of pro-public education candidates across New Jersey and to encourage our members, regardless of political party, to run for public office."

Unpacking the charter conundrum

The NJEA Public Charter School Organizing Boot Camp

You are an employee of a charter school. Your supervisor has directed staff to attend an impromptu after-school meeting until 6:30 p.m. This is the fifth time this month that you are left scrambling for child care because of work. A colleague was fired recently for missing too many meetings. You stay.

What is the first step you can take to protect your job and quality of life?

You are an association member who just got word that a charter school has applied to open or expand in your district. If approved by the New Jersey Commissioner of Education, the charter will absorb students from your home school. A significant amount of funding will leave with them.

What is your next step?

The first step in both circumstances is the same: call your NJEA UniServ regional office. The UniServ office can connect you with a team of experts who are standing by to guide you and future NJEA members. NJEA Organizational Development (OD) Field Representative Marguerite Schroeder and her crew of charter organizers will investigate your needs and help you to develop effective strategies to respond to your circumstances.

A dual commitment

These kinds of challenges come in an environment where NJEA's position on charter schools reflects its dual commitment to public school employees: those who work in traditional public schools that need protection from the rapid expansion of charter schools, particularly in urban districts, and those who work in charter schools facing deplorable working conditions not seen on such a large scale in traditional public schools since the 1970s.

On one hand, NJEA is advocating for a moratorium on the approval of any new charter schools or the expansion in size or geographic reach of existing charter schools until certain conditions are met. On the other hand, NJEA advocates for the employees of charter schools in their efforts to organize as local associations in the NJEA family.

In 2016, Schroeder instituted the NJEA Public Charter School Organiz-

ing Boot Camp for NJEA members who work in charter schools and for NJEA UniServ field reps dealing with an increase of charter activity in their regions. The Public Charter Members Work Group participates in the Boot Camp each year and includes members from each of the 17 public charter schools in which NJEA has a local association.

Boot Camp attendance grows

This year, Boot Camp attendance doubled in size. Breakout sessions—offered on March 17 and 18 at the Princeton Marriott—included information on developing the structure of locals, identifying member needs, clarifying NJEA's position on public charters and organizing successful pushbacks against charter school expansion. The 2017 attendees also included the NJEA Bolivar L. Graham Intern Foundation Practicing Apprentices.

NJEA OD Consultant Jaime Valente assisted Schroeder with organizing the Boot Camp and acted as master of ceremonies for many of the presentations. Valente teaches music at the Teaneck Community Charter School and is the president of his local association. As both an NJEA member and charter school employee, he brings a broad perspective to the public charter conversation. Schroeder and Valente were joined by several NJEA UniServ field representatives and consultants from across the state who presented their experiences to the group.

The status of charters

Valente and Schroeder shared some basics regarding charter schools:

- Over 5,000 public charter school employees work in New Jersey
- Over 100 approved and 88 operating charters exist in our state
- Fifty-five charter schools have been revoked, surrendered, or non-renewed since 1996
- Approximately 50,000 students attend New Jersey charter schools
- Seventeen charter schools are represented by NJEA with a combined total of over 1,000 members.
- The New Jersey Department of

Education recently closed four charter schools (the staffs were not represented by NJEA) because of low test scores and failure to provide services.

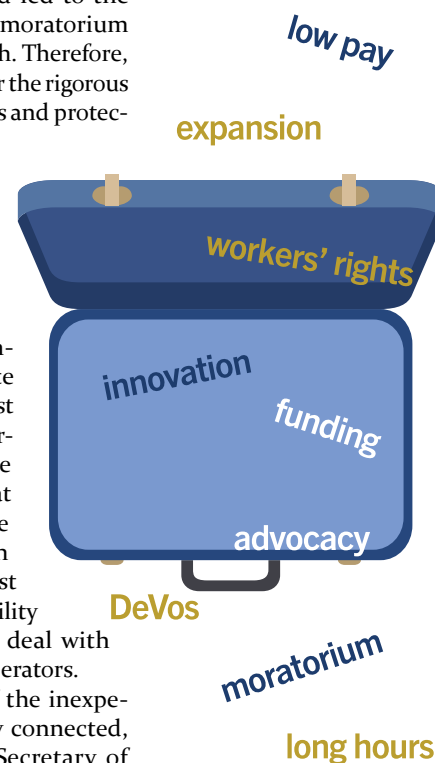
NJEA believes high-quality public charter schools are one component of an innovative, progressive system of public education. The association works with public school employees, parents, charter school members, and other stakeholders to ensure that public charter schools are true to the original intent of such schools to be laboratories of innovation. NJEA believes that public charter schools must enhance, and not detract from, the traditional public schools in their districts and be responsive to the needs of the parents and students they serve.

Many concerns with how the state's public charter school law has been implemented led to the association's call for a moratorium on charter school growth. Therefore, NJEA has also pushed for the rigorous accountability measures and protections that have led to abuses in states such as Michigan.

NJEA advocates for legislation to prevent profiteering on public charter schools so that student learning, and not corporate profits, remain the most important priority. Charter schools must serve student populations that are representative of the communities in which they operate. There must be fiscal and accountability safeguards in place to deal with larger charter school operators.

The appointment of the inexperienced, but politically connected, Betsy DeVos as U.S. Secretary of Education, makes it likely that deep concerns about charter schools will remain. Next year's NJEA Public Charter School Organizing Boot Camp will see an increase in advanced organizing strategies for member advocacy as members continue to unpack the charter conundrum.

The association works with public school employees, parents, charter school members, and other stakeholders to ensure that public charter schools are true to the original intent of such schools to be laboratories of innovation.



Regional health and safety conferences empower local committees

A well-informed health and safety committee is key to a local association's success in moving school districts to act when the well-being of staff and students is at risk. NJEA has long encouraged local associations to form health and safety committees. Through monthly articles in the *NJEA Review* (see Page 36 for this month's installment), a compendium of resources at njea.org/hs, conferences, and a partnership with the New Jersey Work Environment Council, the association works to ensure that local committees have the information they need to act.

A health and safety committee can empower members to advocate for everyone when a single voice goes unnoticed. In some school districts, health and safety committees are a joint endeavor with association and district leadership. In others, they are made up solely of association members.

This year, NJEA held two health and safety conferences: one at NJEA headquarters in Trenton on Jan. 7 and one farther north at the Galloping Hills Golf Course in Kenilworth on April 1. Local associations looking to form or strengthen a health and safety committee found a workshop to support their needs while other sessions addressed health and safety concerns such as indoor air quality, clean water, and emergency response protocols.

Challenges and successes

Members with already active health and safety committees shared their successes and challenges.

Pemberton and Princeton clear the air

Pemberton Education Association member Leslie Nirdlinger said that the PEA Health and Safety Committee meets monthly to review the most recent issues members are facing and to review reminders about maintaining good health and safety practices. In addition to districtwide committee, PEA has building advisory committees. These building committees report

to the district committee.

"The building committees are on the front lines in protecting health and safety," Nirdlinger said.

As a result of the work of the committee, Pemberton has recently implemented a policy in which district staff no longer cut grass or blow leaves while school is in session. Concerns the committee raised about exhaust fumes from the machines entering the classrooms led to this change.

Several years ago, after the Pemberton school district installed air conditioning in one of its buildings, staff and students experienced respiratory problems. Mold growth in condensation was found to be the culprit. The health and safety committee was successful in pressuring the board to spend the resources needed to remediate the problem.

Princeton Regional Educational Support Staff Association President Olive Giles had similar indoor air quality concerns during new construction several years ago.

"Because we had the committee in place, it was able to serve as a resource for us," Giles said. "We learned about the tools that are available to test air quality and were able to get access to those tools and solve the problems."

Orange fights for renovation funding

According to former Orange Education Association President Mary Karriem, Cleveland Street School was badly in need of renovation.

"Every time it rained, it would come down into their all-purpose room," Karriem recalled.

The cramped all-purpose room was located in the basement of the building and served as the served as the gym and the lunchroom. Students would sometimes eat in the hallway. Karriem described the boiler room as "something out of a Frankenstein movie."

Conditions at the school drew the attention of the National Education Association, with Karriem taking then NEA President Dennis Van Roekel, NJEA President Wendell Steinhauer and

NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Sean M. Spiller on a tour of the school.

NJEA Vice President Marie Blistan encouraged Karriem to testify before the State Board of Education on the conditions of Cleveland School. While the fight wasn't won overnight, OEA didn't back down, and ultimately funding was provided for repairs to Cleveland Street School. Renovations are scheduled to begin in 2018.

North Plainfield addresses aging buildings

The North Plainfield Education Association created its health and safety committee this year. The committee is determined to bring about positive changes, especially concerning a district school building constructed in the 1880s.

North Plainfield Education Association Co-President Theresa Fuller said that while they are just getting started, the creation of the committee has been an important first step.

"It empowers our members to know that it's OK to say something," Fuller said. "They now know they have a route to take to start fixing problems."

Manchester Township EA committee adds value to membership

Manchester Township Education Association President Daniel Staples attended the conference with MTEA Health and Safety Chair Melanie Estelle. Staples noted that until a recent merger with bus drivers and custodians, MTEA only had one person appointed to act as a health and safety chair. The combined group decided to form a full health and safety committee.

Staples explained that the merger has resulted in a new awareness about health and safety issues.

"We want to be proactive going forward and working with the district and the community," Staples said. "When our members ask what our dues dollars are paying for, we want to be able to tell them about our health and safety committee and its accomplishments."



NJEA UniServ Field Representative John Staab discusses health and safety committees.



Members learn effective strategies to build community support for healthy and safe schools

Good news



Leading the Country in Giving Children the Chance to Succeed

New Jersey ranks among the top 3 states in Education Week's "Chance for Success Index," which measures a state's ability to give its children the greatest chance for success and shows that it is doing more in preparing young people for the challenges they will face as adults.

Best in Nation in Giving Children Educational Opportunities

New Jersey ranks #1 in the "Education Dimension" of the latest Opportunity Index, which rates access to educational opportunities based on birth location.



High School Graduation Rate Is Among the Top in the Nation

New Jersey is one of the top two states in the nation in public high school graduation



Public School Students Outperform Private School Students on AP Exams

In New Jersey, public school students score higher than private school students on their AP exams, according to the College Board.

Public School Students Outperform Private School Students on AP Exams to Qualify for College Credit

According to the College Board, New Jersey public high school students are more likely than private and religious school students to receive grades on AP exams high enough to qualify for college credit.



Leading the Country in Education

The Annie E. Casey Foundation ranks New Jersey public schools among the top two in the nation.

New Jersey's teacher salaries lead the nation

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Average BA minimum in New Jersey.
#1 in the nation.

\$37,521
Average BA minimum in U.S.

\$54,440
Average MA minimum in New Jersey.
#1 in the nation.

\$40,760
Average MA minimum in U.S.

\$81,385
Average BA maximum in New Jersey.
#1 in the nation.

\$54,595
Average BA maximum in U.S.

\$85,959
Average MA maximum in New Jersey.
#1 in the nation.

\$62,897
Average MA maximum in U.S.

Deptford EA halts privatization of aides

Long-term organizing pays off

When the Deptford Education Association began organizing last year, its only goal was to obtain a fair settlement. Those efforts took a detour this past March as the association sought, instead, to protect Deptford's students and save the jobs of their paraprofessional members. Facing a budget shortfall, the district abruptly began exploring the privatization of its classroom aides. Thankfully, everything the DEA needed to respond rapidly was already in place.

DEA knows that the key component of any campaign is a solid base of support among members, mobilizing them to participate in rallies, speak at board meetings, and engage in other activities that demonstrate unity and strength. Through 10-minute meetings, email, and social media outreach, DEA has steadfastly improved participation.

That preparation paid off. With little notice, hundreds of DEA members attended

two Deptford Board of Education meetings in a matter of days and delivered hours of public comment.

DEA has also worked hard to improve voter turnout and elect pro-public education candidates. DEA conducts a Meet the Candidates Night, an open-to-the-public event moderated by the League of Women Voters, at which candidates are asked a series of specific, detailed questions on the state of education in Deptford Township.

To lobby board members, DEA remind board members of their campaign promises on privatization.

"At the meetings, we brought out many, many reasons not to privatize, and we spoke individually with each of the board members," DEA member Anna Marie Cooney explained. Cooney's children attended Deptford's public schools.

DEA was able to inspire community mem-

bers to testify on the importance of their classroom aides. The cumulative effect of PRIDE events, social media contacts, publications, and above all dedicated staff brought parents out in defense of the classroom aides.

"The parents are happy with us," explains DEA member Lee Henry. "They see that we love the kids, we care for the kids, and that we go above and beyond. For us, it's not just a nine-to-five job. They see that and recognize and appreciate it."

Members will be watching closely as the district struggles to complete a budget for the 2017-18 school year and continues negotiating a new contract.

"The union has shown that we are strong and we have member support," Henry said. "We've shown the board that we are serious, that we care about our students, and that we are going to do whatever we need to."

Long-term, strong member outreach paid off when hundreds of Deptford Education Association members packed multiple board meetings to fight for the jobs of educational support professionals.





NJEA leaders deliver 6,800 petition signatures to the field director for the Murphy campaign, Dave Parano. From left: NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Sean M. Spiller, NJEA Vice President Marie Blistan, Parano, NJEA President Wendell Steinhauer, and NJEA Executive Director Ed Richardson.

NJEA members deliver more than 6,800 signatures for Ambassador Murphy

In a sign of the enthusiasm New Jersey educators feel for electing a pro-public education and pro-public school employee governor in the 2017 election, NJEA's leadership team delivered nominating petitions containing the signatures of 6,819 NJEA members to the Murphy for Governor campaign on March 28.

The signatures were gathered as part of a statewide effort by NJEA members eager to support Ambassador Phil Murphy's campaign. The minimum number of signatures needed to qualify as a candidate is 1,000 signatures. NJEA members alone provided Ambassador Murphy with nearly seven times that requirement.

"NJEA members are well-known for their passionate political activism," said Steinhauer. "But few candidates have energized our members like Ambassador Phil Murphy. His positions on the issues that matter most to our members are, of course, a primary factor in our endorsement. But his willingness to listen, learn, and work cooperatively with our members to confront the serious challenges facing our state give us hope for real change and a better future for our students, our members, and our communities."

"Our members are engaged in this process like never before, and earlier than ever before, because we have seen the devastating impact of poor public policy and politicians more in love with their own rhetoric than with moving our state forward. Chapter 78 is an example of the devastating impact politicians can have on hard-working New Jerseyans," said Blistan. "For too long, politicians

have promised our members that they would seriously address the funding crises facing our public employee pension system and our public schools, only to let them down time and time again. This year must be different. Our members are working to ensure that the choices they face on Election Day will be between the best candidates possible."

"Ambassador Murphy's positions on the issues that matter most to our members are unequaled in the Democratic primary race," said Spiller. "And he has proven that he does not just tell our members what they want to hear. His message is the same, across the state, that we can and we must grow our economy and address the social and fiscal issues that are holding our state back. Along the way, there will be tough choices, but working together, we will ensure that New Jersey's public schools remain among the best in the nation, and that public school employees will be treated with the respect and dignity they deserve."

In October, NJEA's 125-member political action committee (PAC) unanimously endorsed Ambassador Murphy for the Democratic gubernatorial primary. 🇺🇸



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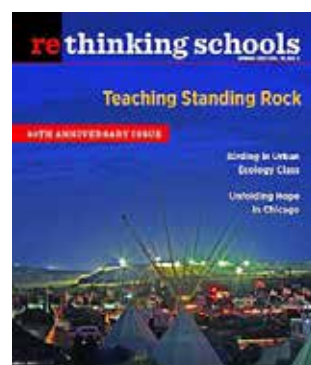
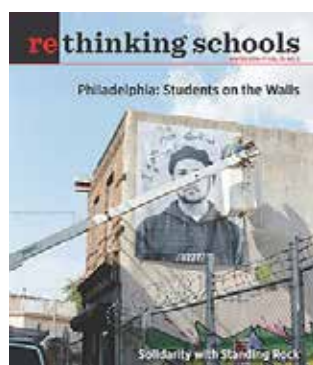
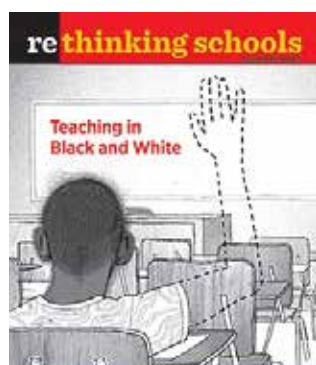
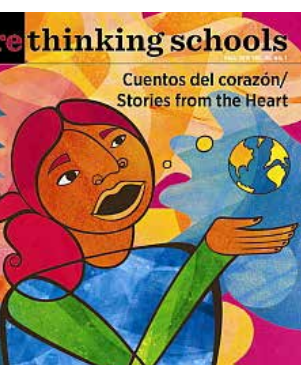
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Rethinking Schools: 30 years of teacher activism

By Stan Karp

After the first issue came out, Bob Peterson was called down to his principal's office and told, "Be careful."

"What?" he asked incredulously. "What do you mean?"

"It's like the McCarthy-era down at central office," the principal warned. "People are talking about you and your paper."

"I'm a troublemaker because I oppose the basal reader?" Bob persisted.

"I can't say any more," said the principal. "Just be careful."

Bob Peterson, a veteran educator who's never been especially good at being "careful," was recalling official reaction many years ago to the first edition of *Rethinking Schools*, a teacher-run publication that this year is celebrating an unlikely 30th anniversary. For three decades, the journal has been at the center one of the most effective teacher-led activist projects in the country.

Born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, during an earlier era of top-down school reform, *Rethinking Schools* has grown from the brainchild of a small teacher-discussion group to a vibrant citywide newspaper to its current status as an influential quarterly magazine and publisher of educational resources for teaching social justice and advocating for better public schools.

The group took shape in the mid-80s when a Reagan-era report titled "A Nation At Risk" sparked a national debate about the status of U.S. public education. A slew of think tank reports, blue-ribbon commissions and governors' summits followed, with top-down prescriptions to "reform" schools and classrooms, often without the participation of those who worked in them.

Against this background, teacher-activists in Milwaukee began looking for ways to push back.

"We wanted to stop being on the defensive all the time," recalls Peterson, a founding editor who was a bilingual fifth-grade teacher and, years later, was twice elected president of the Milwaukee Teachers Education Association. "We were tired of constantly trooping down to the school board meetings to stave off yet another attack on teachers and decent education programs."

A critical edge from the start

The small group of mostly K-12 classroom teachers launched *Rethinking Schools* as a teacher-run newspaper distributed free

throughout the city. It provided a vehicle to analyze and respond to the maze of reform proposals raining down upon them. It was also an organizing project that required building a network of supporters willing to distribute the paper in Milwaukee's neighborhoods and 150 schools, and ready to take action when the need arose.

From the start, *Rethinking Schools* also had a critical edge. "We wanted to have an impact on the way teachers thought about school issues," Peterson says, "and not just uncritically defend the role teachers were playing in a flawed system. Teachers need to be challenged both through critique and through examples of things that work."

They began by taking on that staple of daily school life, the basal reader. Basals are those sequential, artificially constructed reading books with comprehension questions at the end of each story and matching workbooks. Basals are where kids first find reading turned into "schoolwork."

"See John. See Sally. See how they hate school."

For students who succeed easily in school, basals may pose no more serious problem than boredom. But for the growing numbers of students struggling early on, basals can be the beginning of lifelong frustration with the system's expectations and demands. Moreover, *Rethinking Schools'* editors knew that reading was a key source of educational anxiety for all concerned, and that traditional, mechanistic approaches to the teaching and assessment of reading skills might be a good place to begin criticizing a whole web of related ideas. They were right.

In November 1986 the first issue of *Rethinking Schools* appeared, with a lead article by kindergarten teacher Rita Tenorio titled "Confessions of a Kindergarten Teacher: Surviving Scott Foresman." It was a firsthand account that laid out the negative implications

of what the basics testers and textbook publishers had in store for school kids. “The administrators in [Milwaukee Public Schools] and many school systems across the country are responding to pressures to improve our schools by extending the questionable basal reading program downward to the kindergarten,” she wrote. “Apparently their theory is that the earlier we begin the workbooks, the earlier the students will read, and the earlier they will be ‘on level.’”

Instead, *Rethinking Schools* promoted strategies that de-emphasized workbook pages and fragmented skill drills in favor of teaching activities that encouraged children to communicate, exchange ideas, address individual needs and interests, and use language skills purposefully to explore the world around them.

An accompanying editorial tied these pedagogical issues to larger reform trends. It criticized efforts to change schools by instituting “systems management,” which moved authority from classrooms to administrative bureaucracies, served the interests of textbook and test publishers, and de-skilled educators by proposing “teacher-proof” curriculums.

The newspaper continued to publicize the issue, digesting a large body of educational research about “whole language” alternatives to basal-based reading instruction and making it available to readers, including school board members and other policymakers who were personally lobbied on the matter. The campaign eventually convinced Milwaukee Public Schools to reject citywide adoption of a single basal program in favor of a system that gave teachers a choice of methods and materials, including ten whole language pilot programs.

In a relatively brief time, *Rethinking Schools* had raised an issue, educated its readers about the implications, and won a significant, if small, victory. It went on to reproduce this mix of analysis with action on a host of other educational issues from curriculum and instruction to school governance and collective bargaining to social issues beyond schoolhouse walls.

A progressive approach to classroom practice

As the core of editors expanded to include teachers from other parts of the country, *Rethinking Schools*’ reach and ambition grew. In 1992, in response to the 500th anniversary of Columbus’ voyage, it produced a teacher’s guide called *Rethinking Columbus*. This impressive collection of resources, lesson plans, and stories sold several hundred thousand copies and changed the way teachers across the country presented this history to students. It also reflected *Rethinking Schools*’ progressive approach to classroom practice, emphasizing role plays, student voice, and a robust, anti-racist multiculturalism in place of conventional, teacher-centered classroom activities and standardized, sanitized curriculum.

Rethinking Columbus was followed by *Rethinking Our Classrooms*, a collection of curriculum and teaching pieces that deepened *Rethinking Schools*’ vision of classrooms as places of deep critical inquiry and democratic values, with healthy measures of joy, hope, and community.

Today, *Rethinking Schools* resources include more than two dozen teacher-produced titles. These inexpensive, attractive publications reflect the experience and wisdom of practicing teachers working to build equity and social justice in their classrooms and communities. They cover the K-12 spectrum and a wide range of curriculum themes from immigration (*The Line Between Us*) and language arts (*Teaching for Joy and Justice: Reading, Writing and Rising Up*) to climate change and globalization (*A People’s Curriculum for the Earth*). There are collections on “rethinking” math, multiculturalism, early childhood, popular culture, poetry and more. The popular *New Teacher Book* is an especially valuable

resource for preservice and early-career teachers and is also one of the few books for new teachers that directly addresses the role and importance of teacher unions.

The group’s most recent titles tackle thorny issues of *Rethinking Sexism, Gender and Sexuality* and *Rethinking Bilingual Education*. Other publications have addressed policy issues such as vouchers, testing, and top-down school reform. All are shaped by *Rethinking Schools*’ combination of activist, social justice critique and hopeful vision.

Expanding into social media

In recent years, *Rethinking Schools*, which can be found online at rethinkingschools.org, has also expanded its presence on social media, with 75,000 “likes” on its Facebook page and nearly 20,000 Twitter followers. In partnership with activists at Teaching for Change, *Rethinking Schools* also maintains the Zinn Education Project (ZEP), named for the famous historian Howard Zinn. ZEP provides an archive of curriculum resources, many drawn from *Rethinking Schools* publications, that over 60,000 registered users can access free of charge. ZEP’s Facebook page also provides a popular “This Day in History” feature to more than 250,000 visitors. When a state legislator recently introduced a bill to ban the use of Zinn’s work in Arkansas public schools, ZEP made Zinn’s classic *A People’s History of the United States* available upon request to hundreds of Arkansas teachers free of charge.

A valuable resource for New Jersey teachers

New Jersey teachers and teacher-educators have found *Rethinking Schools* a valuable resource in multiple ways. Eileen Heddy of The College of New Jersey says, “I use *Rethinking Schools* materials nearly every week in my classes. I tell my students that if they only get one professional periodical, it should be *Rethinking Schools*. It really pushes my students to think beyond their own experiences and provides so many important and useful materials for the classroom.”

Montclair State University assistant professor Bree Picower calls *The New Teacher Book* “a trusted staple in my practice of preparing aspiring educators. No other text prepares them for that nerve-racking next step of entering their first classroom like receiving the sage advice from experienced educators who have made it through... It is the one book that my students thank me for assigning.”

Picower’s colleagues, Monica Taylor and Doug Larkin, use a number of articles in their teacher prep courses, citing the introduction to *Rethinking Our Classrooms* as an especially good summary of what teaching for social justice is about.

Engaging material across the curriculum

At Montclair High School, Shana Stein has used *Rethinking Schools* and ZEP materials to build engaging units for her civics and government classes. “Students love the role plays and anything interactive where they’re debating and arguing,” she says. “Just a few weeks ago I did the Seneca Falls Convention [for women’s rights] based on a role play that includes people who weren’t really there: such as enslaved Africans, African-American women, Cherokee women.”

Each year, the high school’s Civics and Government Institute holds an annual “social reform panel” event.

“We study revolutionaries and reformers in U.S. history,” Stein explains. “The kids come dressed as those people and it’s a huge event, kids love it.”

It’s typical of the kind of teaching *Rethinking Schools* encourages

At EdCamp Revolution on April 1, members and the community engage engaged in the professional practices envisioned by *Rethinking Schools*. Here NJEA member Awo Okaikor Aryee-Price facilitates a session titled "What is Critical Pedagogy?" With her is Matthew Fratteli.



Students also participated in EdCamp, including Fady Sait Fleur and Avery Julien.



At EdCamp, Stan Karp speaks with Dr. Michelle Fine of the Graduate Center, CUNY.



EdCamp attendees complete post-it notes to propose sessions. From left: Dave Zirkle, Thomas Whitaker, Dena Grushkin, Daniela Ceballos, and Kevin Flanagan.



and supports.

"There are so many great ideas. It makes you feel like someone is looking out for you; that you can do this kind of teaching and really challenge your students because there's a community of people supporting social justice teaching," Stein adds. "So much of teaching can be isolating. You think you're the only one thinking about these things. To read what other teachers are doing and see the creative work happening in your field makes you feel like a professional and that what you're doing is really important work. You get a sense of the possibilities. I've been inspired by teachers I've never met."

Digging deep in to culture

Language arts teacher Awo Okaikor Aryee-Price, who has taught in Jersey City and Hackensack, recalls using Linda Christensen's lesson on "Where I'm From" poems from *Reading, Writing, and Rising Up*.

"I used that with every level I taught because it allowed students to dig deep and showcase their culture in their own kind of way," Aryee-Price says. "A lot of kids find poetry intimidating, this helped students see themselves as writers." Christensen, the Director of the Oregon Writing Project and a *Rethinking Schools* editor and classroom teacher for more than 30 years, will be the featured presenter at NJEA's Teaching and Learning Symposium on Oct. 14. (For details go to njea.org/tlsymposium.)

For world language and ESL teacher Kevin LaMastra, *Rethinking Schools* opened doors that led far beyond his Linden classroom. As part of an effort to create authentic, real world curriculum about globalization and immigration issues, *Rethinking Schools* editors Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson led several groups of teachers on trips to the U.S.-Mexican border. LaMastra joined one of the early tours and was inspired.

"We were learning about globalization on both sides of the border from people on the ground and in the communities that were directly affected," LaMastra recalls. "It was the kind of perspective reflected in the magazine itself; making teachers the experts and giving voice to the students, their parents, and the communities while respecting home cultures."

Teaching for justice

LaMastra was so motivated by this combination of real-world learning and teacher-made curricula, that he used it as a model to develop his own teacher tours to the Dominican Republic. The trips, which he has conducted for more than a decade, have attracted interest from teachers across the country and developed lasting people-to-people ties and projects. They also provided rich curriculum ideas for LaMastra's middle school French and ESL students. He found classroom activities such as "The Chairs of Inequality" from *Rethinking Globalization: Teaching for Justice in an Unjust World* "helpful in my own learning in conjunction with the travel experience. It helped shape my own understanding of globalization and informed me of the possibilities of doing social justice work as a teacher."

"Being a social justice educator is not always about the specific content you're sharing with students," adds LaMastra. "It's the relationships in the classroom between students and teachers. It's everything you do, from the poster you put up to the movie you decide to show to the bulletin boards you create, everything has an effect and creates a message."

Facilitating difficult conversations

In South Orange-Maplewood, Columbia High School teacher Thomas Whitaker has used *Rethinking Schools* resources in his challenging work on race.

“Over the last two years I have been conducting workshops for elementary and middle school parents on institutional racism, police brutality, white privilege, and other social justice issues,” says Whitaker. “I have used materials from RS to facilitate these discussions” citing ‘10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children’s Books for Racism and Sexism,’ and RS interviews with authors Michelle Alexander, who wrote *The New Jim Crow*, and Enid Lee, whose discussion about “Taking Multicultural, Anti-Racist Education Seriously” is among the group’s most popular pieces.

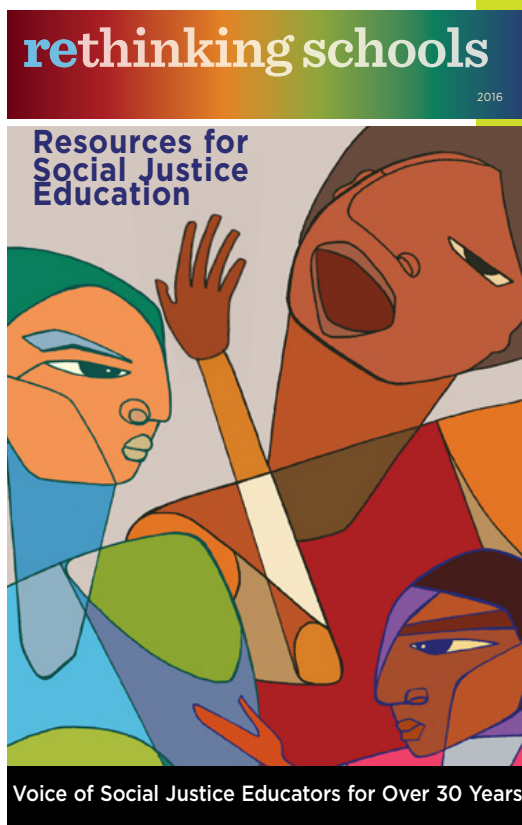
“Teaching in a diverse community offers not only the opportunity, but the necessity of promoting anti-bias work for the victims,” Whitaker says, “as well as solutions for those who perpetrate the injustice. RS provides ways for teachers to pass these tools on to parents and caregivers.”

A resource for parents

Parents have expressed appreciation for *Rethinking Schools* too—including some famous ones. Academy-award winning actor and public school advocate Matt Damon was introduced to *Rethinking Schools* by his mother, Nancy Carlsson-Paige, a longtime teacher and early-childhood expert. He’s been a supporter ever since: “As the parent of four girls, I want my daughters’ teachers to combine the teaching of academic skills with values of justice, equality, and environmental sensitivity—values that are expressed in every issue of *Rethinking Schools*.”

For a small, nonprofit, grassroots, teacher-activist project like *Rethinking Schools* to celebrate a 30th anniversary is, in many ways, remarkable. It’s also a testament to how the group’s vision has resonated with teachers through the nation and the world that “classrooms can be places of hope, where students and teachers gain glimpses of the kind of society we could live in and where students learn the academic and critical skills needed to make that vision a reality.” 🏡

Stan Karp taught high school English and Journalism in Paterson for 30 years. He has been a Rethinking Schools editor since 1992. He can be reached at stan.karp@gmail.com.



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Getting ready for the Next Generation Science Standards

**Recommended
informational texts for
Grades K-3**

By Susan M. Dougherty, Rider University, and
Sarah Anderson, Metuchen Public Schools

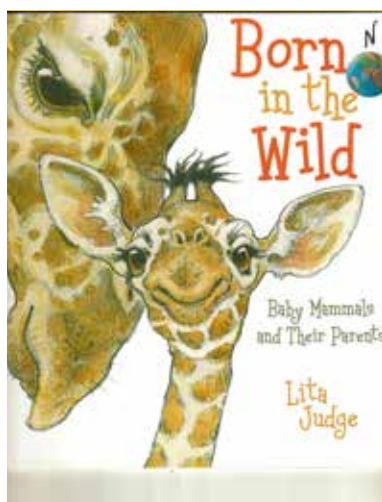
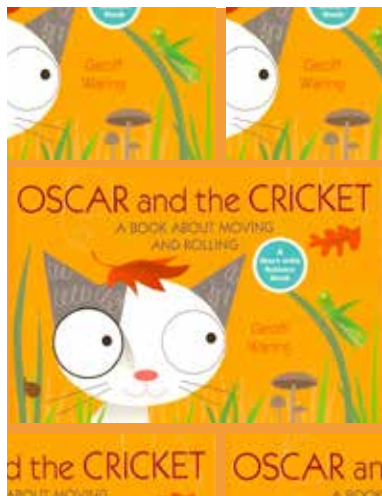
The Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) are upon us. By the fall, teachers in the lower elementary grades will be shaping the teaching of science on the basis of these new standards. In some cases, the shifts will be subtle; in others the NGSS require a whole new approach to teaching science. Perhaps most notable in the new standards is heightened attention to exploration, experimentation and problem solving. The NGSS ask teachers to involve students in hands-on, inquiry-based activities. For example, first graders are to “plan and conduct investigations to provide evidence that vibrating materials can make sound and that sound can make materials vibrate” and third graders are to “analyze and interpret data from fossils to provide evidence of the organisms and the environments in which they lived long ago.”

As teachers know, the ability of young children to make logical predications or to pose questions is dependent, to some degree, on their background knowledge. The child who has spent time working in a garden and watching the plants grow, flower, and produce fruit, is likely to have some questions about the processes he or she has observed. That child is likely to be able to make hypotheses about how plants grow and the factors that enhance or hamper growth. Hands-on experiences offer rich windows into the world of science.

But what about those topics and concepts that cannot be easily observed or accessed? The NGSS asks teachers to engage their lower elementary grade students in learning across scientific domains (life science; physical science; earth and space science; and engineering, technology, and applications of science). While each standard can be connected to children’s real life experiences, some draw upon less familiar and more abstract concepts. It is in these instances that informational picture books can serve as a rich source of information.

As teachers of young students know, there has been an increased emphasis on the use of informational texts in the lower elementary grades over recent years. Children’s book publishers have responded to the increased attention by publishing greater numbers of informational texts, some of which deal with sophisticated science topics in engaging, age-appropriate ways. In this article, we detail some of the recently published texts we have found to be excellent matches for Next Generation Science Standards in the lower elementary grades. We highlight at least one book for each grade level (K-3) and then provide a more comprehensive list.

The NGSS are explained in a variety of ways, but we find looking at the “performance statement” for each standard to be a useful



place to begin. Once we understand what children are expected to be able to *do*, then we take a look at what they are expected to *know* that will support them as they attempt to *do*.

Texts to support kindergarten standards

Among the kindergarten standards is the performance statement requiring that students “plan and conduct an investigation to compare the effects of different strengths or different directions of pushes or pulls on the motion of an object.” The NGSS delineates three disciplinary core ideas to support this standard:

PS2.A: Forces and Motion

- Pushes and pulls can have different strengths and directions.
- Pushing or pulling on an object can change the speed or direction of its motion and can start or stop it.

PS2.B: Types of Interactions

- When objects touch or collide, they push on one another and can change motion.

PS3.C: Relationship Between Energy and Forces

- A bigger push or pull makes things speed up or slow down more quickly.

In our search for informational texts that can be used to support children’s developing understanding of these ideas, we discovered *Oscar and the Cricket: A Book About Moving and Rolling* from the Start with Science series written by Geoff Waring and published by Candlewick Press. Oscar, a cat, and his cricket friend engage in play that involves pushing and pulling a number of objects. This book belongs to the narrative nonfiction genre, providing scientific information through the story of Oscar and the cricket’s antics.

This is a book that lends itself to a read aloud, followed by opportunities for kindergarteners to try out some of the pushing and pulling scenarios introduced in the story. Kindergarten teachers can help their students record the results of their experiments with various objects and different kinds of pushes and pulls. Soon the teacher will be able to invite students to suggest new push/pull investigations. In addition to being highly excited and engaged in these activities, the kindergarteners will build background knowledge about this foundational aspect of physical science and will be able to predict the results of their experiments.

Texts to support first-grade standards

For first grade, we have chosen to highlight the life science standard that asks teachers to prepare students to “read texts and use media to determine patterns in behavior of parents and offspring that help offspring survive.” The disciplinary core idea that underscores

this performance expectation is:

LS1.B: Growth and Development of Organisms

- Adult plants and animals can have young. In many kinds of animals, parents and the offspring themselves engage in behaviors that help the offspring to survive.

To support children's developing awareness of these ideas, we recommend the beautifully illustrated *Born in the Wild: Baby Mammals and Their Parents*, published in 2014 by Roaring Book Press. In each segment of the book, Lita Judge, the book's author and illustrator, highlights three animals that offer evidence for different ways that babies and their parents behave, most directly connected to survival.

For example, one of the sections of the book is given the heading "The baby needs protection." Then, the two-page spread that follows highlights three mammals: white-tailed deer, pandas, and musk oxen, beginning, "Mammals are born small and defenseless—they need to be kept safe from danger." The example of the white-tailed deer reads, "In his first few days, a white-tailed deer fawn is too wobbly and frail to run, so he hides by staying perfectly still. His mother comes back to nurse him occasionally, but most of the time she stays away so hungry predators don't find him."

First-grade teachers can read *Born in the Wild* aloud over several sittings and guide the class in a discussion about the behaviors that keep the baby animals alive. Together the teacher and the students will create a chart to record these ideas, providing guided practice that will enable students to begin to use texts to learn about additional animals when working away from the teacher.

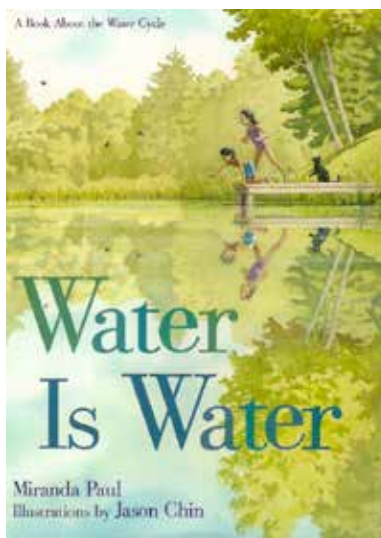
Practice of this standard with less teacher support might happen at a classroom "Research Center" full of easier-to-read texts (e.g., *Ranger Rick, Jr.* magazines or leveled, nonfiction texts about animals). Students might work together at the center to add new information to the chart started during the whole class discussion of *Born in the Wild*.

Texts to support second-grade standards

For second grade, the NGSS include several standards in the category of earth and space systems. Here we highlight the performance standard, "Obtain information to identify where water is found on earth and that it can be solid or liquid." The disciplinary core idea that underscores this standard is:

ESS2.C: The Roles of Water in Earth's Surface Processes

- Water is found in the ocean, rivers, lakes and ponds. Water exists as solid ice and in liquid form.



In order to achieve this performance standard, students must engage in the following scientific practice for "obtaining, evaluating, and communicating information":

- Obtain information using various texts, text features (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) and other media that will be useful in answering a scientific question.

To support students as they develop an understanding of water's presence across the earth and to provide them with opportunities to use informational texts to obtain information, we highlight two texts.

The first, *Water Is Water: A Book About the Water Cycle*, written by Miranda Paul and illustrated by Jason Chin, was published in 2015 by Roaring Book Press. Beautifully illustrated, the book is written in poetic verse, but showcases many aspects of the water cycle. The words including, "Clouds are clouds unless...they form low. Misty, twisty. Where is the town? Fog is fog unless..." lead the reader from water leaving a faucet, to steam, to clouds and rain and snow, all the way to the water absorbed by tree roots and contained within an apple. We recommend using *Water Is Water* to introduce various aspect of the water cycle, allowing students to think about the ways in which they've experienced the water cycle in their own lives and to introduce them to phenomena they have not yet observed.

The second text we recommend is an example of the kind of text typically imagined when nonfiction texts are discussed. *Water*, a National Geographic Kids expository text, written by Melissa Stewart, was published in 2014. It contains many of the features expected of a nonfiction expository text including a table of contents, diagrams, maps, and photographs, a glossary and an index. The book begins with a section titled "A Watery World" that explains that water covers three-fourths of the earth's surface; many of the other sections of the book are dedicated to information about the various locations and forms of water on earth, making it an obvious choice for supporting the target disciplinary core idea. Likewise, the text offers teachers many opportunities to support student use of various features of expository text to acquire information. Lessons on how to read the text and incorporate information provided by maps, diagrams, and photographs and described in captions could accompany this text.

Texts to support third-grade standards

Among the third grade life science standards is the expectation that "students will

be able to analyze and interpret data to provide evidence that plants and animals have traits inherited from parents and that variation of these traits exists in a group of similar organisms.” The NGSS delineates two disciplinary core ideas that will enable students to achieve this goal:

LS3.A: Inheritance of Traits

- Many characteristics of organisms are inherited from their parents.

LS3.B: Variation of Traits

- Different organisms vary in how they look and function because they have different inherited information.

In our search for books to support students’ development of an understanding of heredity, we found a book that we expect third graders will find highly relatable and intriguing. *Inheritance of Traits: Why Is My Dog Bigger Than Your Dog?* written by Jen Green was published by Raintree Books in 2014 as part of their “Show Me Science” series. This book explains the role of genes in the inheritance of traits such as ear length and hair color and type among dogs, cats and ponies.

A section about greyhounds and how they were bred for their speed states, “For centuries, breeders selected animals without understanding how inheritance worked. Now we know that features pass from parents to their young through genes, which are found inside cells.” The book also discusses the role of parents in heredity when answering the question, “If the two dogs come from the same litter, and inherited half their genes from each parent, why don’t they look exactly the same?”

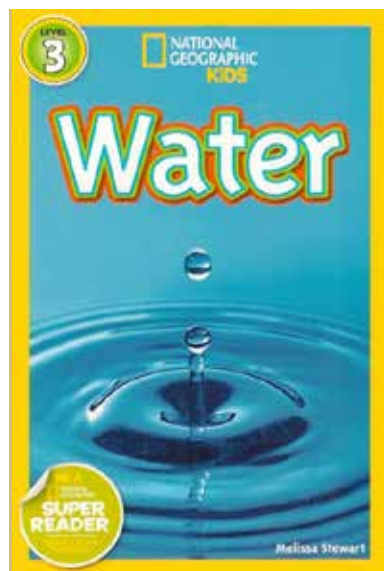
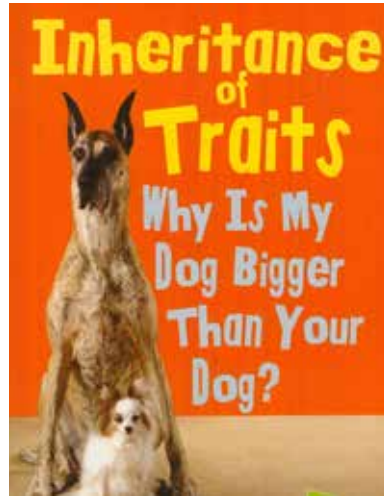
Once they understand the basics of heredity, third graders can use this book and others to make a t-chart of animals and the traits that they inherit from their parents. In the case of dogs, information about speed, fur color, sniffing ability, and agility are among the traits discussed. This data can then be put into paragraph form and shared with the class.

We are enthusiastic about the possibilities these texts offer to students and teachers engaged with the learning outlined by the Next Generation Science Standards. See Page 28 for additional texts to use with your students. 📖

Photos are from Sarah Anderson's 3rd grade class in Metuchen.

Sarah Anderson is a third grade teacher at Campbell Elementary School in the Metuchen Public Schools. She Anderson can be reached at sanderson@metboe.k12.nj.us.

Susan M. Dougherty is an assistant professor in the Department of Education at Rider University in Lawrenceville. Dougherty can be reached at sdougherty@rider.edu.



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Amazing informational texts

As we searched for informational texts that teachers in the lower elementary grades can use to support their students as they learn about and experiment with the scientific concepts outlined by the Next Generation Science Standards, we found a range of interesting, well-written texts accompanied by beautiful illustrations and photographs.

Kindergarten

Weather:

National Geographic Readers: Weather by Kristin Baird Rattini

Hurricane Watch (Let's-Read-and-Find-Out Science, Stage 2) by Melissa Stewart

Animals and plants:

Beavers by Gail Gibbons

A Nest Is Noisy by Dianna Hutts Aston

Woodpecker Wham! by April Pulley Sayre

National Geographic Readers: Monkeys by Anne Schreiber

National Geographic Readers: Weird Sea Creatures by Laura Marsh

Push and pull:

Oscar and the Cricket: A Book About Moving and Rolling (Start with Science) by Geoff Waring

First grade

Animals and plants (features):

My Little Book of Ocean Life by Camilla de la Bédoyère

A Bird Is a Bird by Lizzy Rockwell

Best Foot Forward by Ingo Arndt

Feathers: Not Just for Flying by Melissa Stewart

Animal Faces by Penelope Arlon and Tory Gordon-Harris

Animals and plants (babies):

Born in the Wild: Baby Mammals and Their Parents by Lita Judge

Ferdinand Fox's First Summer by Mary Holland

Sound and light waves:

What Are Sound Waves? (Light & Sound Waves Close-Up) by Robin Johnson

Sun, moon, and stars:

The Sun (revised edition, 2015) by Seymour Simon

Second grade

Properties of matter (physical/chemical):

Changing Matter (Science Readers) by Karen Larson

Animals and Plants:

Seeds and Fruits (Plant Parts) by Melanie Waldron

Flip, Float, Fly: Seeds on the Move by JoAnn Early Macken and Pam Paparone

Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt by Kate Messner

Rocks, water, and erosion of earth:

Water Is Water: A Book About the Water Cycle by Miranda Paul

National Geographic Readers: Water by Melissa Stewart

Third grade

Interdependent Relationships in Ecosystems:

The Great Monkey Rescue by Sandra Markle

Dirty Rats by Darrin Lunde

Inheritance and Variation of Traits:

Inheritance of Traits: Why Is My Dog Bigger Than Your Dog? by Jen Green

Gregor Mendel: The Friar Who Grew Peas by Cheryl Bardoe

Weather and Climate:

Hurricanes! by Gail Gibbons

When the Sky Breaks: Hurricanes, Tornadoes, and the Worst Weather in the World by Simon Winchester



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Bringing the world to your classroom

The benefits of hosting an international exchange student at your school or in your home

By Heather McBride, M.A., Hunterdon Central Regional High School

AFS liaison and Atlantic City EA member Carla Davis-Smith with host grandfather Jim Schroeder, host mother Kathy Coulibaly, and Spanish student Alvaro Rodriguez Mujica.



Imam Mukhtar demonstrates a home-cooked Indonesian meal, complete with sambal oelek.



Imam, Italian student Federica Alex Giassi, and host brother William Coulibaly at Port Republic's cardboard regatta.



Alvaro enjoys his first Phillies game.



In today's technologically wired global society, it would seem that we should have no difficulty bringing the world into our classrooms in ways that provide rich, meaningful experiences full of teachable moments about the different products, practices and perspectives that shape cultural views and that can help us to become better global citizens. After all, with just a few clicks of a mouse, we can show our students practically any location in the world.

There are, in fact, so many online and traditional resources available to us that the task of vetting these sources and preparing them for use with our lesson plans can become overwhelming and time-consuming. Nevertheless, we depend on a plethora of online resources to help us create and modify curricula that aligns with our school districts' initiatives to comply with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards for developing 21st-century skills in all of our students. These standards charge us with the responsibility to foster a population that, among other things:

- Considers multiple perspectives, values diversity and promotes cultural understanding.
- Appreciates the global dynamics between people, places and resources.
- Exhibits attitudes, values and skills that indicate a positive disposition and understanding of cultural differences and that enhance cross-cultural communication.

It's fair to say that a web-based activity may facilitate the opportunity to consider multiple perspectives, and even help students to gain an appreciation for cultural differences at some level. Nevertheless, we often find ourselves at a loss for knowing, or being able to quantify and evaluate, just how effective our lesson plans have been in developing globally minded and culturally aware students. After all, the majority of our students haven't left the comfort and familiarity of their classrooms or communities to actually explore, engage with and get to know other cultures.

Bring the world to your classroom with AFS-USA

How can we bridge the gap between technologically provided resources and real-world, firsthand experiences with cultural differences when we might not be able to travel abroad with our students or send them abroad to another school?

"We could give our students a whole new perspective on life by supporting our school communities to host an AFS international exchange student," says Andy Perlmutter, a long-time AFS volunteer and Sponsored Program Coordinator.

AFS-USA (formerly the American Field Service) is a branch of AFS Intercultural Programs and has been leading international high school student exchanges for nearly seven decades. Its mission is to work "toward a more just and peaceful world by providing international and intercultural learning experiences to individuals, families, schools, and communities through a global volunteer partnership."

International students bridge the global cyber gap

Samantha Cleaver notes in her online article, "7 Ways Hosting a Foreign Exchange Student Can Up Your Teaching Game," that "high school students who live and study in the United States through [various exchange] programs... will not only offer you and your family a rich cultural experience, it will enliven your work in the classroom." You can read the full article at bit.ly/exchangestudent7ways.

Cleaver suggests that a semester or yearlong exchange experience can broaden your students' horizons in unpredictable ways, inspire your students to travel abroad, and develop cultural

The 2016-17 NJ AFS exchange students at a beach party.



Alvaro played on Cedar Creek High School's 2015 football team, which won the Group II Division Championship.

Host sister Katie Law, AFS-NJ Hosting Coordinator Alison Colaluca, Area Team Chair Sue Fershing, and host mother and Ocean Gate EA member Peggi Law.



empathy for other points of view.

"Your students will love learning more about your exchange student's country," Cleaver notes. "Record their questions, then research to find the answers, and compare what you find with your exchange student's experiences."

Christine Kania, an NJEA member and English teacher at Hunterdon Central Regional High School (HCRHS) in Flemington, has seen this cultural curiosity blossom in her classroom.

"Every experience I have had with international students has been rewarding in some way" Kania says. "Early in my teaching, an exchange student from Russia was a top-performer in my Honors Major Themes English elective. Not only did she have advanced proficiency in reading college-level literary works in English, she intrigued her classmates with anecdotes about school and life in Russia and how they differed from school and life in the U.S."

For teachers, the opportunity for our students to talk to an exchange student firsthand about what life is like in his or her country not only personalizes, but vividly enlivens our lessons in ways that technology can't. Ryan Herbst, a social studies teacher at HCRHS has been involved with various student exchange programs for years.

"I've had the pleasure of having exchange students from Germany, Poland and Argentina in my global studies and sociology classes," Herbst says. "These students have contributed a lot to discussions with my students, including their observations about culture, history and everyday student life. They've offered my students opportunities to ask engaging questions about life in the exchange students' respective countries. These 'a-ha' moments just can't be found online in the same, tangible way."

Host families and schools connect in a meaningful way

Helping students connect to what they are learning in practical, substantial and meaningful ways is priceless. Sue Ferthing, the AFS-NJ Volunteer Area Team Chair and host mother to Hilde from Norway in 2014, shared that "Hilde told us that her history teacher loved having her in his class so she could give the European perspective on the events he taught about, and the students would ask her questions."

Steven Muench is an NJEA member and world history teacher from Westwood Junior-Senior High School, who himself was an AFS Returnee. A "returnee" is an American student who spent a year abroad through AFS. He continues to participate as a host brother and local volunteer. Muench has seen how AFS has brought the world to his students and made ordinary lessons spring to life in very animated and personal ways.

"An exchange student becomes a daughter, son, sister or brother to a new family, living under new house rules and sharing new cultures and language with each other," Muench says. "The exchange student wants to become a member of the school community so they are encouraged to participate in clubs or sports just like their host siblings."

The benefits of having local families host an exchange student stretch far across the school campus. Many members of a school community can learn from this visitor to their hometown. Sarina Orta, a school counselor at Phillipsburg High School has seen how having exchange students on campus has had an impact on her school.

"Having an exchange student doesn't really take any more time than I spend with my other students," Orta says. "I have never felt that it took time away from my other students or that

it was too much work. I think having an exchange student in our school exposes us to different cultural and even educational practices."

A transformational experience

As an AFS Returnee to Greece, and as a host sister and volunteer liaison to Luiza, a Brazilian student at Phillipsburg High School, I have experienced the AFS program from many perspectives.

As a Spanish teacher at HCRHS, I have a keen sense of how much more effective a lesson becomes when my students can interact with an exchange student, especially if that student comes from a Spanish-speaking country. My students have direct access to a native speaker and are able to use their language skills in a personal, meaningful way.

Teenagers live in the moment, and are so accustomed to having instant access to information, that the immediacy of engaging a native speaker and learning about life in their part of the world is gratifying and enlightening to them. It transforms and broadens their horizons and challenges them to think differently not only about their communities and personal relationships, but also about the world beyond the classroom. As one of my students recently said, "You'll be able to learn about the culture, the points of interest in their country, and ask about basic language vocabulary, such as 'Can I have this or that?' You'd be able to make connections. That's really cool!"

Volunteer liaison Kristen Schachter, host parent to students from Denmark and Germany who attend Jonathan Dayton High School in Springfield Township, knows that international students are "value-added assets" in our schools. Schachter is herself an AFS Returnee to Japan and Venezuela. She notes that international students are candidates who come from a highly competitive group of students who are eager to study in the United States.

"Thousands of students around the world apply every year to be a part of AFS but only a few are selected," Schachter states, "so you know you're getting the very best academically well-rounded students coming into your classrooms."

"There are many students who want to experience life in American high schools," Perlmutter adds. "They want to get a different perspective of what life is all about in the United States beyond what they see in Hollywood movies."

Schachter has witnessed how her AFS students have helped to broaden the perspectives of American students that shared classes with them.

"I was blown away," Schachter says. "Our children are so isolated and have no cultural experiences these days. I've seen how it has changed people's viewpoints right at my family's dinner table. Having an exchange student in your home really opens your children's eyes to the world."

NJEA member Peggi Law, a teacher at Ocean Gate Elementary School and an AFS host parent from Manchester, couldn't agree more.

"Having other cultures around you is so vital in today's world," Law says. "To have access for your students to be able to ask questions and get to know someone from another part of the world so they can learn what it is like from the ground level—to live in their homes and communities—it's truly transformational! It's opened up the world to my kids. It's the best way to promote world peace."

How you can take advantage of AFS

Thanks to a vast, supportive network of volunteers, New Jersey families host scores of AFS students from dozens of countries each year. AFS volunteers can arrange to give a talk in your individual classroom, in your library/media center or at a PTO meeting. They would be happy to write an article for your school's newsletter or provide a poster for your school's campus.

AFS students make presentations to students in grades K through 12 about their countries in their own districts as well and neighboring districts as part of their role as an ambassador of the worldwide AFS organization.

"These schools ask the AFS students to give talks to their classes, bring food and costumes from their countries, and much more," Schachter says. "It's worthwhile to be a part of this amazing organization. It's changed my family's life forever!"

For more information, contact AFS in New Jersey through Martha Friend at mfriender@afsusa.org or 908-370-1254. You may also contact Sue Fershing, Volunteer Area Team Chair, at sfersh@juno.com or 973-477-6207. 📞

Heather McBride, M.A., is an AFS Liaison and teaches Spanish at Hunterdon Central Regional High School, in Flemington.



Alex poses in a Christmas sweater.



Imam outside his high school just before school started.



Tanzanian student Thereza Joseph with Daniel Keyser, Ramapo-Indian Hills EA member.



Alvaro and Will in Central Park.

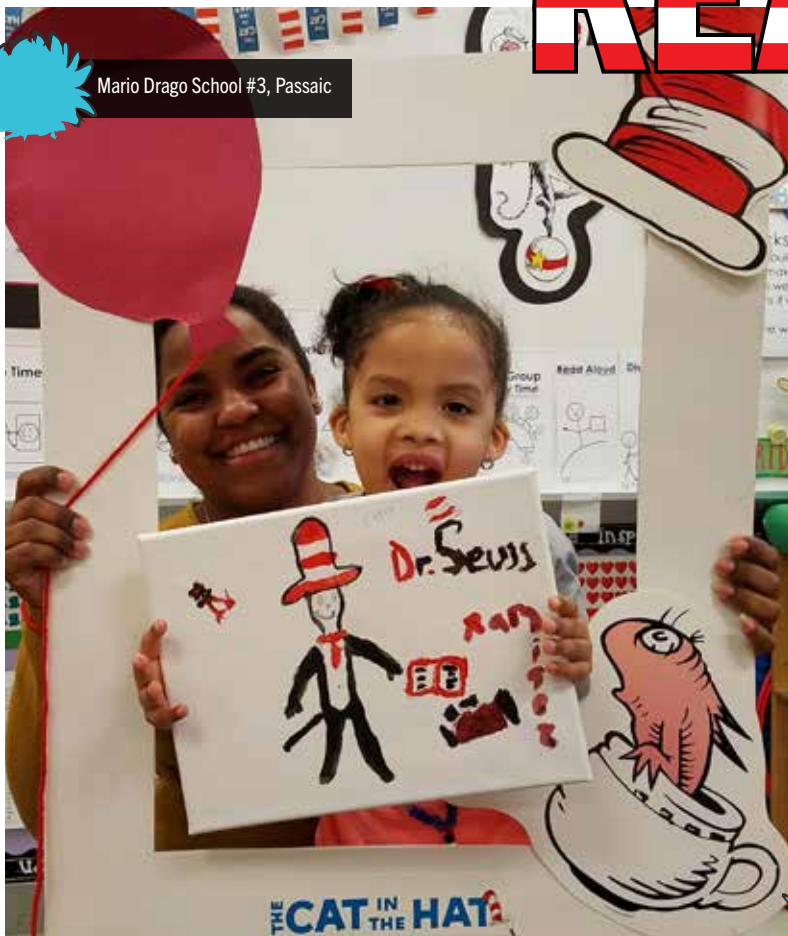


Aline Asheim from Norway and Alvaro attend prom together.

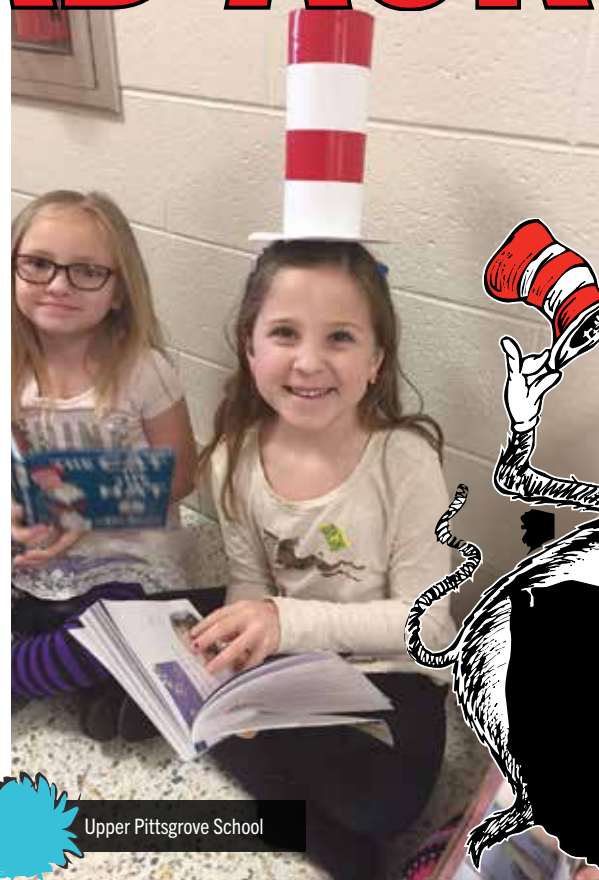


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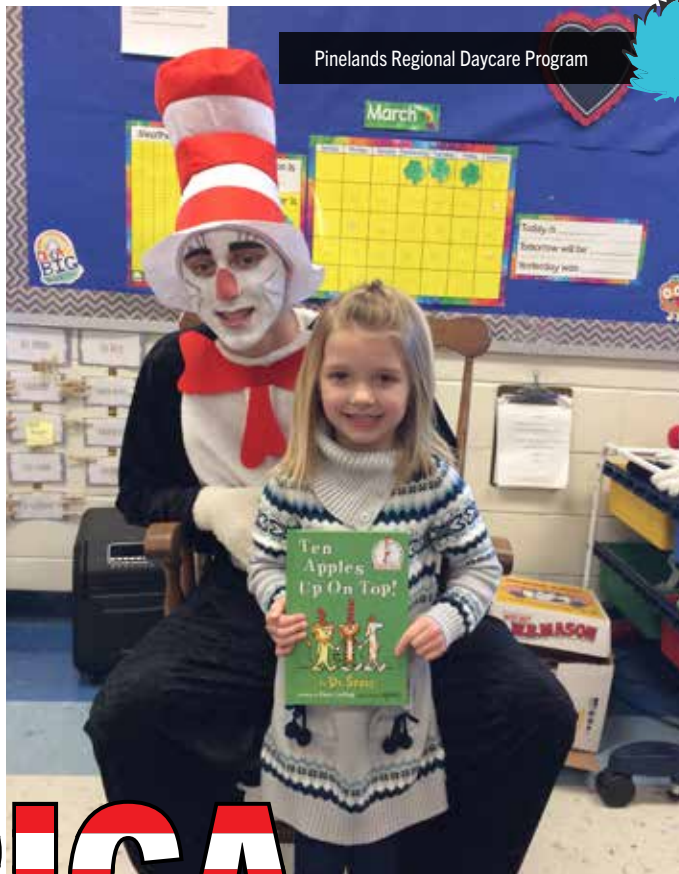
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SS AMERICA

Parker Elementary School, Middlesex



Schools denied access to chemical disaster data

By Debra Coyle McFadden

School Safety and Security plans cannot be adequate if district officials tasked with the responsibility of developing them are denied access to critical chemical disaster data.

New Jersey mandates that all school districts establish School Safety and Security plans in cooperation with police, fire departments, emergency planners and others. The hazard assessments within these plans must consider risks posed by local industry and spell out evacuation, shelter in place, and lockdown procedures. School Safety and Security plans cannot be adequate if district officials tasked with the responsibility of developing them are denied access to critical chemical disaster data.

Access Denied, a new report issued by the New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC), documents how the Christie administration is allowing counties and municipalities to violate federal law by blocking public access to local Emergency Response Plans (ERPs). WEC wrote to the 59 municipalities and 19 counties that host the 95 most potentially hazardous facilities, requesting to review the ERPs. Thirty-four of the 59 municipalities and 16 of the 19 counties denied or ignored the request. The facilities in these communities include chemical plants, oil refineries, sewage and water treatment works that use chlorine, bulk chemical handling and storage terminals, and refrigerated food processing facilities that use ammonia.

Security concerns exaggerated

There is a common refrain regarding nefarious characters getting their hands on this public information as a reason not to release it. We should recognize that those bad actors can access much of this information without an ERP. Large chemical facilities are easily discoverable with either a quick internet search, aerial map, or a pair of binoculars. If facility information is already disclosed, easily observable, or readily discoverable, then keeping it secret is not an option.

Although we should be vigilant about terrorism, the greater risk to school employees and community members is exposure to chemicals, particularly if there is a disaster. So we should be just as vigilant in preparing for and reducing the risk of that scenario. While chemical plant accidents are much more likely, emergency responders and communities should prepare for chemical releases from terrorism too—and we should all support technology upgrades that might make facilities less attractive terrorist targets.

The need to know is real

According to a 2014 report released by the Center for Effective Government, Kids in Danger Zones, 1,492 New Jersey schools are sited in the vulnerability zone of a hazardous


chemical facility. A staggering 43 percent of pre-k through high school students are at risk from a chemical catastrophe in New Jersey. The report states the riskiest facility in the U.S. is located in South Kearny, putting 1,887 schools at risk from a chlorine release.

Gov. Chris Christie's failure to ensure public oversight required by law has serious consequences. It prevents residents and community advocates from making suggestions to improve emergency plans. It exchanges opportunities for informed community preparedness for misleading promises of security. By keeping the public in the dark about the dangers we all face, the Christie administration protects corporate executives from pressure to replace highly hazardous substances or processes with safer ones. It also hinders the ability of school districts to create the most useful School Safety and Security Plans by hiding important information that should be included.

What local associations can do

Local associations can work with their UniServ field representatives to ensure that community and school officials have access to all data needed to properly assess chemical disaster hazards, and take all the necessary steps toward hazard reduction and emergency preparedness.

Specific local actions can include:

- Encourage members to sign WEC's petition (see "For more information") to Gov. Christie demanding the right to know about chemical hazards.
- Request and review the local Emergency Response Plan (ERP). WEC has developed a factsheet on how to make a request. If access is denied, please contact WEC to assist with the request.
- Request and review the district's school safety and security plan. Make sure it is up to date, and compare it to the local ERP to make sure they are consistent with each other.
- Ensure there is annual training of school staff on how school personnel and community responders will protect staff and students.
- Ensure there is a fire and security drill every two months. 

Debra Coyle McFadden is assistant director of the New Jersey Work Environment Council, a coalition of 70 organizations dedicated to safe, secure jobs and a healthy, sustainable environment.

For more information

- ✓ *Stop Chemical Disasters: Respect Our Right to Know*, WEC campaign petition. Go to bit.ly/respectrtk.
- ✓ *Access Denied: NJ Communities Remain in the Dark about Chemical Disaster*, 2016 WEC report. Go to bit.ly/accessdeniedwec.
- ✓ *How to Request an Emergency Response Plan*, WEC factsheet, Pages 22-23 of above report.
- ✓ *Kids in Danger Zones*, Center for Effective Government 2014 report. Go to bit.ly/kidsdangerzones.



**NJ Communities
Remain in the Dark
about Chemical Disasters**



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Nurturing a passion for learning through choice-based learning

By Steve Isaacs

The past seven years have marked a true transformation in my approach to teaching and learning. This was in large part a function of watching my own children and how they learn.

My daughters have been demonstrating a desire to learn outside of school based on their interests. When rainbow loom was all the rage, my daughter Leila would go right to YouTube to figure out how to make different types of bracelets with complex stitches. As I became more aware, it became apparent that this is how kids truly learn.

Take Minecraft for example. The game was introduced without a game manual or instructions. The community of players has created directions, tutorials, volumes of documentation, and a vast amount of video content to support the game. This says so much about learning, and more importantly how we learn. Talk about intrinsic motivation and creating for an authentic audience!

I teach game design and development. I was never formally taught about game design. It began with my passion for games and fascination with how they were made and what made a game good. This dates back to my childhood days with my Apple II+ computer, my 300 baud modem, and Mr. Behson, my computer programming teacher, who provided us with an opportunity to create a game as an option for our final project.

Choice/quest-based learning in my classroom

Fast-forward about 25 years. After years of teaching, I came to realize that I really wanted to embrace how kids learn in informal spaces and provide an environment where they could find and nurture their passion. I started out by adding "side quests," extra credit projects for my students to complete. I was trying to add a gamified layer to my existing curricula. Soon after, I decided to move to a complete quest-based system allowing students to choose their learning path.

I had some friends using 3DGameLab and decided to give it a go. 3DGameLab is a quest-based learning management system. The teacher creates quests, such as in an RPG (role-playing game). The quests can be linear, where a student completes one quest and that opens another. Quests can be nonlinear, where completed quests open new choices in learning pathways. The system is set up so that certain quests have prerequisites to unlock them while others may not. In the spirit of gamification, teachers can award badges, achievements and other rewards, and students earn XP (experience points) instead of grades. Essentially, a teacher can either approve a quest when it is completed or return it for a student to improve upon the quest based on teacher feedback.

Reviewing student submissions provides a great opportunity to engage in the feedback loop with students. I provide feedback to further guide the process. I am continually adding new

quests, but once they are established they remain as options for students for years to come. Like any good teaching, the quests are continually re-evaluated and modified or eliminated as needed. As new ideas arise, the class gets a refresher and continues to stay relevant, but reinventing the wheel continually is not necessary. All activities align to the learning goals for the course, but choice in how students get there provides a great sense of autonomy and empowerment.

Another key component to my choice-based approach is to provide my students with a variety of resources, thus putting much of the learning in their hands. I have come to realize that my expertise is in teaching and guiding students through the iterative design process inherent in making games—that is guiding students through creating a prototype of the game, testing it, analyzing it, and refining it.

The tool the students use is neither important nor something I need to teach directly. Students often come with a level of interest or expertise that will drive that learning. I support the process and learn with and from my students. I love sitting down with a student and figuring things out together. I model the learning process, and they see my excitement when it comes to tackling a new challenge. I think there is great value in having the students see me as a co-learner in the classroom while their interest drives the process.

This is how it unfolded for me, but your path may be different. Consider bringing student choice into your

Steve Isaacs' daughter Leila demonstrates the innate motivation to learn based on interest and choice.



classroom, or consider additional ways you can embrace the power of choice and encourage passion-based learning.

How to get started creating a choice-based learning environment

Providing opportunities for students to choose does not require a complete course overhaul. I would suggest the following points of entry.

1. Offer choice in terms of assessment: There are many ways for students to demonstrate their learning. Is it necessary for every student to submit a poster or brochure? I don't know about you, but evaluating 100 or more brochures would bore me to tears. Why not give options and allow students to choose how they would like to demonstrate their learning? Some options may include:

- a. Create a world or interactive experience in Minecraft.
- b. Design a board game or digital game.
- c. Produce a poster or video.

- d. Give an oral presentation.
- e. Make a quiz using quizzlet or Kahoot!
- f. Allow students to propose an alternate assignment that appeals to them.
2. Develop a choice-based unit of study: Some of the teachers in my building have taken this approach and created a unit of study based on the topic at hand and students choose from a variety of learning paths within the unit.

3. Co-create activities with your students: I have a number of colleagues I respect very much that often mention the fact that education is one of the only industries where we rarely ask our clients for their input. Students are sure to take ownership in an activity that they helped to develop.

I hope you found this information helpful. Please feel free to reach out to me via email at steveizo71@gmail.com. 📧

Steve Isaacs is passionate about game-based learning and is one of the founding members of the Games4Ed Initiative as well as a co-founder of the weekly #games4ed Twitter chat. He teaches Game Design and Development at William Annin Middle School in Basking Ridge. Isaacs was honored as the 2016 ISTE Outstanding Teacher of the Year as well as the state lead PBS Digital Innovator for 2016-17. Isaacs' work with EdTech companies led to the founding of #EdTech-Bridge, a Twitter chat and online community aimed at helping EdTech stakeholders build collaborative relationships to create better EdTech products. Through his involvement with a number of EdTech organizations, Isaacs has become a Brainpop Certified Educator, Microsoft Innovative Education Expert, Common Sense Certified EdTech Coach, and a global Minecraft Mentor. You can follow Isaacs on Twitter, @mr_isaacs, and keep up with his work through his blog, gamesandlearning1.blogspot.com. Outside of his role as educator, Isaacs is an event producer for Minefaire, a massive Minecraft fan experience aimed at fans, educators and parents. Upcoming shows include Charlotte, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia.

Reflective teaching by Pam Garwood

May is the time when educators look back over the events of the last 10 months and ask themselves, “Have I met the goals that I created for my students and myself?” It is never too late—or too early—to think about your goals for the year and reflect on whether or not they were met. Reflective teaching is a strategy in which you examine what you are doing in the classroom and then apply what you have learned to improve your teaching practice.

Daily reflection can lead to a deeper understanding of what is happening in the classroom. Reflection and analysis of classroom events allows you to view strengths and weaknesses in order to improve your teaching practices. It also helps you focus on the needs of the students sitting in your classroom.

How to start

1. Keep a daily journal. Record reflections, questions, and possible answers to your questions. Include a copy of any lesson plan you want to analyze. Record comments and questions about the lesson plan.
2. Ask a colleague to buddy up with you. Partnering with a colleague provides an opportunity for peer sharing and discussion. You could also ask students for specific feedback about a lesson, classroom procedure, or event.
3. Select a problem for reflection. Are you concerned about the effectiveness of your lessons? Is there a particular group of students that causes concern? Are discipline and classroom management a problem? Do you want to improve your teaching practices?

Gathering data:

1. Set aside time each day to write

in your journal. If it was a wonderful day, record it and then ask why. Record classroom events. Note what occurred, student reactions, your feelings, your assessment of the event, and any additional information you feel is relevant. Develop questions that you want to answer.

2. If you are working with a colleague, you may want to invite him/her into your classroom to observe your teaching. Before the observation, meet with your colleague to discuss the focus of the observation.

3. You may want to observe a colleague to see new techniques in action, get new ideas for your own teaching toolkit, and reflect on your own assumptions, beliefs, and teaching practices based on what you observe. This can be a great opportunity to share successful teaching approaches with each other.

4. Think about recording or videotaping your lessons. It might feel awkward at first, but it certainly will be helpful. Think about some specific aspects of your teaching on which you would like to focus.

5. Involve students in collecting information for your reflection. Their feedback, opinions, and perceptions about a lesson can provide be a valuable perspective.

Last but not least

Once you have collected information, it is time to make connections between present practices and future actions.

- Analyze: You may notice patterns begin to emerge. What are they? What ideas come to mind? Are you surprised by some of what you are learning? Do changes need to take place? Who

needs to be involved in the change?

- Talk: Find a colleague with whom you can share your discoveries. A supportive colleague may help you develop new ideas and strategies. Discuss scenarios from your own classroom. Try creating a book club with other teachers who want to improve their practice. Read and discuss professional articles.

- Research: After you have identified changes you would like to make, you may need to find out more information. Begin an online search of best practices and academic articles. There are numerous websites that offer useful information about instructional strategies.

- Ask: When areas of change have been identified, attend professional learning programs. Pose questions on reputable teacher websites to get ideas from other educators. Don't be afraid to ask a trusted colleague for help.

Each new school year presents new challenges. Look at the goals you set last September. Select one goal. Determine what you can do during the last few weeks of school to move toward achieving that goal.

End the school year with reflective practice. What you discover may inspire you during the summer months. Be prepared to start your reflective practice on the first day of school in September. 🏠

Pam Garwood is an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division and coordinator for the NJEA Priority Schools Initiative. She can be reached at pgarwood@njea.org.

Reflection and analysis of classroom events allows you to view strengths and weaknesses in order to improve your teaching practices.

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A CLOSER LOOK *monthly highlights*



During the month of May, "Classroom Close-up NJ" visits schools where science, technology, engineering and math are key. You can see how general education students partner with students with special needs, how LEGO projects enhance learning, and how educators use more effective ways to deal with discipline issues. All these stories can be found on classroomcloseup.org after they air on NJTV.



watch

MAY 7

Students at Canfield Avenue School in Mine Hill Township have an active voice and choice in their learning. During Innovation Time, students pursue interest-based projects and create their own learning experiences. This allows students to delve deeply into their interests while helping them to build skills and self-regulate their learning experience.

MAY 14

Nestled on the banks of the Delaware River, Palmyra High School has dedicated educators and supportive parents resulting in successful students. The smaller school with a diverse population gives students opportunities to be involved in more activities including sports, clubs and plays. Because of the size of the school, the teachers and students form personal connections that result in successful outcomes.

MAY 21

Mullica Township Middle School is participating in The Big History Project, a world-class resource available to everyone, everywhere—for free. The course spans the history of the universe and incorporates the insights of more than a dozen disciplines. By challenging students to look at the world from many different perspectives, teachers inspire a greater love of learning and understanding of how we got here, where we're going, and how we fit in.



Air times

NJEA's "Classroom Close-up NJ" has won 15 Emmy® awards. It inspires and educates the public about the great things happening in New Jersey public schools. The show airs on Sundays on NJTV at 7:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

**Classroom
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classroomcloseup.org

Visit classroomcloseup.org to watch individual segments, the entire show, or to see what's coming up. On Twitter, follow @CCUNJ and "like" the show at [facebook.com/crcunj](https://www.facebook.com/crcunj). The show continues to gain fans, especially since it is available online and can be downloaded or emailed to family and friends.

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highlights

Opera, science, and Advanced
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showcase

These experiences have been endorsed by NJEA's Professional Development Institute and are also posted on njea.org. Providers seeking endorsement should call NJEA's Professional Development Division at 609-599-4561.

Opera Learning Institute

The Metropolitan Opera Guild is sponsoring a weeklong institute for educators of all grade levels Aug. 6-11 at Lincoln Center, New York. Through this intensive professional development experience, teachers will engage in opera creation and apply those strategies to the classroom environment, using the Metropolitan Opera Guild's three strands of opera-based learning: create, present, attend. Participants will explore a nonfiction text through an opera creation process. This process will demonstrate teaching strategies that use opera to explore text and build students' comprehension, analysis, and writing skills.

Participants will also have the opportunity to engage in guided lesson planning and curriculum development to integrate opera into their work and create their own opera-based lessons.

These opera-based teaching activities will use the Metropolitan Opera Guild's Comprehensive Arts Learning and Teaching standards (<https://sites.google.com/site/cobaltstandards/>), which have key Common Core connections, including an emphasis on building teaching strategies through opera to help students make inferences, cite evidence, and analyze text. Opera Learning Institute is designed for educators new to opera, as well as seasoned opera-lovers.

Teachers will leave with clear strategies for connecting artistic processes with multiple subject areas. New Jersey teachers may receive professional development credit with prior approval from their designated supervisor.

The cost is \$175. Breakfast is provided each day, lunch on Friday. To register go to www.jotform.com/70124792416151. The registration deadline is August 4. For additional information, contact Stuart Holt at 212-769-6023 or sholt@operaed.org. You may also visit www.metguild.org.

NJSTA 2017 Summer Institute

21st-Century Science Connections: Real World Applications for the Classroom

The New Jersey Science Teacher Association's (NJSTA) 13th annual Maitland P. Simmons Memorial Award Summer Institute will be held July 17-21 on the campus of the College of Saint Elizabeth in Morristown. Middle school teachers of science are encouraged to apply.

Participants will improve their understanding of teaching applications, which align with the Next Generation Science Standards. Twenty-four middle school teachers will work with natural phenomena as they engage in the dimensional creative processes that transform the conceptual applications into classroom experiences. Educators will learn how to use science to empower their students and meet performance expectations. Each teacher will receive a one-day registration to the 2017 New Jersey Science Convention, where a follow-up session will be held.

Teachers who are accepted for the institute must become NJSTA members in order to participate. A \$100 reservation fee is required, but will be refunded upon completion of the institute.

Contact Cheryl Zanone at 973-714-5771 or clzanone@gmail.com for more information. Visit www.njsta.org to register. The registration deadline is May 15, 2017.

Lewes Advanced Placement Summer Institute

Lewes, Delaware is the setting for The Lewes Advanced Placement Summer Institute, a College Board-endorsed, intensive four-day program. Designed for new and experienced AP teachers to maximize their pedagogical practices, information is provided by master instructors that is focused on strategies, methodology, creativity, technology, resources and best-practice lesson planning.

The following courses will be offered:

Session 1: July 18-21 – Biology, Computer Science Principles, English Language, European History, French Language, Music Theory, Psychology, Spanish Language and Culture, Statistics, U.S. Government and Politics, U.S. History, and World History.

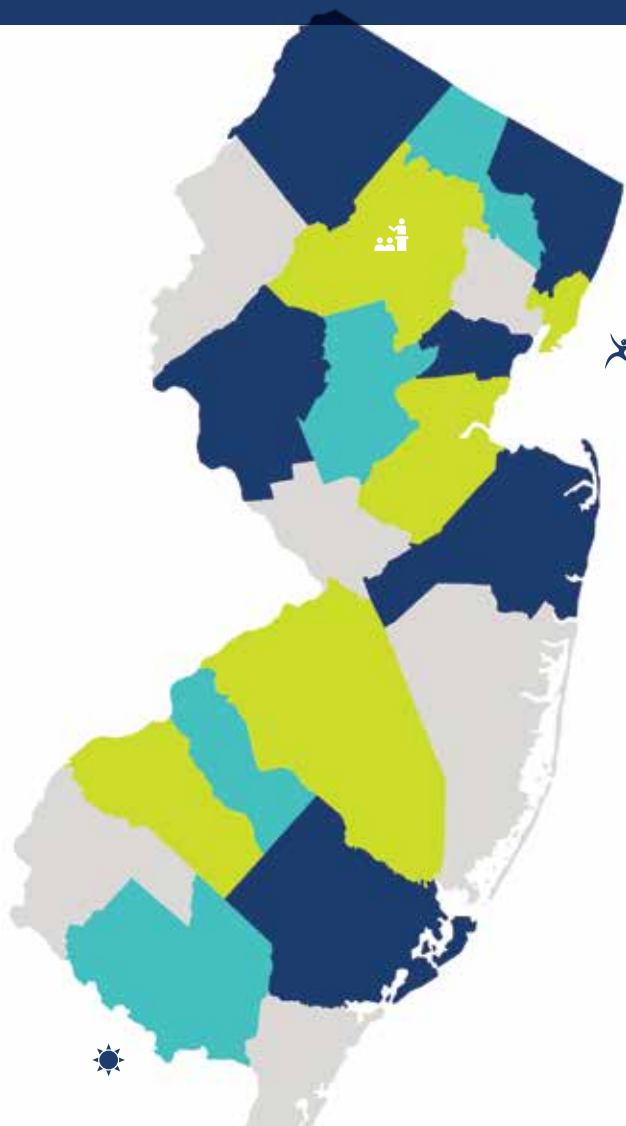
Session 2: July 25-28 – Calculus AB, Chemistry, Economics (Macro), English Literature, Environmental Science, Physics 1, and Studio Art.

The institute is held at Cape Henlopen High School. Participants are responsible for housing. The institute website lists several suggested hotels within a short drive of the high school.

Because Lewes and Rehoboth Beach are extremely popular resort areas, early registration is encouraged.

The registration fee is \$1,200, which includes payment for 30 hours of instruction; a College Board-endorsed professional development certificate, course materials, lab fees, textbooks, College Board booklets, and a catered lunch at a waterfront restaurant. The early bird registration is \$1,099 if registered by June 12.

For more information contact Dr. Wilson Frampton at 302-644-0277 or lewesapsi@gmail.com. To register go to www.lewesap.com.



More to learn


HiTOPS and GLSEN Central New Jersey present 3rd Annual Trans Youth Forum

The 3rd Annual Trans Youth Forum, sponsored by GLSEN Central New Jersey and HiTOPS and hosted by Rutgers Center for Social Justice Education and LGBTQ Communities will take place at the Livingston Student Center in Piscataway on Saturday, May 20.

For the past two years, HiTOPS and GLSEN Central NJ have brought together hundreds of New Jersey's trans and non-binary youth and their supporters for a day of celebration and education. This year's theme, "We Exist. We Thrive!" will focus on empowering trans and non-binary youth and their allies to come together and work, explore, share, bond and find renewed strength for themselves and their community.

Keynote speakers are Jiselle Parker and Christine Hamlett—two role models in the trans community who will share their stories. Participants will choose from over 30 workshops. In addition to youth programming, this year's NJ Trans Youth Forum will include a track dedicated to increasing the skills of educators and another track for parents and key family members. For more information on the forum, and to register, visit www.njtyf.org.

HiTOPS is an adolescent health and wellness organization with over 30 years of experience providing comprehensive sexual health education and services to adolescents and their families in New Jersey.

GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network) and GLSEN Central New Jersey Chapter strive to ensure that each member of every school community is valued and respected. 

NJSEA leadership matters

The importance of receiving traditional pedagogical training

By Ellen Bacon, NJSEA State President, Seton Hall University

New Jersey is facing a pedagogical crisis. The bleak reality is traditional teacher preparation programs experienced a drastic decrease in enrollment while alternative and non-institute of higher education based programs (Non-IHE) enrollment has increased over the last few years. According to the Title II Higher Education Act government-sponsored website, in the 2008-09 school year, traditional program enrollment in New Jersey was 18,038 preservice teachers, but by the 2013-14 school year, that number decreased to 10,667 preservice teachers.

According to the United States Department of Education, non-IHE programs gained an increase from zero in the 2008-09 school year to 2,548 in 2013-14. While both paths afford the opportunity to receive a teaching certificate in the state of New Jersey, they are not comparatively equal. This has become a problem for New Jersey schools and students for various reasons, including rapid teacher-turnover, diminished understanding of developmental influences in education, and reduced student performance.

Long-term commitment to the profession

New Jersey's accredited institutions of higher education expose preservice teachers to multiple field placements and internships, ensuring that when they enter the classroom these now first-year teachers have the skills they need to perform effectively. New Jersey's teacher preparation program graduates have experience that solidifies their commitment to our profession because they have abundant experience with learners and classroom involvement.

In contrast, the brief training program afforded in alternative programs, such as Teach for America (TFA), do not expose participants to adequate or sufficient training that will ensure dedication to teaching as a profession. In *Education Week*, Morgaen L. Donaldson and Susan Moore Johnson wrote that this can result in teachers coming out of the alternative programs leaving the profession at a higher rate than their traditional counter-parts.

Moreover, the alternative program candidates often leave school districts that would benefit most from a stable and consistent faculty. One study by Julian Vasquez Heilig of the University of Texas at Austin and professor Su Jin Jez of California State University, Sacramento, notes that 80 percent of TFA candidates leave teaching after three years, and the high turnover is linked to increased expenses and time spent on training replacement staff.

Our students benefit from certified teachers

Heilig and Jez also found that when TFA teachers teach students, those students perform significantly lower in reading and mathematics compared to students that are taught by credentialed beginning teachers. Heilig recognizes a correlation between the suffering performance and alternative programs' shorter training process, leaving the profession after only a few years, and overly vigorous placements for their capability.

Conversely, educators that have received a traditional pedagogical training outperformed those trained in the alternative programs. In New Jersey, this is due to our world-class, nationally accredited institutions. We graduate capable teachers, and capable teachers create capable students and citizens. While test scores alone do not fully demonstrate student achievement, this is just one of many aspects of our profession in which teachers trained in traditional programs excel in all cases.

How can we solve this?

It is no secret that our profession faces constant scrutiny and backlash. With those in public office threatening to take swings at us or dealing with teacher performance being linked to standardized testing, among countless other disincentives, it is no surprise that young people have been deterred from entering the teaching profession.

In addition, college affordability is at an all-time low. We cannot continue to treat higher education as a luxury. It is our duty to support candidates who will fight for our needs. If more NJEA members enter public office and advocate in that arena, education from prekindergarten to universities will reap the benefits.

I implore all NJEA members to join together with the preservice members against challenges such as dwindling enrollments in teacher education programs numbers and certification concerns, and injustices such as the prohibitive cost of a college education.

For more information on the preservice component of NJEA, please visit our Facebook page, facebook.com/NJEAstudents and our blog, powertopubliceducation.weebly.com. 📢

See for yourself

A number of studies on the teacher retention of educators who have come through a non-IHE training program are available, as are statistics for participation rates in traditional teacher education programs.

"TFA teachers: How long do they teach? Why do they leave?" by Morgaen L. Donaldson and Susan Moore Johnson. *Education Week*. <http://bit.ly/tfaedweek>

"Chronic teacher turnover in urban elementary schools," by Kacey Guin. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*. bit.ly/teacherturnoverchronic

"Teach for America: A false promise," by Julian Vasquez Heilig and Su Jin Jez. *National Education Policy Center*. bit.ly/tfafalsepromise

State Enrollment Information, United States Department of Education. title2.ed.gov/Public/Home.aspx



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NJREA past, present and future

A strong NJEA PAC depends on you

While we cannot see into the future and predict elections, one thing is certain: this time next year, Chris Christie will no longer be New Jersey's governor. This fall, New Jersey will elect a new governor as well as representatives for all 120 seats in the Senate and Assembly. As a union, our pro-public education voice is significantly enhanced when we work to elect individuals who reflect our values.

Electing these individuals doesn't happen by accident. It takes countless hours of campaign work and the help of political contributions made by the NJEA Political Action Committee (PAC) to help shape a pro-public education and pro-public employee Legislature. PAC is a member-supported, member-led effort.

The 125-member NJEA PAC Operating Screening committee represents all segments of our organization. These members—including NJREA representatives—meet with candidates, ask tough questions and decide which candidates earn the support of NJEA's 200,000 active and retired members.

A robust NJEA PAC fund does not happen by accident either. Voluntary political contributions depend upon the commitment of active and retired members who understand the importance of supporting pro-public education, pro-union candidates. The fund cannot be sustained by only a few caring and committed individuals. Everyone must recognize that giving to PAC will ensure the right leaders are elected to protect the long-term availability of pensions and post-retirement medical benefits.

This spring, help support your county and help support pro-labor, pro-public education employee candidates: Make a contribution to PAC. Need a PAC contribution form? Be sure to check page 12 of the March issue of the *NJREA Newsletter* or visit www.njea.org/njrea to get find the form.



Whom to support with NJEA PAC funds is determined by a democratic process that includes a thorough interview with a screening committee. An NJREA Representative sits on that committee. Pictured here is NJREA Congressional Contact Carol Friedrich.

Around the counties

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

BURLINGTON COUNTY REA's spring meeting/luncheon will be on Thursday, May 11 at Marco's at the Indian Spring Country Club in Marlton. The cost is \$30. To attend, call Lisa Donatiello at 609-410-7197.

Join **ESSEX COUNTY REA** for its upcoming meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, May 17 at the Hanover Manor in East Hanover. NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Sean M. Spiller will be the guest speaker. The cost is \$25. To attend, call Beverly Johnson Showers at 862-955-4133.

The **MIDDLESEX COUNTY REA's** spring meeting/luncheon will be held on Thursday, June 8, at The Grand Marquis in Old Bridge. MCREA scholarship winners will be honored. The cost is \$30. To attend, call Anne Chomko at 732-675-1734.

MONMOUTH COUNTY REA welcomes you to its next two events. The MCREA's meeting/luncheon will be held on Friday, June 13 at the Spring Lake Manor in Spring Lake.

MCREA's Family Fun Day will be held on Tuesday, June 27 at the Oak Tree Lodge in Neptune. The cost to members is \$5. To attend either event, call Sue Shrott at 732-995-7754.

MORRIS COUNTY REA welcomes you to its upcoming spring meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, May 10 at the Birchwood Manor in Whippany. The cost is \$26.

The **MCREA's** scholarship luncheon will be held on Wednesday, June 7 at The Mansion in Mountain Lakes. The cost is \$26. To attend either event, call Nancy Condit at 973-335-0990.

OCEAN COUNTY REA's next meeting/luncheon will be held on Thursday, May 11 at Jack Baker's Lobster Shanty in Point Pleasant. The cost is \$28. To attend, call Janice Sovinee at 732-477-1711.

Join **PASSAIC COUNTY REA** for its upcoming meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, June 7 at The Brownstone in Paterson. To attend, call Kitty Sausa at 201-445-7577.

SALEM COUNTY REA will hold its spring meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, May 17 at St. John's Episcopal Church in Salem. To attend, call Peggy Kavanaugh at 856-935-0075.

The **SUSSEX COUNTY REA's** spring meeting/luncheon will be held on Monday, June 5 at the Lafayette House in Lafayette. Annual SCREA scholarships will be presented. The cost is \$26. To attend, call Linda Adams at 973-827-6285. 📍

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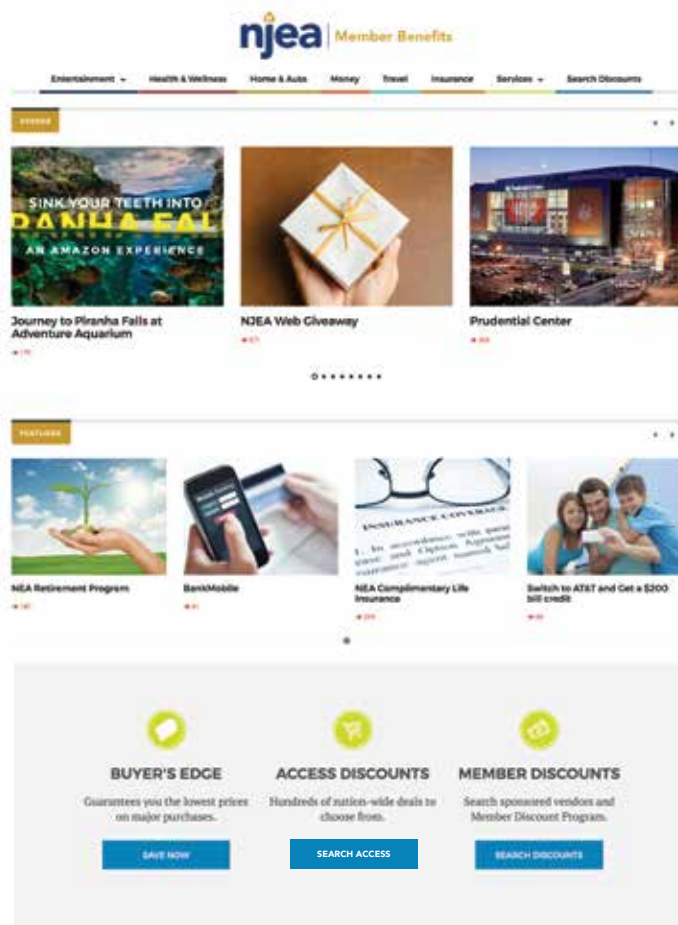


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- On the tabs at the top of the page, click on "Search Discounts" and enter "Plum Benefits." You'll find a site that provides discounts on national and local events.
- More fun discounts can be found under the tabs marked "Entertainment" and "Travel".
- Keep on exploring to find more!

May Web Giveaway

One winner will receive:

- Two tickets to SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment* properties (except Discovery Cove) valid through Dec. 31, 2017. Discounts to SeaWorld Parks and Entertainment are available through Plum Benefits and ACCESS Discounts at NJEA Member Benefits.
- Free golf outing for two (including lunch and cart fees) at Battleground Country Club* in Manalapan, N.J. Contact Sheila Olt at 732-462-7575, ext. 119 for information regarding discounts on weddings, parties and special events at Battleground County Club.

Deidre Varga of Holmdel Twp. EA won:

- \$200 Target gift card from Bank of America.** NEA members have three great sponsored credit cards from which to select. Go to neamb.com and look under the finance menu.
- Member Appreciation Event valued at \$150 from California Casualty.** Deidre will be able to schedule a celebration with food for her school staff. Go to neamb.com and look under the insurance menu or call 888-308-9158 to request a quote for auto/home insurance.

Be sure to register online each month for the web giveaways!

*Member Discount Program and Access: Products and services listed in the NJEA Member Discount Program and Access are provided as a service to NJEA members and do not constitute an endorsement by NJEA or a representation regarding the products' quality or characteristics. NJEA makes no warranties expressed or implied, including the warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose regarding any products or services listed in the NJEA Member Discount Program and Access.

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Staff News hires & promotions



Congratulations to NJEA Administrative Assistant **HEATHER MARSH** who was honored with the Friends of Public Education Award by the Morris County Council of Education Associations on March 29. Marsh, who works in the NJEA UniServ regional office in Parsippany, devotes much time and energy to assisting the Jefferson Township Education Association on its "JTEAM" initiative.

Through JTEAM, the JTEA joins with dozens of municipal and community organizations to combat substance abuse,

including the Jefferson Township Municipal Alliance Committee (JTMAC). Sharing the honor with Marsh was JTEAM's partner, JTMAC President Kristine Wilsusen.

JTEAM hosts events throughout the year including workshops, speakers, community roundtables, and large-scale, multi-association events involving parents and students.

Pictured are JTEAM members with Marsh in the foreground on the right and Wilsusen on the left. 🏠



NJEA welcomed **AILEEN O'DRISCOLL** to NJEA staff on March 16 as the managing attorney in the NJEA Legal Services office. O'Driscoll is familiar to many NJEA members, having previously worked at the Zazzali, Fagella, Nowak, Kleinbaum and Friedman law firm in its Newark office. While there, she handled member and organizational legal matters for NJEA, most recently the successful battle to prevent the School Employees Health Benefits Commission from forcing retired NJEA members into a Medicare Advantage plan.

O'Driscoll has extensive experience litigating matters on behalf of the NJEA and its members before the Public Employment Relations Commission, the New Jersey Office of Administrative Law, and federal and state courts. She has participated on a number of professional development panels for the New Jersey State Bar Association and NJEA.

A native of New Jersey, O'Driscoll is a Tarheel, having earned her bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. She holds a Juris Doctor from Seton Hall University. O'Driscoll resides in Mendham with her husband, John, and four children, Sean, Robert, Elizabeth and Claire.

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Visit njea.org/jobs regularly for the latest postings.



Questions? Call the NJEA Human Resources office at 609-599-4561.

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5/19
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**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING AND COUNTY
PRESIDENTS' COUNCIL
MEETING**

5/20
Saturday

**DELEGATE ASSEMBLY
MEETING**



6/2
Friday

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
MEETING**

6/3
Saturday

**NEA RA STATEWIDE
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6/30-7/5
Sat-Mon

**NEA REPRESENTATIVE
ASSEMBLY**

7/12
Wednesday

**NJEA SUMMER
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(SPLI)**

7/19
Wednesday

NJEA TECHSTOCK

deadlines

6/2

**NJEA SUMMER LEADERSHIP
CONFERENCE**
Event date: Aug. 5-11

6/16

TECHSTOCK CONFERENCE
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6/26

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Member authors must exhibit during all convention hours on both days, Nov. 9 and 10, displaying and selling their published works and conversing with members. The cost to participate in Authors' Alley is \$50.

For more information or to reserve your space, call Cindy Vannauker at 609-599-4561, ext. 2263. NJEA must receive your space reservation by June 30, 2017.

For a registration flier visit njea.org/authorsalley.



Public education and International Workers' Day

In scores of countries around the globe, May 1 is officially known as International Workers' Day. The U.S. is an exception, despite the fact that the marking of the day originated in Chicago on May 1, 1886. But as income inequality grows wider here in America, observation of the day is gaining renewed momentum.

Because NJEA members work in public schools everywhere in New Jersey, we have a front-row seat to the effects of income inequality. In classrooms, on school buses, and in the lunch line we see one student wearing the latest fashions with the most expensive labels beside the student in worn out, years-old hand-me-downs. We see the student who always has money for extra snacks next to the child who rarely has a decent breakfast.

At the March 18 meeting of the NJEA Delegate Assembly, delegates passed a resolution calling for "a statewide day of action on May 1, International Workers' Day." At first blush, it might seem that a recognition of International Workers' Day is beyond the scope of NJEA, whose mission is to advance and protect the rights, benefits and interests of members, and promote a quality system of public education for all students.

First and foremost, however, in addition to being a professional association of educators, NJEA is a labor union that has common cause with everyone who fights for economic justice. We know that there is a correlation between poverty and achievement in school. We know that there is a correlation between collective bargaining and a reduction in poverty. When we fight for better economic conditions for workers, we help create better learning environments for our students.

Secondly, the foundation upon which the concept of a free public education is built has its roots in justice for all Americans regardless of economic or social status. When Horace Mann was appointed as the first secretary of Massachusetts' first statewide board of education, his six principles of education embodied that notion:

- Citizens cannot maintain both ignorance and freedom.
- Education must be taught using tenets of a free society.
- Education should be paid for, controlled and maintained by the public.
- Education should be provided in schools that embrace children from varying backgrounds.
- Education must be nonsectarian.
- Education must be provided by well-trained, professional teachers.

Radical in the 19th century, each of Mann's principles remains controversial today.

The principle that the purpose of education is freedom is largely ignored when standardized test scores are overemphasized. Preparing students to be ready for a career and for higher education is one of many worthy outcomes of education, but in a free society, preparing students for informed and intelligent participation in a democracy is the higher goal. A mechanic should be as prepared to participate in the institutions of our republic as a doctor of philosophy, but when schools are evaluated on the basis of tests developed by a private corporation such as Pearson, that aim is often forgotten.

The principle that education should be controlled by the public is disregarded when charter schools are publicly funded, but privately controlled. The idea that education should be overseen by the locally elected boards of education is ignored in state-takeover districts such as Paterson, Camden, Jersey City and Newark.

The principle that schools embrace students from varying backgrounds is challenged when the children of undocumented residents are taunted by

their classmates with threats of deportation. While NJEA members hold diverse views on immigration, it is nonetheless the responsibility of public school leaders and employees to create a welcoming school climate. Schools are places where all children should feel safe regardless of their parents' immigration status. Schools are the first line of defense for all children, not the first line of prosecution for Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The principle that education funded with public money must be nonsectarian is under attack with the elevation of voucher proponent Betsy DeVos as U.S. Secretary of Education. Her only "qualification" for the job seems to be her mission to divert public funds to private and religious schools or corporate-backed charter schools.

That education must be provided by well-trained professional teachers—a principle that in New Jersey was the basis for the founding of NJEA—was most recently under attack here when the state Department of Education attempted unsuccessfully to create a separate, watered-down certification process for teachers and administrators in charter schools.

International Workers' Day is a reminder of the work left to be done to secure economic justice for all Americans. Mann's six principles provide a starting point for educators.

In every public school in New Jersey, students recite "The Pledge of Allegiance." Written in 1892, the pledge concludes with "and justice for all." Since long before that pledge was written we, as a nation, struggled to live up to that phrase. A system of free public schools, while often imperfectly practiced, provides one of the surest paths to that justice. 🌟

The foundation upon which the concept of a free public education is built has its roots in justice for all Americans regardless of economic or social status.

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Caesars	\$105	N/A	Oct. 6	SC11MEM
Golden Nugget	\$59	\$159	Oct. 25	ANJEA17
Harrahs	\$74	\$164	Oct. 9	SH11NJ7
Tropicana	\$84	\$174	Oct. 20	HNEA17
Resorts	\$75	\$105	Oct. 17	VNJEA7

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