

# REVIEW



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and hard of  
hearing**

**Extraordinary  
circumstances  
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contract in  
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**Getting  
social with  
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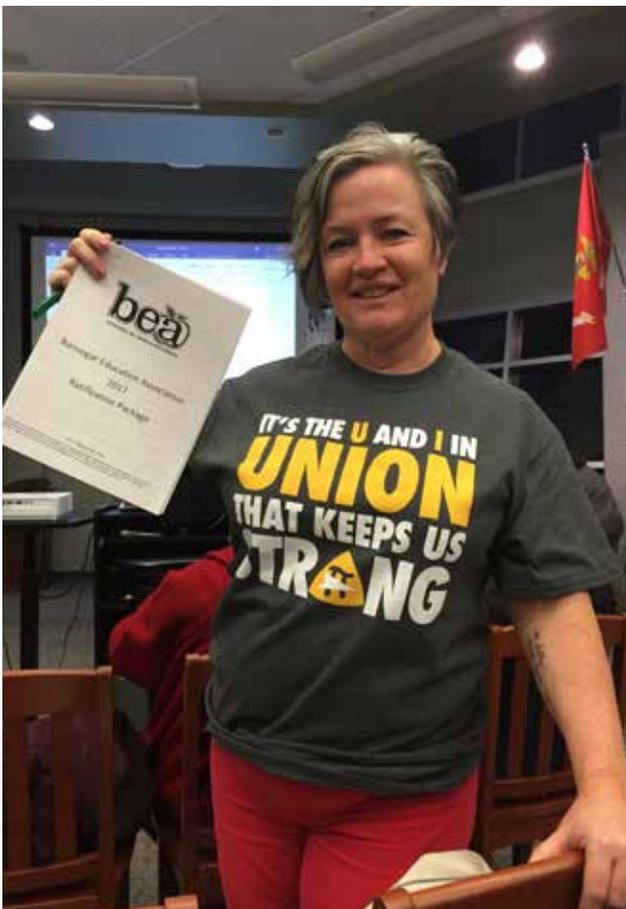
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LEFT: NJEA members from Union and Essex counties with Jacqui Greadington (top left), chair of the NJEA Human and Civil Rights Committee, at the NJEA Martin Luther King Jr. Human and Civil Rights Celebration on Jan. 13. A full story on the celebration will appear in next month's Review.

BELOW: Trenton Education Association President Naomi Johnson-Lafleur and Camden Education Association President Keith Eric Benson prepare to testify against the expansion Renaissance schools in Camden. See the full story on Page 12. ("NJEA members stop bad bills in lame duck session.")



ABOVE: Sarah O'Neill, secretary of the Barnegat Education Association, at the BEA memorandum of agreement package presentation held on Jan. 8. O'Neill had just attended Winter Leadership Central where she purchased that amazing shirt!



RIGHT: Megan Hubbard from the Woodbine Education Association and Diane Stelacio, Cape May County Retirees Education Association, listen as NJEA GR Lobbyist Beth Schroeder Buonsante leads the Cape May County Legislative Action Team meeting on Jan. 10.



NJEA UniServ Field Representative Ron Villano and Freehold Borough Education Association President Heidi Brache observe ongoing construction in Freehold as the district addresses chronic overcrowding. See Page 24 for the full story.



## FEATURES



### 20 | DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INCLUSION

For 40 years, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing program at Governor Livingston High School in Berkeley Heights has provided an array of learning and social opportunities in a highly inclusive setting.

BY GLHS STAFF



### 22 | EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES IN NEPTUNE

Every round of bargaining has its challenges, but the Neptune Township Education Association's negotiations team could be forgiven for feeling uniquely challenged as they fought for three years to settle a successor agreement to an expired contract.

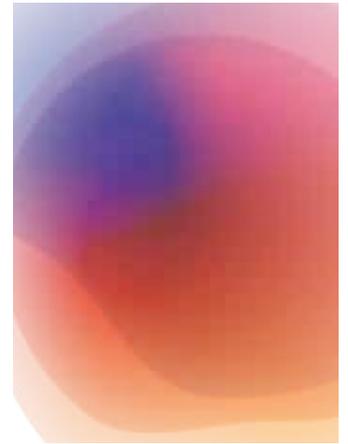
BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



### 24 | THE FACES SCHOOL FUNDING

Visit any of Freehold Borough's three schools, and you'll have all the evidence you need to know that it is a dangerously overcrowded district. Learn how the local association plays a crucial role in student advocacy as FBEA members and district administration fight for fair funding.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



### 27 | GETTING SOCIAL WITH TECHNOLOGY

As more and more members find themselves active on social media, many local associations find themselves active on social media platforms as well. Read how leaders in six local associations are adapting their communications strategies to meet the needs of their members.

BY MATT STAGLIANO

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**ON THE COVER:** Students in Freehold Borough work in overcrowded classrooms. Staff work against steep financial odds to provide a great education for their students. See Page 24.

**PHOTO BY**  
KATHRYN COULIBALY

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NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

# REVIEW



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Annual membership dues are: Active professional: \$897 (full time); \$448.50 (part time) \$448.50 (on leave). Active supportive \$438 (full time) \$219 (part time) \$219 (on leave). Retired: \$84; \$985 (retired life). Retired ESP: \$59; \$610 (retired ESP life); Preservice \$32. General professional (outside N.J. public education employment): \$250. Subscribing \$250. Only those in education positions in N.J. public schools and colleges are eligible for active membership. Payment of annual dues entitles a member to receive the *Review* for one year, from January through December. Dues include \$5 for the *NJEA Review*.



# Creativity, tenacity, curiosity, and constant improvement

A career in public education requires people to be creative, tenacious, curious, and constantly improving their skills. This month's issue of the *Review* highlights just a few stories that illustrate how vital those traits are and the amazing results our members achieve by drawing on them.

Two Monmouth County local associations are featured—for two very different reasons—but each exhibited creativity and tenacity. In “Extraordinary Circumstances Lead to Exceptional Contract,” you'll hear how the Neptune Township Education Association finally secured a contract that, after many trials and tragedies, earned the local the 2017 Jim George Collective Bargaining Award.

In “The Faces of Inadequate School Funding,” the Freehold Borough Education Association's long journey of advocacy has resulted in improved learning and working conditions in the district, but because of the state's historic underfunding of schools, severe challenges remain and the push continues under a new governor and state senator.

A desire to create a program that met the needs of their students led staff at Governor Livingston High School in the Berkeley Heights School District to launch a Deaf and Hard of Hearing program 40 years ago. In “Celebrating 40 Years of Excellence,” we look at the program and celebrate its many achievements.

Finally, in “Getting Social with Technology,” we look at how local education associations can effectively use social media to communicate with members and the public. The use of digital communications by associations in Cherry Hill, Hopewell Valley, Lakewood, Monroe Township (Gloucester), Plainfield and Point Pleasant Borough has been proven effective and provide excellent examples for other local associations.

Working in public schools can be challenging, but it is also one of the most rewarding careers there is. I am proud every day of the school employees I represent, and who I am proud to call my partner in education.

*Marie Blistan*



NJEA President Marie Blistan (l) and NJEA Human and Civil Right Committee Chair Jacqui Greadington congratulate Paterson educator Zellie “Imani” Thomas, the recipient of the 2018 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. NJEA Human and Civil Rights Award. A full story on Thomas and the NJEA Human and Civil Rights Celebration will appear in the *NJEA Review* in March.

## Officers Online

Marie Blistan

Twitter

**@MarieBlistan: Governor Phil Murphy's 1st executive order—equal pay for women!**

NJEA President Marie Blistan tweeted a photo from Gov. Phil Murphy's first press conference as governor at which he announced his first executive order. Executive Order #1 bars state entities from ascertaining any employment applicant's salary and compensation history. Such a practice tends to perpetuate the salary gap between men and women.

Sean M. Spiller

Twitter

**@SpillerForNJEA: Really cool program for girls interested in computer science. Check out “Girls Who Code” free summer program.**

NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller tweeted out a nationwide opportunity for girls in grades 10-12 to learn computer science and gain exposure to tech jobs through a free seven-week summer immersion program. The program will be in Newark/Jersey City on July 2-Aug. 17 and July 9-Aug. 24. To learn more visit [girlswhocode.com/sipapply](http://girlswhocode.com/sipapply).

Steve Beatty

Twitter

**@SteveBeatty928: A new era for New Jersey and perhaps the US... @GovMurphy We all look forward to rolling up our sleeves and getting down to the hard work...together!**

NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty tweeted a series of photos from Gov. Phil Murphy's inaugural celebration, noting his optimism for New Jersey's future with Gov. Murphy at the helm. The tweet also included the governor's new Twitter handle.

# Know. Lead. Act.

## DA to hold NEA Director election

Elections for three of New Jersey's representatives on the NEA Board of Directors and for three alternates will be held at the March 10 Delegate Assembly (DA) meeting. The elected board members will serve three-year terms from Sept. 1, 2018 to Aug. 31, 2021. Elected alternates will serve one-year terms beginning Sept. 1, 2018.

In addition, an election will be held to fill the unexpired term of Gary Melton Sr. of Atlantic County, who resigned from his position as an NEA Director in January. That term expires on Aug. 31, 2020.

The NJEA Executive Committee may put forward nominations for NEA Directors at its Feb. 16 meeting. Additional nominations may come from the floor at the March 10 DA meeting prior to the vote. All nominees will have an opportunity to speak for two minutes prior to balloting.

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

The DA meeting will begin at 9:30 a.m. at the Princeton Marriott at Forrestal, which is located at 100 College Road East in Plainsboro Township.

Anyone interested in seeking a position as an NEA state director or alternate should contact a member of the DA. Interested members may request a list of names and addresses of the NJEA Executive Committee, Delegate Assembly, DA alternates, and New Jersey members of the NEA Board of Directors.

The DA list includes county association presidents.

For more information call the NJEA Executive Office at 609-599-4561, ext. 2256.

## Nominations for Image Award open

NJEA is accepting nominations for the 2018 Ethnic Minority Affairs & Leadership Image Award, which honors members who have been champions of ethnic minority rights/issues and have significantly affected education and the achievement of equal opportunity for those facing discrimination due to their ethnicity. The award will be presented by the NJEA Minority Leadership and Recruitment (MLR) Committee at its annual conference this April.

Award criteria and a nomination form are available at [njea.org/imageaward](http://njea.org/imageaward). Only online applications and supporting documents received via email by Wednesday, Feb. 28 will be considered.

## Nominations for Equality Champion Award open

NJEA is accepting nominations for the 2018 Equality Champion Award, which honors members who have been champions in defense of human and civil rights and who have significantly affected education and the achievement of equal opportunity for those facing discrimination due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. The award is presented by the NJEA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SO&GI) Committee in conjunction with the Minority Leadership and Recruitment (MLR) Committee at the annual MLR Conference this April.

Award criteria and a nomination form are available at [njea.org/EqualityChampion](http://njea.org/EqualityChampion). Only online applications and supporting documents received via email by Wednesday, Feb. 28 will be considered.



## Selfie of the month

NJEA members are all smiles while attending the 2018 MLK Jr. Human and Civil Rights dinner with Paterson EA member and award recipient Zellie "Imani" Thomas (center) on Jan. 13. Front (l-r) Orange EA member Jean Jackson, Paterson EA member Kathy Rogers, Rear (l-r) Paterson EA 2nd VP Lakresha Hodge, Paterson EA member Nikki Baker, PCEA VP Javier Fresse.

Attending a local, county or state training or meeting? Working a PRIDE event? Send your selfies to [NJEAreview@NJEA.org](mailto:NJEAreview@NJEA.org). Be sure to identify where the picture was taken and the members who appear in the photo.

# 2018 Legislative Dinners

|                    |          |   |
|--------------------|----------|---|
| Atlantic           | March 6  | The Carriage House, Galloway              |
| Bergen             | March 21 | The Venetian, Garfield                    |
| Burlington         | April 30 | The Merion, Cinnaminson                   |
| Camden             | March 21 | The Mansion, Voorhees                     |
| Cape May           | April 19 | Grand Hotel, Cape May                     |
| Cumberland         | April 11 | The Greenview Inn, Vineland               |
| Essex              | March 14 | Nanina's in the Park, Belleville          |
| Gloucester/Salem   | March 13 | Nicolosi's, Woodbury                      |
| Hudson             | May 9    | Casino in the Park, Jersey City           |
| Hunterdon/Somerset | April 17 | Basking Ridge Country Club, Basking Ridge |
| Mercer             | March 20 | Mercer Oaks, West Windsor                 |
| Middlesex          | May 9    | Pines Manor, Edison                       |
| Monmouth           | April 25 | Doubletree Hotel, Tinton Falls            |
| Morris             | May 1    | Birchwood, Whippany                       |
| Ocean              | May 3    | Ramada Toms River Inn, Toms River         |
| Passaic            | March 6  | The Brownstone, Paterson                  |
| Salem/Gloucester   | March 13 | Nicolosi's, Woodbury                      |
| Somerset/Hunterdon | April 17 | Basking Ridge Country Club, Basking Ridge |
| Sussex             | April 17 | Perona Farms, Andover Twp.                |
| Union              | April 12 | The Westwood, Garwood                     |
| Warren             | April 11 | Hawk Pointe, Washington 🏠                 |

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# Cool Stuff

## Take a ride on the State House Express

The State House Express program provides small grant awards to eligible middle school and high school teachers who wish to take their students to Trenton. The grants are designed to help pay for bus rental to the capitol for a guided tour and firsthand examination of the Legislature's role in our system of representative democracy.

Awards are generally \$300. Schools in Atlantic, Bergen, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, Passaic, Salem, and Sussex counties are eligible for \$350 grants because of their distances from Trenton. The State House Express program is funded by the New Jersey Legislature and is administered by the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University in collaboration with the Office of Legislative Services at the State House in Trenton.

Teachers may submit applications for the 2017-18 program at any time during the academic year. Awards are distributed on an ongoing basis, with a decision made as soon as the applications are received.

Eligibility requirements are:

- Middle and high school students only (grades 6-12).
- A minimum of 25 students.
- The tour must take place before the end of the academic year in June 2018.
- All eligible teachers are encouraged to apply, including those who have received the award in the past. In special circumstances, separate grants may be awarded to different teachers in the same school.
- Other school groups or organizations that do not meet the exact criteria specified above may also apply and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Applications are available at [www.eagleton.rutgers.edu](http://www.eagleton.rutgers.edu). For more information, contact Gloria Minor at 848-932-8750 or [gminor@eagleton.rutgers.edu](mailto:gminor@eagleton.rutgers.edu).

## Use arts education to achieve Title I goals

Arts Ed NJ, in cooperation with the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the New Jersey Department of Education, and New Jersey's Foundation for Educational Administration, launched an interactive website devoted to demonstrating how arts education has been embraced as an effective strategy for achieving the goals of Title I. By featuring successful models and examples, the website, [NewJerseyTitle1arts.org](http://NewJerseyTitle1arts.org), is designed to be a statewide resource for districts in New Jersey seeking to learn more about how to harness the power of arts education.

Arts strategies have been used to address the four pillars of Title I: Student Learning and Mastery; School Climate and Culture; Student Engagement; and Family and Community Engagement. Every page of the website identifies resources to assist educators with critical steps throughout the stages of planning, implementation, and assessment that lead to student success. NJEA is a member of Arts ED NJ.

## Send us photos from your RAA celebration

The *NJEA Review* will print selected photos from Read Across America celebrations around the state. To have one of your photos considered for publication, choose your favorite two or three photos from your event and send them to [ProudMoments@njea.org](mailto:ProudMoments@njea.org). In the email, provide a brief caption for each photo you send.

If children are identifiable in the photos, a media release must be on file with the district or you may use the release from found at [njea.org/PRIDE](http://njea.org/PRIDE). You must log in with your NJEA PIN number to access the page that includes the photo release form.

You may keep the signed release forms on file at your school and simply indicate that you have secured them when you send email your photos to NJEA. From all of the photos submitted prior to March 9, five to 10 will be selected for publication in the April *NJEA Review*.

Photos, regardless of whether they are selected for publication in the *NJEA Review*, will be part of an online gallery at [njea.org/raa](http://njea.org/raa). Some photos may also be shared on NJEA's social media platforms.

## Hey high school students! Say it with your pen and win Summer Jam tickets

NJEA and Hot 97 are sponsoring a student essay contest open to all New Jersey public high school students. "Say It With Your Pen" is a chance to spotlight a teacher or educational support professional that has impacted your life.

Students are encouraged to write a short essay about a school employee who has had positive influence on them. It can be a teacher, counselor, nurse, secretary, security guard, custodian, bus driver, cafeteria staff member or any other school employee who has made a difference in their lives. Essays should be no more than 250 words.

Two winners will be selected. Each winning student will win two tickets to Hot 97's Summer Jam! Hot 97's Dr. Bob Lee will also "Crash the Classroom" with a school visit and \$1,000 award for for the school employee the student wrote about.

Entries must include the student's name, parent's name and phone number, school name and address, teacher's name, and grade level.

Send entries to:

### NJEA Summer Jam Contest

Dawn Hiltner

PO Box 1211

Trenton, NJ 08607-1211

Or email [dhiltner@njea.org](mailto:dhiltner@njea.org), putting Summer Jam in the subject line. Submissions must be received by March 15, 2018.

## A+ Effort

### Collingswood educators win NEA Foundation Grant

Sarah Whitman and Kathryn Kemeny of the Collingswood Education Association in Camden County are the recipients of a \$2,000 Student Achievement Grant from the NEA Foundation. This grant will fund a schoolwide book study based upon "I Will Always Write Back," a novel in which an American girl builds a lifelong friendship with a pal from Zimbabwe. After reading the book, students will participate in an international pen pal program, visit with the books' authors, and conduct research on the home countries of their pen pals.

Nationwide, the NEA Foundation announced that it is awarding 30 grants to NEA members across 22 states for a total of \$123,000.

"With these grants, we are supporting educator-driven solutions that contribute to improved student performance in public schools," said Harriet Sanford, president and CEO of the NEA Foundation. "Our support enables educators to engage in a wide variety of innovative approaches to the benefit of students across the country."

The NEA Foundation awards two levels of grant funding, \$2,000 or \$5,000, for two categories of grants to public education professionals: Student Achievement Grants for initiatives to improve academic achievement, and Learning and Leadership Grants for high-quality educational professional development activities.

A team of 20 educators, many of them former grantees, carefully reviewed all applications and evaluated each one against a set of criteria. Funded educator grants were selected for the quality of the grant proposal ideas and their potential for enhancing student achievement.

The NEA Foundation awards its grants to educators three times a year. Grants are available for NEA members only, and the next education grant deadline is June 1, 2018. Application forms and a video with step-by-step instructions on how to apply can be found at [neafoundation.org/for-educators](http://neafoundation.org/for-educators).

## Attention preservice members:

### BCEA to host a "Getting My First Job" workshop

The Bergen County Education Association (BCEA) is hosting a "Getting My First Job" workshop on Tuesday, March 27 from 4-6 p.m. at the BCEA office, 210 W. Englewood Ave., in Teaneck.

This workshop, open to all NJEA Preservice members, will offer tips and advice for landing your first job

#### Topics include:

- Where to look for a job
- How to prepare for an interview
- What to wear
- What to bring
- How to nail your demo lesson
- What to do post-interview
- What to expect your first year

Refreshments will be served and materials will be provided.

RSVP to [psnjeabcea@gmail.com](mailto:psnjeabcea@gmail.com) by March 20, to register. Include your school and NJEA membership ID number in your response. 📧

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# NJEA Report

## NJEA members stop bad bills in lame duck session

In the final days of the 2016-17 legislative sessions, NJEA members sent hundreds of emails to legislators opposing legislation harmful to students in urban schools and members working in the state's community colleges. Some members made their way to Trenton to testify against two bills that were ultimately pulled from consideration.

### Urban Hope Act IV

The Legislature sought to again expand the scope of the Urban Hope Act. S-3309, or Urban Hope Act IV, would have dramatically expanded the Renaissance schools program that has been used to undermine neighborhood public schools in Camden.

The first Urban Hope Act, passed in 2012, resulted in the construction of Renaissance schools in Camden. Renaissance schools are publicly funded, privately managed schools. While NJEA supported the original Urban Hope Act in 2012, NJEA has opposed subsequent amendments to the law that loosened regulations on Renaissance schools and provided for their swift expansion.

Urban Hope Act IV would have expanded the definition of urban campus area—the area within a certain radius of a Renaissance school project—to allow Renaissance school to grow far beyond what was contemplated in the original bill.

The law also loosened rules on what types of buildings could house a Renaissance school. The original law said that a Renaissance School project had to begin with new construction. The law was

later amended, against the NJEA's opposition, to permit a Renaissance school to begin with a “substantially reconstructed building.” Urban Hope Act IV would have relaxed the construction requirement even further, allowing Renaissance schools to use any building so long as it was newly renovated or constructed within five years.

“In essence, these new amendments target the newer public school buildings in Camden, as well as absolving Renaissance schools from their responsibility to build a new, or substantially renovate facilities, and can simply operate out of any building the district superintendent hands over to them—including neighborhood schools,” Camden Education Association President Keith Eric Benson wrote in the Philadelphia Inquirer on Jan. 1.

NJEA strongly opposed Urban Hope Act IV. Benson, Trenton Education Association President Naomi Johnson-Lafleur, and NJEA Director of Government Relations Ginger Gold Schnitzer were set to testify against it in the Senate Education Committee Jan. 5, but the bill was pulled from consideration before they could testify.

While it is welcome news that S-3309 was withdrawn, it is expected to be reintroduced in the 2017-2018 session that began on Jan. 9.

### NJEA members block move to weaken higher education member health insurance

Another damaging bill, S-3535, would have unilaterally moved county college employees and

county college retirees from the School Employees Health Benefits Program (SEHBP) to the State Health Benefits Program (SHBP). That would have resulted in lower quality coverage for most employees.

SHBP has, over the years, agreed to reductions in benefits and options available to members. The SEHBP, on the other hand, has retained many of those benefits and options. In addition, higher education members and retirees have a stronger voice under SEHBP than they would have had under SHBP. The SEHBP Commission has three representatives from the state, four representatives from the unions whose members are covered by the plans (including NJEA), and a representative from the New Jersey Schools Boards Association. By contrast, the SHBP Commission has three representatives from the state and two union representatives.

NJEA and NJREA officers sent a letter to all higher education members alerting them to the bill and providing contact information for key legislators. Higher education members, in turn, vigorously lobbied legislators to oppose this attack on collective bargaining.

This bill may also be reintroduced in the new legislative session.

NJEA will keep members informed when, or if, either of these bills are resuscitated.

## Christie adds members to State Board of Education in final days in office

Practically on his way out the door, then-Gov. Chris Christie made two final appointments to the New Jersey State Board of Education: Camden County resident and president of the United Adjunct Faculty of New Jersey (UFANJ) Elaine Bobrove and Union County resident and Teach for America (TFA) executive Fatimah Burnam-Watkins. The Senate approved the appointments in December. Bobrove and Burnam-Watkins were sworn at the Jan. 3 meeting of the State Board.

The appointment of Bobrove had the effect of replacing board member Edie Fulton, a former president of NJEA. Fulton had been appointed to the board in 2007 by Gov. Jon Corzine. State

Board members serve beyond the expiration their terms until the governor either re-appoints them or replaces them. Having not made a new appointment since 2011—depriving the board of its full 13 members—Christie made eight appointments in his the final months as governor.

Bobrove has been an adjunct professor at Camden County College since 1982, where she served as vice president of president of the UFANJ chapter, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers-New Jersey. Previously, Bobrove taught at-risk students at Lenape Regional High School working with special education students who needed one-to-one instruction. She is a member

of the AFT Higher Education Program and Policy Council.

Burnam-Watkins served as the Executive Director of TFA-New Jersey from 2010 to 2015. Most recently, she served as TFA's Senior Vice President, Executive Leadership and Learning. Through TFA, Burnam-Watkins taught English and Introduction to Criminal Justice at Northwestern High School in Baltimore, Maryland from 2001 to 2003. In 2003, she was employed by TFA as a program director and teacher coach in New York.

# Paterson EA president vindicated in tenure charge case

## Arbitrator dismisses suspension, concludes filing unwarranted

Paterson Education Association (PEA) President John McEntee Jr. has been vindicated in his battle with school district officials while advocating for his union colleagues.

On Dec. 27, Commissioner of Education-appointed arbitrator James Mastriani dismissed the Paterson school district's request to justify placing McEntee on an unpaid suspended leave last April, and concluded the district was unwarranted in proceeding with tenure charges after a contentious December 2016 meeting between McEntee and former district administrator Dr. Sharon Davis, where the district administration alleged that McEntee acted unprofessionally.

The district filed tenure charges in March consisting of two counts of conduct unbecoming. The district did not seek a revocation of McEntee's tenure or his dismissal, but rather his suspension, leading the association to believe its motive was to intimidate him as a local leader who dared to stand up to administration.

"I am pleased that the arbitrator found that my comments and actions toward Ms. Davis in this meeting occurred under the umbrella of protected activity as union president and were not insubordinate, threatening, nor harassing in nature," McEntee stated. "More importantly, I hope my exoneration will be viewed as evidence that PEA members and building representatives never should be afraid of standing up to those in authority and fight for our rights under the contract."

Since becoming PEA president in 2015, McEntee has been an outspoken advocate for his members and frequent critic of the district's leadership, especially former state-appointed

Superintendent Donnie Evans, who, like Davis, left the district shortly after the charges were filed against McEntee. In September 2016, McEntee spearheaded a vote of no confidence against Evans, citing cuts in security guards and nurses, and memorably embarrassed the administrator by publicizing Evans' role as an instrument of the state government to undermine *Abbott v. Burke*, which assures adequate funding for schools like Paterson.

In a move to drive a wedge between PEA members and their leader, Evans sent a memo to all staff on March 29, detailing the charges and presenting a one-sided view of the incident. His attempts backfired, as NJEA members from around the state rallied in support of McEntee and decried the superintendent's action.

"I am passionate about what I do and advocating for the students, staff and community of Paterson," McEntee continued. "I am pleased to see that the arbitrator saw through the district's obvious attempt to paint my actions as intimidating and suggest that any local leaders who stand up for what's right are nothing more than union thugs."

NJEA President Marie Blistan lauded McEntee's bravery throughout the ordeal and viewed the arbitrator's decision as validation of the importance of protected union advocacy.

"I applaud Paterson Education Association President John McEntee for standing up and winning this very important case," Blistan said. "John's fight wasn't just for himself: it was for the right of every union leader to be a fearless advocate even in the face of hostility. It took courage and determination to keep fighting with so much on

the line for him personally."

McEntee sees this decision as an opportunity to restore respect for the union's role protecting the middle class, specifically in New Jersey's public schools.

"Make no mistake: This was nothing more than an expensive fishing expedition to see if it's possible to silence the voices and shackle the actions of those who dare to challenge the ongoing and universal fight to erode our country's unions," McEntee declared. "This is not just a win for the Paterson Education Association; this is a decisive victory for our colleagues throughout the state."

Blistan agrees.

"By refusing to settle and instead standing on principle, John helped ensure that other union leaders can do their jobs as well," Blistan said. "John and every PEA member deserve to celebrate this win, and we celebrate with them."

**"This is not just a win for the Paterson Education Association; this is a decisive victory for our colleagues throughout the state."**



LEFT: Elaine Bobrove (center) is sworn in as a State Board of Education member by Judge R. Brian McLaughlin, assisted by State Board of Education Director Diane Shoener.



Paterson EA members showing support for President John McEntee (center) during a rally on March 20, 2017.

## NJEA funds 46 sustainability grants

At an awards ceremony held Jan 10, Sustainable Jersey for Schools (SJ4S) announced the 46 New Jersey schools and school districts selected to receive NJEA-funded Sustainable Jersey for Schools small grants. Eleven \$10,000 grants and 35 \$2,000 grants were distributed to fund a variety of projects including vertical aeroponic tower gardens, agricultural and sustainability curriculum, student green team capacity building, an outdoor classroom, a healthy habits program, enhanced recycling efforts and more.

NJEA is proud to head into its fourth year partnering with SJ4S, having so far provided \$750,000 to support a sustainable future for children across the state through the Sustainable Jersey for Schools program.

School boards representing 48 percent of all New Jersey school districts have adopted a resolution to participate in SJRS in 712 schools. In addition, 194 schools have become Sustainable Jersey for Schools certified, and over 2,700 sustainability initiatives have been completed by Sustainable Jersey certified schools.

“This is an important program that directs resources into our schools and NJEA is proud to continue to work with Sustainable Jersey,” said NJEA Vice President Sean Spiller. “It is our job to help create a new generation of engaged citizens and leaders. We help ensure that we leave a better world for our students when we emphasize the value of sustainability.”

In addition to the grant funding, NJEA supports Sustainable Jersey for Schools as a program underwriter.

“Sustainable Jersey for Schools aims to empower schools with the funding needed to implement important sustainability actions,” said Randall Solomon, executive director for Sustainable Jersey. “We look forward to the completion of these projects and the ongoing efforts of these schools and school districts. The NJEA-funded grants allow communities to come together to improve outcomes for students, staff and the environment.”

Proposals were judged by an independent Blue Ribbon Selection Committee. SJ4s grants are intended to help school districts and schools make progress toward a sustainable future in general, and specifically toward Sustainable Jersey for Schools certification.

To learn which schools received grants, visit [njea.org/sj4s](http://njea.org/sj4s). To learn more about SJ4S and future grant opportunities visit [www.SustainableJerseySchools.com](http://www.SustainableJerseySchools.com).



NJEA and Sustainable Jersey for Schools partner to empower schools to implement sustainability projects. From left: Heather McCall, Renee Haider, NJEA staffer Meredith Barnes, Veronique Lambert, NJEA Secretary-Steve Beatty, Randall Solomon, Samantha McGraw, Kaitlyn Vollmer, Kristy Ranieri, and NJEA staffer Vicky Lepore.



Gov. Phil Murphy delivers his inaugural address at the Patriots Theater in the Trenton War Memorial on Jan. 16.



## As Gov. Murphy takes office, NJEA members anticipate a new era

NJEA members have long been working toward, and anticipating, the gubernatorial inauguration of Ambassador Phil Murphy. Over a year ago, on Oct. 8, 2016, NJEA PAC, the 125-member political action committee, unanimously endorsed Murphy in the Democratic gubernatorial primary. The unprecedented endorsement in the primary launched a 13-month campaign, NJEA Members4Murphy, which helped result in Murphy's victory on Election Day, Nov. 7, 2017.

In April, NJEA delivered more than 6,800 signatures to place Murphy on the primary ballot.

Throughout the spring, NJREA hosted regional town hall meetings that enabled their members to meet Murphy and hear from him his vision for the state.

Additionally, NJEA's Legislative Action Teams, UniServ consultants, and rank-and-file members canvassed, made phone calls, and communicated with members about the pro-public education positions that had earned Murphy the NJEA endorsement.

The hard work continued throughout the summer, and NJEA deployed Summer Fellows to contact members and share information about PAC-endorsed candidates, including Murphy.

On Oct. 21 and 22, members from all 21 counties, including NJEA, NJREA, and NJEA Preservice went door to door, made phone calls, mailed postcards, and organized events to encourage members to support Murphy and other endorsed candidates.

The work continued through Election Day, and at the NJEA Convention, governor-elect Murphy personally thanked NJEA for their tireless efforts and constant support.

NJEA members have always been engaged in political action to support candidates who share their values, but the 2017 election cycle was noteworthy for the creativity, enthusiasm, and unflagging dedication members showed after eight years of inflammatory rhetoric and devastating economic decisions by the Christie-Guadagno administration.

NJEA members, like all New Jerseyans, can look to Murphy's inauguration as the dawning of a new day for the state.



## Blistan lauds nomination of Dr. Lamont Repollet as ed commissioner

NJEA President Marie Blistan praised Gov. Phil Murphy's nomination of Asbury Park Superintendent Dr. Lamont Repollet as New Jersey Commissioner of Education.

Repollet, who became Asbury Park's superintendent in October 2014, was nominated by Murphy on Jan. 12.

"With this nomination, Governor-elect Murphy has kept his promise to respect the professional expertise of New Jersey's educators," Blistan said. "Dr. Repollet's career as a teacher and administrator in New Jersey's public schools means that he understands the needs of our students and the challenges faced by New Jersey educators."

Prior to taking the reins in Asbury Park, Repollet was principal of Carteret High School and a teacher in the East Orange School District. He serves on the board of trustees of Kean University.

Blistan praised Repollet's work in Asbury Park. "Dr. Repollet's good relationship with staff in Asbury Park reflects his respect for the women

and men who make New Jersey's public schools among the very best in the nation," Blistan said. "His focus on student achievement shows that he shares our commitment to providing great public schools for every child in every community. The progress in Asbury Park under his leadership shows that he knows how to convert those values into real-world results.

"After eight years of politically motivated attacks designed to undermine the strongest, most successful public schools in the nation, New Jersey's students and families are counting on the Murphy administration to chart a new course," Blistan concluded. "We look forward to working with Dr. Repollet to do that important work, because our members are the leading experts on what works in our schools and the best advocates for the wellbeing of their students."

As of press time, Repollet awaits Senate confirmation.

**"Dr. Repollet's good relationship with staff in Asbury Park reflects his respect for the women and men who make New Jersey's public schools among the very best in the nation."**

The numbers  
**\$2.2 billion**

**Annual cost to states and school districts** because of teachers leaving the profession: The added costs to states and districts stem from continually recruiting, hiring, and developing new teachers to fill the void.

Source: Castro, Quinn, Fuller, and Barnes, "Policy Brief 2018-1: Addressing the Importance and Scale of the U.S. Teacher Shortage," (University Council for Educational Administration, January 2018).



Amy Andersen, the 2017-18 NJ Teacher of the Year, and finalist for the National Teacher of the Year, will appear on the March 18 episode of Classroom Close-up NJ.

## New Jersey State Teacher of the Year named a finalist for National Teacher of the Year

For the first time since 1972, a New Jersey State Teacher of the Year is one of four finalists for the National Teacher of the Year. Amy Andersen, a high school American Sign Language (ASL) teacher at Ocean City High School in the Ocean City School District in Cape May County, was named the 2017-18 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year in the beginning of October 2017.

The National Teacher of the Year Program began in 1952 and continues as the oldest, most prestigious national honors program that focuses public attention on excellence in teaching. Each year, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) brings together State Teachers of the Year from the 50 states, U.S. territories, DC, and the Department of Defense Education Activity for a year of professional learning, and facilitates the selection of the National Teacher of the Year (NTOY). In the process, the national program selects four finalists

out of the State Teacher of the Year applications to finally compete for National Teacher of the Year.

Since 1969, New Jersey has been participating in the National Teacher of the Year Program overseen by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), however New Jersey has never had any of its State Teachers of the Year be named a National Teacher of the Year.

Should Andersen be selected as the National Teacher of the Year, during her official year of recognition, she is released from classroom duties to travel nationally and internationally as a spokesperson and advocate for the teaching profession. NTOYs speak at over 150 events each year before audiences ranging from several hundred to over 10,000 and are often asked to sit on national and state commissions and policy advising bodies.

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First Place (high school): Ashley Russell, Bridgeton



# The Awakening

## NJEA's social justice art contest

At the 2017 NJEA Convention, one of the featured educational exhibits, The Awakening, was dedicated to social justice. Multiple paths in The Awakening took participants on a journey through information and visual displays that revealed stories of students' journeys through life. Options attendees chose along the pathways changed the outcome of these stories. The Awakening addressed important role of educators in improving the lives of students of color, LGBTQ+ students, and immigrant students at every level of education.

The exhibit included the artwork of New Jersey middle and high school students that centered on the themes of the exhibit. The artwork was acquired through a contest. These pages include the award-winning pieces. <#>

Second Place (high school): Carolina Carlanian, Mount Olive



Honorable Mention (high school): Shayla Rivera, Bridgeton



Third Place (high school): Irina Lazouski, Mount Olive



Honorable Mention (high school): Carlos Ortiz, Paterson



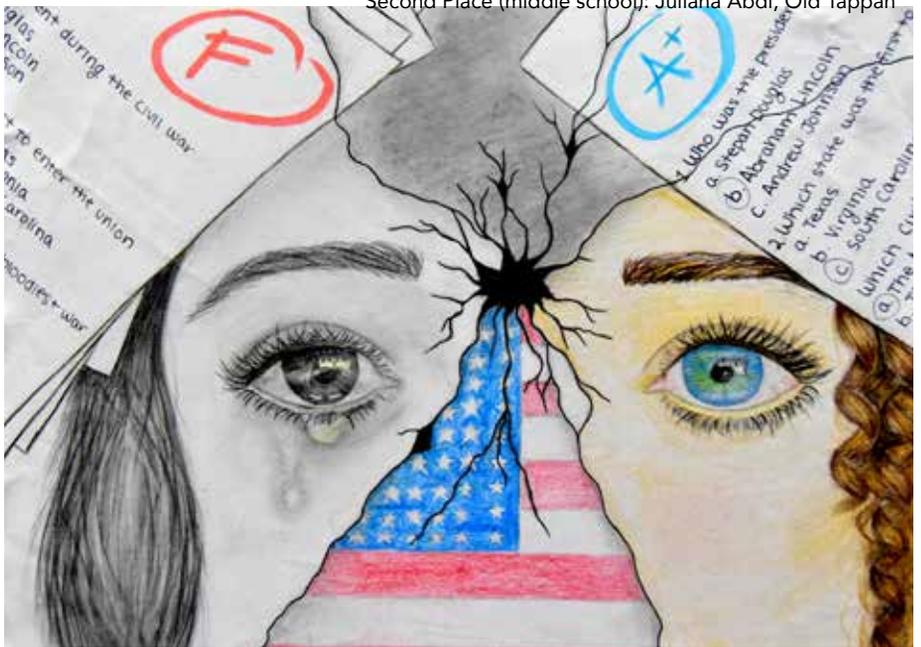
First Place (middle school): Marquise Green, Paterson



# THE AWAKENING

through our eyes

Second Place (middle school): Juliana Abdi, Old Tappan



Honorable Mention (high school):  
Sienna Alvarado, Teaneck Community Charter



Honorable Mention (middle school): Irem Kara,  
Paterson



Third Place (middle school): Dasan Kelton, Greater Brunswick Charter

# Celebrating

## 40 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

By the Deaf and Hard of Hearing program staff at Governor Livingston High School

For 40 years, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing program at Governor Livingston High School (GLHS) in the Berkeley Heights School District has provided an array of learning and social opportunities in a highly inclusive setting for attending students. GLHS has an extraordinarily supportive staff that consists of teachers of the deaf, a speech and language therapist, and American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters. The program enables students to take advantage of academic courses ranging from a departmentalized self-contained setting to general education classes with varying levels of support.

Students are able to participate in various electives, such as gourmet cooking, photography, forensic science, percussion, TV production, various computer-based courses, and many more. There is also the option of attending the Union County Vocational Technical School program or participating in a workforce program known as Community Based Instruction (CBI), where students are exposed to a work environment.

The program for students who are deaf and hard of hearing at GLHS began in 1977 as mainstreaming was becoming more common. At about that time, a parent from Mountainside and other parents of young students who are deaf and hard of hearing requested that the Department of Education establish a mainstream program to give their children options beyond the residential school for the deaf in Trenton. A rubella epidemic in 1964-65 had resulted in a large number of deaf students in the state who were about to become high school aged.

The steadfast efforts of these parents paid off. The state awarded a grant to the former Union County Regional High School District (of which Berkeley Heights was a part) to become one of the first two mainstream high school tuition programs for the deaf and hard of hearing in the state of New Jersey. The other school was in Bergen County.

GLHS, with one teacher, Alice Johansen, and one student, began that program, which

at one point would grow to almost 50 students who are deaf and hard of hearing. The program has a long, rich history, one which has evolved and grown through many years to become a well-respected program for the education of students who are deaf and hard of hearing in the region.

### Academic benefits for all students

The program inspired the creation of three full years of ASL as a world language course. It motivated many hearing GLHS graduates to become interpreters, teachers of the deaf, counselors for the deaf and speech therapists, not to mention the hundreds of students who are deaf and hard of hearing who have gone on to have successful careers throughout the United States.

Students in the program are supported throughout their day based on their individual needs and abilities. Some students enter the program with more involved deficits due to a hearing impairment. Over the years a number of the students have excelled in general education class settings with the support of an ASL interpreter only, including honors and Advanced Placement-level course loads.

When students come to the program with more significant deficits, they benefit from the teaching of highly skilled teachers of the deaf, who are able to provide more intensive instruction because they understand the complexity that comes with supporting students with multiple learning challenges.

### Social-emotional benefits for all students

To understand education is to know that it is an institution that stretches far beyond academics. Educators are tasked with supporting the social-emotional growth of students, as well as working to expose students to a wide range of opportunities outside of the classroom. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing program at GLHS has expanded in areas that



Senior Night for GLHS Varsity Soccer



National Association for the Deaf presentation



GLHS's Friday Night Lights



Deaf Highlander Intramural Volleyball team



Alice Johansen, founder of the Program, in the 1980s



Senior Matt Colon acting as technical director for TV production class



Performing in Atlantic City at the New Jersey School Boards Association Convention

not only benefit the students in the program, but also help to expose all students to the deaf culture, helping to create an environment that bridges the social gap that can exist when students are so different in their method of communication.

All students in the high school have the option to take ASL as a world language, which further serves to integrate the students in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing program into the school community. Gaining access to general education settings and participating in school-based clubs and activities with nondisabled peers separate this public high school program from the private institutions that typically are available to students who are deaf and hard of hearing.

### Innovative music and after-school programs

A staple of our program is the Percussion Workshop. This class fulfills the fine arts requirement for any student who takes it. With the assistance of the educational interpreters, the students work under the direction of one of the district's certified music teachers, and through his or her expertise the students learn the techniques necessary to engage with various percussion instruments as they feel the vibrations of the instruments to create and play music.

Additionally, the students learn music history, theory and culture, and begin to understand how to read music in order to enhance their ability to perform. This class, along with the other components of our program, led GLHS to win the "Innovations

in Special Education Award" in 2017. The award is conferred annually in May during Special Education Week by the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Further enhancing their own experiences at GLHS, our students have created a club called GL Deaf Highlanders for the purpose of becoming more involved with school activities during school hours that normally take place during afterschool hours.

In just the last two years, our students have independently organized an intramural volleyball team, became active participants in TREND (a program that promotes a drug and alcohol-free lifestyle), and collaborated with the yearbook staff to set up a photo booth for the graduating class of 2016.

Their future goals are to fundraise for charities and set up educational field trips that include team-building skills.

The environment at GLHS is truly a special one. While the Deaf and Hard of Hearing program is a separate component in the district, it is anything but separate when you walk into the building. The staff and students over the last 40 years have bridged any gap that you might have expected to see. Regardless of your culture, language, disability, interests or goals, here at Governor Livingston, we are all Highlanders. 🏠

*The GLHS staff contributors to this article are speech therapist Cynthia Manto, teachers of the deaf Hannah Frankenbush and Mary Gauthier, interpreters Debora Thedinga, Lisa Demarco, Amy Policelli, Kim Lalley and Chelsey Cahilly, and supervisor Kevin Morra.*



Deaf football player working with his interpreter in the 1985.

## 10 tips for teachers and staff who have a student with hearing loss

1. Closed Captioning is essential; not optional.
2. Be conscious of lecturing while students are working independently. Students quickly fall behind if they have to stop working to look at the interpreter.
3. Lip-reading is not an effective form of communication.
4. Interpreters are an important part of classroom communication and do not fulfill the role of a paraprofessional.
5. Maintain eye contact with the student and speak directly to him or her as if the interpreter is not there.
6. All students who are deaf and hard of hearing are unique and may require different accommodations.
7. Expect lag time: Wait for interpretation and response before continuing to speak.
8. Give any class materials and handouts to students and interpreters, and do this in advance whenever possible.
9. The student may or may not speak for him/herself. Even if sign language interpreters are present, the student may choose to speak for him/herself when commenting or responding to questions in class.
10. Expect the same from students who are deaf/hard of hearing as you do other students.

NTEA won the 2017 Jim George Collective Bargaining Award. From left: NJEA President Marie Blistan, NJEA Consultant Diane Vistein, NTEA President Pamela Kellett, NJEA UniServ Field Representative Ron Villano, NTEA Association Representative Jennifer McKinley, NTEA Vice President James Weldon, NTEA Treasurer Michael Highland, NJEA Vice President Sean M. Spiller and NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty.



# Extraordinary circumstances

## lead Neptune Township EA to exceptional contract

Neptune wins 2017 Jim George Collective Bargaining Award after three-year crisis

By Kathryn Coulibaly



Kellett addresses the audience as Vistein, McKinley, and Highland look on.



The Neptune Township EA Negotiations Team: Tami Lascar, NJEA UniServ Field Representative Ron Villano, Rick Taylor, Weldon, Highland, Kellett, Bridget James, and McKinley.

"This was an **ordeal** that tested each and every one of us. But it made us **stronger** as a **union** and that strength led us to a ratified contract that was better than the one we'd been offered three years before."

Every round of bargaining has its challenges, but the Neptune Township Education Association's (NTEA) negotiations team could be forgiven for feeling uniquely challenged—perhaps even cursed—as they fought for three years to settle a successor agreement to the contract that expired in 2015.

Beginning in the fall of 2014, the NTEA, which represents 615 teachers and educational support professionals (ESPs), met with then-superintendent Dave Mooij to discuss concepts. They initiated formal negotiations in December 2014.

By May 2015, they had hammered out the framework for a new agreement. Mooij, who was planning to retire, had made it a point to prioritize the successful settlement of the contract before he left the district.

Tragically, Mooij passed away in June, just days before his retirement.

"Dave Mooij had been with the district for 40 years," said NTEA President Pam Kellett. "He started out as a substitute before working as a health and physical education teacher at the middle and high school levels. He loved this district and dedicated his professional life to it. Under his leadership, he increased enrollment and improved facilities and services for students. His loss cannot be overstated."

Struggling to recover, the association worked with the Neptune Township Board of Education and interim superintendent Michael T. Lake to finalize the framework they had agreed to with Mooij. The association and board agreed to a freeze on Tier 4 contribution levels under Ch. 78, added columns to the guide so secretaries and paraprofessionals could get increases in salary based on the degrees they hold, and agreed to salary percentages of 2.9, 2.85, and 2.8.

### ***NTEA takes stand for ESPs***

In September, the board ratified the framework, but they left a critical item out that the association believed had already been agreed to—a \$500 salary adjustment for paraprofessionals.

Believing it was simply a clerical error, the association urged the board

to go back, include the adjustment, and approve the framework. The board refused.

The association's negotiations team brought the contract framework forward to the general membership, but made it clear that they would be pursuing the salary adjustment for paraprofessionals by appealing to the Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC).

Jim Weldon, the first vice president for the association and negotiations chair, said that the association felt strongly about improving the salary package for educational support professionals. "This was a fundamental goal for our team; we were committed to pursuing improvements for our ESP colleagues through every means at our disposal."

With the understanding that the ratification vote would be held with this issue still open, the association approved the contract. Technically, in September 2015, they now had a settled contract.

### ***Board remains obstinate***

Under ordinary circumstances, this would be cause for celebration, but the association was still pursuing the salary adjustment for paraprofessionals.

Later that fall, PERC ruled that there had been a misunderstanding on both sides over the paraprofessionals' adjustment, and urged both teams to meet and work it out, but the board refused to consider it.

In December 2015, the association once again voted on the contract, this time with the clarification that—all else being equal—the paraprofessionals would not get the salary adjustment that the association believed it had been promised. The NTEA voted down the proposed contract.

As a sign of the deteriorating relationship, by February 2016, when the board and association met again, the number of open items had ballooned to 96 issues.

That April, the board's health care costs increased 25 percent, and the next month the board said they could no longer afford the contract they had proposed the year before.

But there was more to come.

### ***Another devastating loss***

In July, NJEA Field Representative Joe Keough, who had worked closely with the NTEA for five years, suddenly passed away. An NJEA staff member since 2011, Keough had retired after 33 years of service to the Old Bridge School District.

The impact was devastating to the local association, and the entire NJEA family.

Veteran NJEA Field Representative Ron Villano began working with the NTEA. With more than 40 years' experience in education, collective bargaining, and organizing, Villano knew what the association needed in order to move past the many challenges it faced.

"With everything that had happened, this association was really at the bottom," Villano said. "So our strategy was simple: go back to Bargaining 101. We set a long-term goal to change the composition of the board. In the meantime, we held face-to-face meetings with the members to give them a chance to express their frustrations, while also working with them on next steps. In addition, we launched an extensive community organizing campaign."

### ***Agreement comes together***

With Villano and a new superintendent, Dr. Tami Crader, the association and the board began again.

The association filed for mediation, but mediator Kathy Vogt did not want to give any relief on Ch. 78. In order to achieve the outcome they wanted, the association restructured their proposal. They agreed to change their medical provider, and they took the money that would have gone to certified staff during the first year of the contract in order to provide ESPs with an increase every year of the contract. At the same time, everyone got their increments and moved up on the salary guide.

The total salary package the association proposed was 15 percent over five years and included one year of retroactive pay.

The health benefits package was a key element in settling the contract. The association agreed to move to the School Employees Health Benefits Program (SEHBP). The board was

able to put the cost savings toward the salary settlement.

Finally, in March 2017, the NTEA and the board reached an agreement and ratified it in May.

The NTEA agreed to a freeze on certified staff salaries in the first year, and annual salary increases for teachers of 3, 3, 3.2 and 3.2 percent.

The salary proposal for secretaries was 3.5, 3.5, 3.7, and 3.7 percent, and for paraprofessionals it was 4, 4, 4.2, and 4.2 percent.

The association felt strongly that since the board had poorly compensated secretaries and paraprofessionals in particular for so long that it was vital to focus on them.

In addition, they negotiated a \$7,500 cap on health care contributions for certified staff and a \$2,500 cap for ESPs. Some certified staff had been paying up to \$12,000 a year in contributions.

While members at the top of the salary guide are not seeing a significant increase, they are seeing Ch. 78 relief, and that was a priority for everyone.

But the association wasn't done. Still angry about the board's decision not to honor the agreement on paraprofessionals' salary adjustment, they set out to change the board. In November 2017, three new board members supportive of the NTEA were elected.

"I wouldn't wish these circumstances on any local association," NTEA President Kellett said. "This was an ordeal that tested each and every one of us. But it made us stronger as a union and that strength led us to a ratified contract that was better than the one we'd been offered three years before."

"We stood together, and with the support of the NJEA, we significantly improved the professional and economic lives of our members," Kellett said. "That's something that makes each of us very proud." 🙏

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

# The faces of inadequate school funding

Freehold Borough finally building—but continues to fall behind

By Kathryn Coulibaly

Visit any of Freehold Borough's three schools, and you'll have all the evidence you need to know that it is a dangerously overcrowded district.

Cubbies for students' belongings compete for space with computer carts in the hallways.

Locker doors swing open because the locks no longer work, not unusual for a 50-year old building, but further impeding walkways.

Innovative teachers and staff have rearranged desks to maximize space, even as cartons of books and other materials line the walls. But because there aren't enough textbooks for all students—and haven't been for years—most teachers rely on other resources to aid student learning.

The faculty lunchroom has a well-used laminating machine; a relic in most tech-centric districts, but absolutely vital in Freehold Borough.

Technology, necessary to meet the demands of the 21st century, is hard to come by. There aren't enough electronics for each child, and with classrooms of 28 students, including English language learners (ELL), special education students, and gifted students, the focus every day is ensuring that every student gets the attention they need.

In the media center, which has not been a media center in a decade, bookshelves have been used to carve out classrooms. Educators struggle to teach without unduly disturbing the six or seven other classes occurring at the same time.

The cafeteria and gymnasium are so seriously overcrowded that there are concerns for students' safety.

One building, constructed in the 1970s as an "open forum" school, is literally a school with no interior walls. In order to separate the building into separate classes, bookshelves have once again been deployed to provide a visual, but definitely not an acoustic, division.

For more than 13 years, these have been the learning conditions, and working conditions, in Freehold Borough.

## Failed referenda lead to DOE intervention

Since 2004, parents, staff, and administration have been advocating for increased funding to accommodate a skyrocketing enrollment. After a building referendum failed in 2005, the district was forced to increase class sizes, repurpose the library and other spaces into classrooms, rent space in a church basement, and bus more than 100 students out of district to six rented classrooms.

In 2014, the district once again held a referendum, hoping for community support to alleviate the issues caused by a district enrollment that was 41 percent above capacity. Unfortunately, that referendum also failed.

Following the second failure, the district pursued litigation and petitioned then-Commissioner of Education David Hespe for the necessary funds and to compel the residents of Freehold Borough to finance the construction.

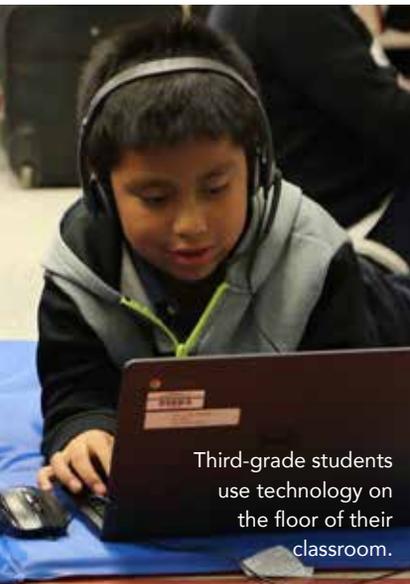
Hespe toured the district, along with many politicians and subsequent commissioners of education, but it was not until 2016 that \$25 million in funding was finally released. A groundbreaking ceremony was held in October 2017, and the new facilities will be open to students and staff by the start of the 2018-19 school year.

## Association plays crucial role in student advocacy

From the beginning, the members of the Freehold Borough Education Association (FBEA) played a crucial role in advocating for their students. Former FBEA President Linda McCarthy was tireless in her efforts to secure additional funding for the district. When she became president, Heidi Brache continued those efforts.

FBEA members wrote letters describing the conditions, testified at board of education meetings, helped to educate parents and other taxpayers

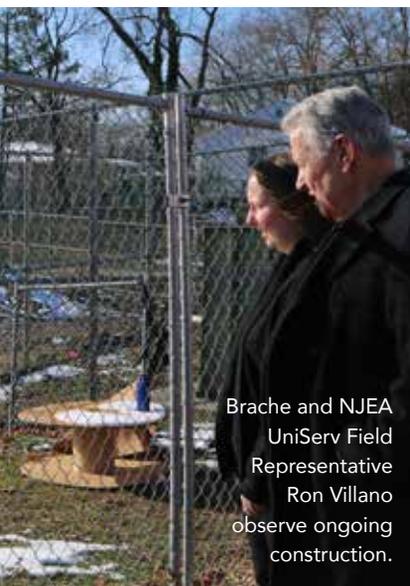




Third-grade students use technology on the floor of their classroom.



FBFA President Heidi Brache in the classroom she shares with colleagues. Construction noises often disrupt instruction.



Brache and NJEA UniServ Field Representative Ron Villano observe ongoing construction.

about the necessity of the expansion, and worked with Superintendent Rocco Tomazic and the board of education to testify at the state level.

In addition, they contacted NJEA and, working with UniServ Field Representative Ron Villano, brought in organizing specialists on health and safety, professional development, communications, and research.

NJEA Government Relations helped to bring legislators such as former Senator Jennifer Beck, and Assemblypersons Eric Houghtaling and Joann Downey to visit the schools and push for funding through the Legislature.

NJEA Executive Director Ed Richardson personally contacted the New Jersey Department of Education and commissioners to persuade them to carefully consider the district's needs.

### Funding falls far below what students need

While it was a victory to have the funds allotted to the district, the situation is still challenging. To accommodate the construction, there has been further upheaval for students and staff. The district has had to relocate parking, rent additional classrooms from another district to house kindergarten students, and the sound of construction often interrupts instruction.

While the district is finally on the right path, the fix is inadequate to meet even the current needs. While enrollment increases have leveled off, the district is still more than 100 seats short of what it should have.

"Our staff works so hard with the bare minimum of everything," Brache said. "A parent of a teacher donates copy paper so he or she can make copies. There have been no textbooks for years, so teachers have to create materials, but they struggle to ensure that every child's needs are met."

The funding challenges are exacerbated by socioeconomic issues facing the community. The district is 74 percent Latino. More than 77 percent receive free or reduced-price lunches. More than 19 percent are ELLs, even though more than 96 percent of the student body was born in the United States. There is a large undocumented immigrant community in the Borough, and with a high tax rate and few ratables, taxpayers are wary of funding stressed schools, even as the state of New Jersey fails to pay its fair share.

Since 2009, Freehold Borough has been underfunded by \$21.7 million in state aid. That has led the adequacy gap per pupil to increase by more than \$1,700.

Without a serious commitment by the state to fully-fund the school funding formula and address the needs of districts like Freehold Borough, which is the third-least funded in the state, these inequities will continue to build.

As Superintendent Tomazic pointed out, Freehold Borough students know they are being shortchanged. While other districts are funding one-to-one computer programs, Freehold Borough is struggling to find room to bring students back into the district; currently, 126 students are being educated outside the district simply because there isn't enough space.

"If the district had gotten the funding at the time of the initial referendum in 2004, we would have been all right," Tomazic said. "But because of the delay and the population explosion, we're still going to be overcrowded. Kindergarten is still going to be placed out of district. That's hard on parents and students."

The district continues to pursue a lawsuit against the state, citing that because the state grossly underfunds the district, there is a lack of operating funds. This deficit prevents the district from providing every child with a thorough and efficient education as mandated by the state constitution.

### Eyes on new governor and new state senator

While the district awaits a decision on the lawsuit, which it has been pursuing with Red Bank Borough, it is still very dependent on political will. The Freehold Borough school community is hopeful that Gov. Phil Murphy and newly-elected Sen. Vin Gopal will support the district.

Tomazic believes the district needs 50 teachers in order to accommodate all of the students according to code. With the influx of funding, they will be able to hire just 15; a good start, but a long way from what the district actually needs.

But through it all, the students and staff have somehow managed to make Freehold Borough's schools a welcoming environment. Bright artwork graces every hallway, providing the students with a much-needed outlet, and everyone with a beautiful work and learning space. Students are polite and curious, even as yet another stranger tours their school. Staff is friendly and classrooms are bright, engaging places, despite the lack of elbow room.

Despite the challenges they continue to face, the students are achieving great things. In particular, the district is proud of a new robotics program and wrestling team who have exceeded beyond anyone's expectations. In addition, students have posted two years of gains in PARCC scores overall and have largely met or exceeded performance targets set by the New Jersey Department of Education. That the students could improve so much under these conditions underscores how much more progress they could make if they are provided the proper amount of classroom space and were adequately funded.

As Brache puts it, "Freehold Borough's schools are an amazing place. We're here to educate every child who walks through our door, and I could not be prouder of the students and staff and what we have been able to accomplish together."

As Gov. Phil Murphy takes office and begins to put together his first state budget, districts such as Freehold Borough will be waiting and watching to see if the School Funding Reform Act is, at long last, fully funded. 🙏

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

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# Getting social with technology

In an age of digital communications, local associations are evolving to meet the needs of their members

By Matt Stagliano

## Communicating with union members in a digital era

Social media is changing the world around us. It's changed how people stay in touch, how they argue, and, many believe, it's even contributing to the increasing polarization of American politics. With a president whose Twitter account garners more attention than any of his predecessors, it's hard not to feel the increasing influence that social media has on public opinion.

Politics aside, social media has affected how nearly everyone communicates. Facebook, for example, has more than 2 billion daily users worldwide. Those users—some fake, but most real—generate more than 4.75 billion pieces of content, which includes photos, videos, website links and status updates, every single day. With more than 58 percent of American adults active on Facebook alone, it's hard to deny the evolution of communication.

With an increase in social media users, and an ever-evolving social media landscape, many teachers have little choice but to learn the ins and outs of new platforms to help their students navigate this complex world. For teachers, student safety drives the infusion of proper online etiquette into traditional curriculum. Some educators see social media as a powerful tool that students can harness for their own academic growth. And, as more and more educators find themselves active on social media, many local associations find themselves active on social media platforms as well.



## Digital organizing, driven by members

Of those local education associations around the state that have gone digital, most have done so to meet the needs of their members. Members are bombarded by emails and feel a sense of email fatigue. They are sifting through too many meaningless emails to find relevant, pertinent information.

As emails overload gets worse, some local leaders around the state saw an opportunity to engage their members in a new, more relevant way. Rather than sending emails, some locals have chosen to create Facebook groups that allow members to exchange thoughts, ideas and happenings of their local unions. The Hopewell Valley Education Association created a Facebook group last year to enhance communication within the association.

“Through the course of the day, we get so many emails that things get buried,” says Lisa Cardinale, vice president of HVEA, who now helps manage a robust Facebook group that successfully helps coordinate local and state level political action and members organizing activities. “But, on Facebook, it’s different. They are looking at content when they choose to, when they have the time, not when they have too much to do and not enough time.”

Unlike email and more traditional means of communications, such as fliers and memos, which historically have been about one-way communication from association leaders to members, social media platforms such as Facebook allow unions to deepen their connection by seamlessly enabling union members across a district to share their successes and challenges. For those locals engaged in digital organizing, social media offers a place for members to connect and build relationships with one another, strengthening the collective power of the association.

“Traditionally, there was a newsletter that used to come out, but by the time you read it, the information was outdated,” says Eric Jones, president of Plainfield Education Association (PEA). “It was great information, but it was not meeting the needs of our members and it certainly wasn’t building community. It was very top down, leaders to members.”

Plainfield’s association Facebook group, Inside PEA, has grown into a place for members to come together and share ownership of keeping each other informed.

“It wasn’t only the leaders of the association telling members what they needed to know, it was members sharing information and questions that they felt were important,” Jones said as he

discussed how the Facebook group has brought forth a change in PEA. “Members would share concerns and suggestions. Ideas formed from building to building and member to member. For me, building community comes down to building relationships among people. In Plainfield, we’ve knocked down the walls of where we work. We use Facebook to build relationships, build community and talk about shared experiences.”

## Community engagement

Beyond members, social media offers many avenues to engage the community. Local associations are beginning to leverage the positive public relations power of being present online.

The Cherry Hill Education Association (CHEA) represents more than 1,000 union members across one of South Jersey’s most densely populated suburban towns. The local understood most parents of school-aged children didn’t fully comprehend the lengths that CHEA members went to for their children each day, so it started a Facebook page as a means for the association to tell its story directly to the community.

CHEA established its first Facebook page one year ago. Within the first week of the new year, CHEA saw its total fans or “likes” surpass the 1,000-user mark. Steve Redfearn, president of CHEA, is the driving force behind the Facebook page, but he doesn’t do all the work. Sometimes he shares content the school district or police department puts out, often he posts pictures his colleagues send from across the sprawling suburban district. He notes content highlighting the success of children always performs the best.

“We get likes and comments on posts about snow days or district information, but we always gets a ton of likes, comments and shares when we start talking about the success of sports team or a district school choir. When parents see their children, or children they know, being celebrated online, they can’t help but enjoy it. It should be enjoyed because it’s one small sample of so many great things happening in our school district.”

Redfearn emphasized that the reach of the association’s page went well beyond its members.

“It’s our members and community members,” he said. “There are freeholders and town council members that follow us. And sometimes other local groups will share information that we put out. This always opens more connections for us. It’s been very successful and positive for us in terms of getting our story out there.”

A bit further north, the Lakewood Education Association (LEA) has expanded into the digital world to help drive change when faced with challenges. LEA’s Facebook page is used to



communicate accurate information fast, which increases member buy-in. In doing so, the page has brought members together and helped unite the membership during a time of crisis.

“When we faced a crisis last year, social media helped unite us,” explains Leilanie Small, webmaster of the LEA. “It helped us spread information quickly and efficiently. Through social media, we were able to stay united. It also increased morale during that time, too. If a school got a grant or had an overall increase in reading level, we would put that on social media and people wanted to share that good news with their friends.”

### Creating common spaces

The Monroe Township Education Association (MTEA) in Gloucester County has taken a unique approach to its use of social media. MTEA uses a Facebook group to communicate with members of the public, as well its members. The association has created a shared space for members of the association to come together with members of the community.

Jon Woodward, a building rep for MTEA and an Administrator of the Facebook group, Monroe Township Cares About Kids, explained how the online group helped build relationships between parents and members.

Woodward realized what so many know: parents want to know what’s happening in their schools and they support the staff making their schools successful. However, all too often, they lack an open line of communication with the staff.

“It’s a very positive page,” Woodward says. “We don’t post negative content on there. Our president, a few other members, and I are moderators on the page, and we control the content of what gets posted. We like to make sure it’s positive, without being overly controlling.”

Woodward noted that the use of social media has fostered positive interaction between Monroe Township residents and the association.

“We engage the community with our job actions and explain to them what we’re doing,” Woodward explains. “We’ve used this to help get residents at our board meetings and rallies and to help us settle contracts.”

Woodward and the MTEA changed the game for their members and their community. When the association created a common space for educators and community members, it opened up a new world of communication. Parents could show their support and learn about all of the things educators do every day. Woodward attributes most of the success of his page to the

commitment from his fellow MTEA members and a few dedicated advocates from the community.

### Potential outweighs challenges

Social media presents its own set of challenges and opportunities. Some local associations are concerned about the oversharing of information. Other locals are worried that their members might post something without thinking; educators, after all, are human beings, despite their many superhero-like qualities. And, in truth, some local associations have had problematic situations as they have embarked into a new digital space for organizing and connecting. But, despite all the challenges, the potential to influence change and build connections via social media far outweigh the risks.

“Everyone at first was hesitant to use Facebook,” Small noted. “I’ve had to work with many people about how to use Facebook for this type of association communication. But once our page became more popular, members realized how fast they could get information. People’s minds started to change. It only took a couple of months.”

Last year, social media, with its ability to facilitate the education of the community at-large, played a major role in helping some local associations resolve major crises. Social media has contributed to the settlement of contacts in many local associations, saved would-be-privatized jobs and ensured that schools maintain health and safety standards for their staff and students.

### Making it your own

Given the broad nature and almost endless possibilities for creativity on social media, locals have found success in a wide variety of ways. Local associations have created Facebook pages, Facebook groups, Instagram accounts and Twitter handles. Each local association active on social media develops a unique voice that works for their local and their membership.

Kim Welsh, the webmaster of the Point Pleasant Borough Education Association has enjoyed success on the Facebook-owned photo-sharing site, Instagram.

“Instagram is really fun,” Welsh said. “We put anything we can up there because the pictures get their attention.”

There is no one-size-fits-all model for success on social media. Locals have used a variety of strategies to reach the same goal: more communication with their members. And, while it’s impossible to quantify all the ways that local associations are



effectively using social media, it's certainly worth exploring. After all, local associations are made up of educators whose professional practice is always evolving; communicating with members we represent should be no different.

"As a teacher, I can either teach in a way that is comfortable for me, or I can teach the way my students are comfortable learning, says Jones. "As a leader, with every day and every new hire, I think more and more people are likely to be on active social media. If we don't go to where our members are to engage them, we lose them. For our members who are more comfortable with more traditional communications, we must keep those traditions in place. But, we must continue to let all of our members drive our leadership instead of letting our leadership drive our members."

*Matt Stagliano is an associate director in the NJEA Communications Division. He can be reached at mstagliano@njea.org.*

# Meet Inside PEA

By Plainfield EA President Eric Jones

When Superstorm Sandy wreaked havoc upon Plainfield in late 2012, it wasn't the district that first notified employees of emergency closings—it was *Inside PEA*.

Because of the storm, the district's technology was down, so the medium to contact its employees was compromised. Fortunately, about one year earlier, a communication tool was established by and for association members that didn't need district approval.

Six years ago, a small group of Plainfield district employees created an electronic chat room on Facebook designed to be a "digital staff lounge" for association members. It didn't matter the position or worksite, if the employee was a dues-paying member, he or she could be a member of the page.

The room has become "the daily home" to approximately four hundred members and served as a go-to site for all things district and union related. While our association still provides a standard newsletter, we encourage our members to join the digital page where they can receive information in real-time.

"Simply said, it's my go-to," shared art teacher Carol Swiss-Petach. "It has the most relevant and up-to-date information. It's much faster than waiting for other sources to notify us. If it's not posted and I have a question, between all the members reading, somebody has the answer."

As the local leader, I'm fortunate to have members who have embraced technology to enhance our communication. Posts aren't limited to officers. Any member can post, "like," and comment on a question or concern from anyone. It truly has created a family atmosphere from colleagues across our nineteen worksites.

*Inside PEA* has significantly increased member engagement in our local, and it is an honor to provide this service to our members.





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# Schools now required to have alarms for deadly carbon monoxide

By Eileen Senn

Last September, New Jersey became the sixth state to require schools to install carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in the immediate vicinity of all fuel-burning appliances. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless and tasteless gas that is a product of combustion and the leading cause of accidental poisoning in the U.S.

Requiring alarms has the potential to save lives, but whether the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs (DCA) regulations will actually do so depends on how well school districts comply. Unfortunately, the DCA rules have weaknesses that districts must address. Potential CO sources in schools are numerous. Some are likely covered by the DCA regulations and some are not.

Sources that are likely covered:

- Gas and oil heating and cooling systems: boilers, furnaces, central and unitary equipment.
- Generators: permanent and portable.
- Natural gas and propane appliances: water heaters, ranges, stoves and ovens and laundry washers and dryers.
- Gasoline powered floor polishers, lawnmowers, weed eaters, leaf blowers, chainsaws, power washers and other tools.
- Fireplaces.

Because CO gas can travel in the air, alarms are also required in hallways connected to the space with the source and any spaces connected to the source by ventilation ductwork or shafts for stairs, elevators or ventilation.

Sources that are likely not covered:

- Bunsen burners, ovens and kilns in labs.
- Welding and burning.
- Vehicles idling near exterior doors, windows, air intake vents and loading docks.
- Vehicles idling in repair garages, whether for vocational education or maintenance of district vehicles.

As equipment ages, the potential for malfunction increases. Therefore, routine inspection and regular maintenance of the above sources are key to preventing them from emitting CO. Sources that are vented to the outdoors may discharge indoors if chimneys or vents are blocked, for example, by snow, leaves, nests or during renovations. Portable sources should be located away from air intakes and entrances.

## Weaknesses in DCA regulation

In existing schools, compliance with the law may be met through the use of battery-operated or plug-in type CO alarms instead of hard-wired alarms. In new schools and schools undergoing renovations, the alarms must be hard-wired.

Only alarms are required, not higher cost detectors. CO detectors are system-connected devices that sense CO gas and communicate with a control panel monitored by a trained individual. Single station CO alarms are stand-alone devices with an integral audible alarm. Detectors are better than alarms because they are monitored.

DCA rules do not require alarms in all locations where CO may be a problem such as repair garages, where the presence of CO may be expected as a function of the normal use of the space. In such locations, CO alarms must be provided just outside such spaces at the points where these spaces connect to other occupiable spaces. Yet, repair garages are one of the most likely places for staff and students to encounter CO exposure and should have alarms.

Most unfortunately, the DCA regulation doesn't specify how a school district should respond when an alarm sounds or how staff should be trained. Without a written protocol and staff training, the tendency may well be to disable and ignore sounding alarms so that school is not disrupted.

## Alarms may give a false sense of security

To minimize sounding and "nuisance" calls to fire departments from non-life-threatening situations, alarms are designed not to sound at CO levels below 30 parts per million part of air (ppm) (*See bit.ly/coalarmlevels*). Yet CO has possible health effects at much lower levels. EPA has set 9 ppm as an eight-hour limit and 35 ppm as a one-hour limit, both not to be exceeded indoors more than once a year (*See bit.ly/cotoxprofile*).

But at 40 ppm of CO, alarms take 10 hours to sound. Only at 400 ppm do they sound in four to 15 minutes. Because they are designed only to prevent death, alarms allow health to be endangered. 🚫

*Eileen Senn holds a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from Duquesne University and a Master of Science in Occupational Health from Temple University. She is an industrial hygiene consultant with the New Jersey Work Environment Council, a frequent partner with NJEA on school health and safety concerns.*

**Without a written protocol and staff training, the tendency may well be to disable and ignore sounding alarms so that school is not disrupted.**

**For more information**

DCA Code Enforcement Assistance:  
609-984-7609  
[bit.ly/dcacodeassist](http://bit.ly/dcacodeassist)

Protocol for response to CO detector activation, University of Albany Facilities Management, March 3, 2016, three pages: [bit.ly/coprotocol](http://bit.ly/coprotocol)



# CO poisoning can be mistaken for the flu

When inhaled, CO combines with hemoglobin in red blood cells to form substances that decrease oxygen levels. The symptoms of CO poisoning often imitate those of common illnesses such as the flu. Victims of low level CO poisoning often experience mild headaches, shortage of breath, nausea, drowsiness and dizzy spells. At higher levels, CO poisoning can cause severe headaches, mental confusion, impairment of vision or hearing, vomiting, fatigue, loss of consciousness, and coma. Severe CO poisoning can cause an irregular heartbeat, amnesia, brain damage, coma, and eventually death. Poisoning can lead to long-term damage to the heart and nervous system.

Studies have shown a high percentage of the population is particularly vulnerable to CO, including low levels over a longer period of time. This high-risk group includes children, pregnant women and their developing fetuses, the elderly and those with heart and lung disorders.

# Local association action plan

Local associations and their health and safety committees should work with their UniServ field representatives to take the following actions:

- Request the district provide a listing of the locations of potential sources of CO and the CO alarms in each school building and cross-check to ensure all sources are covered.
- Stress the need for the district to establish a response protocol if an alarm sounds such as the one listed under "For more information." The protocol should mandate evacuation and calling the fire department to use a CO meter to measure how much CO is present and identify the source.
- Insist that school staff be trained on the symptoms of CO poisoning and the emergency plan of action when symptoms of CO poisoning are observed or a CO alarm sounds.
- Contact DCA or the local fire department with technical questions.

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# Mentoring provides lifelong benefits for youth

By Janet L. Royal, NJEA Staff

Mentoring has been around for many years and mentors have been called by many different names: adviser, coach, instructor, guide, teacher, tutor, trainer, and counselor, to name just a few. Can you remember someone in your life that was there for you; a parent, a cousin, an aunt or uncle, a friend, a teacher? You may not have given them one of the names above, but he or she showed an interest in you, genuinely cared about you, and believed in you.

The benefits of mentoring are countless and help shape the lives of children on a social, emotional, behavioral, cultural, and academic level. This in turn influences the outcomes for a community's social and economic climate. The benefits can be both immediate and long term.

Mentoring builds relationships based on trust, understanding and mutual respect. Children need to know they have something to contribute and that they make a profound difference. Deciding to take a leap of faith and mentor a child is a huge commitment that can be very rewarding and challenging. A mentor may be one of the few adults a child can rely on for encouragement, support and a sense of stability. Mentors do not replace a parent. Instead, they guide a child to realize his or her dreams and hopes for a brighter future.

Mentoring not only helps children in school, but has lasting effects in their home and in

their future work lives. When a child sees an adult working hard, stepping outside the box, and accepting defeat as a challenge, he or she is encouraged to do the same. Dealing with something difficult can build confidence and self-esteem. This type of modeling—similar to that of an apprentice—opens the space for a deeper relationship. What we share verbally is important, but so is our body language. Children are always watching and learning, even if we think they aren't paying attention.

Mentoring builds a positive attitude toward school, an important factor in encouraging a child to stay in school. Mentoring can promote literacy skills, self-esteem, confidence and social appropriateness. This benefits not only the child being mentored; it benefits the entire school and community. Mentoring strengthens a child's relationships with parents, teachers, and classmates and fosters a sense of belonging.

Mentoring assists children in making positive choices and setting goals for their future. When children understand that they have a responsibility in what their future looks like, they tend to keep their eye on the prize and strive to shine.

A popular 1970s toy known as a Weeble had a rounded bottoms that made it impossible to topple. They were self-righting and bounced back when knocked down. Commercials for

it declared, "Weebles wobble but they don't fall down!" That's what we want to build in our children—the ability to be self-righting or to bounce back when something happens to knock them down. Mentoring fosters that resiliency, helping children understand the benefit of "hanging in there" when confronted with challenges. Mentoring can help when children, for example, go through new and/or challenging situations at home, such as marriage, divorce, sickness, death, moving and changing schools.

Mentoring in the context of a school environment brings with it special concerns. Never mentor a child in isolation: work with school administration, school counselors, parents and your local association leaders.

Deciding to mentor is something that will change not only the child's life, but yours as well. You share your experiences, knowledge, and other life skills, and gain so much more in return. The experience can further your own professional growth. There's nothing like the feeling you get when you give your time to benefit a child. 🏠

*Janet L. Royal is an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division and is the coordinator for the annual NJEA Convention. She can be reached at [jroyal@njea.org](mailto:jroyal@njea.org).*



# A CLOSER LOOK

## monthly highlights

This month, "Classroom Close-up NJ" will feature stories on mock trials, lemonade stands, and preparing the next generation for future careers. Tune into NJTV every Sunday, and if you miss the show, go to [classroomcloseup.org](http://classroomcloseup.org) where you can watch, share and download every story. The show inspires educators, informs the community about the latest educational advances and brings pride to the schools that are featured each week.

One February 4 and 11, NJTV is conducting its membership drive and the 7:30 p.m. airtime will be pre-empted. Make sure you tune in to the earlier times at 7:30 a.m. or 12:30 p.m.

## watch

### FEBRUARY 4 AND 25

Students in a special education program at Lower Cape May Regional High School are learning about the importance of bees and how to become beekeepers. They bottle and market honey to keep the bee operation running.

### FEBRUARY 11

The Middlesex County Sheriff's K-9 unit demonstrates narcotic and bomb detection capabilities for students at Middlesex County Vocational-Technical School in Piscataway. Teacher James Wiater coordinated the canine demonstration so he could present an armor vest for one of the dogs.

### FEBRUARY 18

Alan B. Shepard Elementary School students in Old Bridge are Playing Unified. The children volunteer to team up with students who have special needs, to help them truly become integrated into the life of the school.



FEB. 4 & 25



FEB. 11



FEB. 18

### 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.



[classroomcloseup.org](http://classroomcloseup.org)

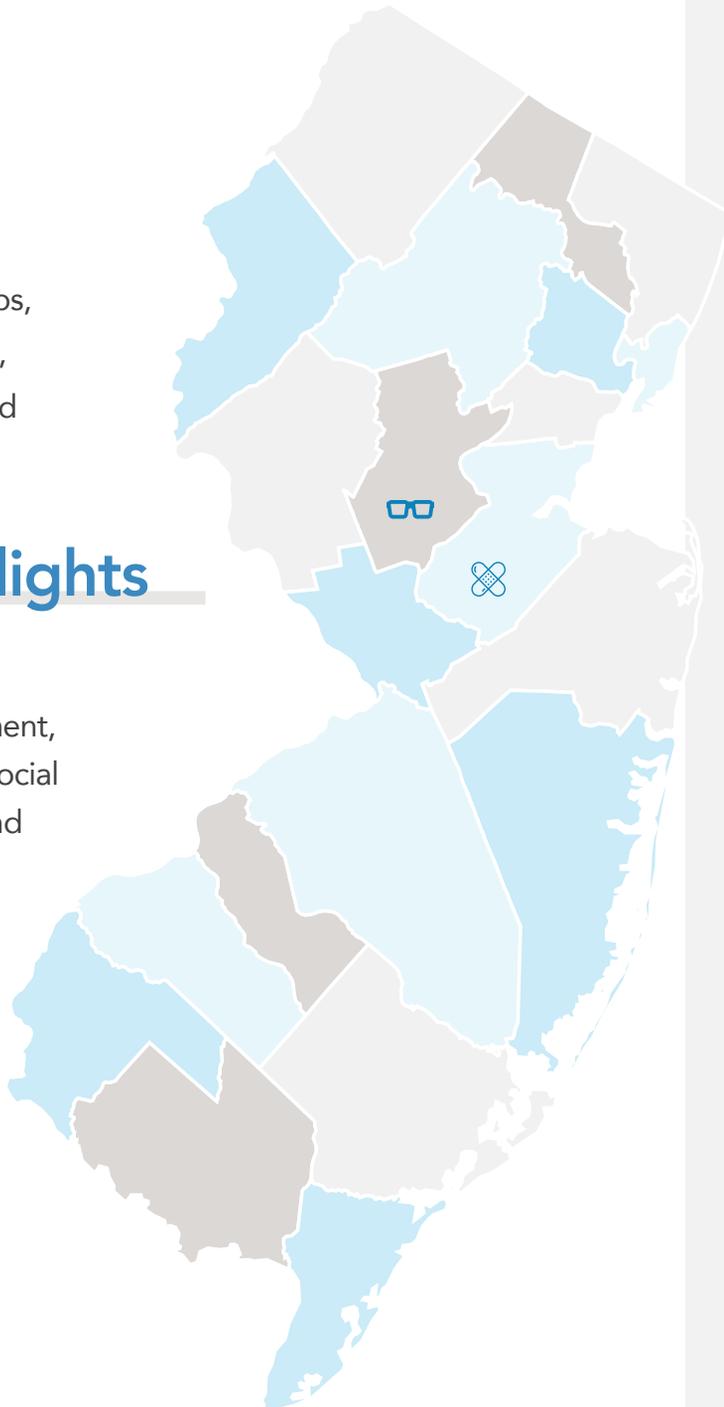
Visit [classroomcloseup.org](http://classroomcloseup.org) to watch individual segments, the entire show, or to see what's coming up. On Twitter, follow @CCUNJ and "like" the show at [facebook.com/crcunj](https://www.facebook.com/crcunj). The show continues to gain fans, especially since it is available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

# SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY:

Workshops,  
field trips,  
grants and  
more

## highlights

Literacy,  
bereavement,  
science, social  
studies and  
social  
justice



These experiences have been endorsed by NJEA's Professional Development Institute and are also posted on [NJEA.org](http://NJEA.org). Providers seeking endorsement should call NJEA's Professional Development Division at 609-599-4561.

## showcase

### #nerdcampNJ

Educators of K-12 students are invited to attend and participate in Nerd Camp NJ, an event of participant-led workshops focused on literacy. Nerd Camp NJ takes place on April 21 at Chatham High School. All attendees come to Nerd Camp NJ to present and attend workshops for free.

There are many ways you might choose to participate at Nerd Camp:

- Sharing what you've already presented in your department, in your district, or at a regional, statewide or national conference.
- Sharing a special passion by trying your hand at presenting with the support of like-minded professionals.
- Asking for help with a certain area of literacy instruction by posting on the workshop board.
- Choosing what workshops you would benefit from or are passionate about.

Nerd Camp NJ promotes collaboration among teachers, subject areas and the publishing world. Come and be a part of the excitement!

It is free to attend and provides six hours of professional development credit. A brown-bag lunch is suggested. For more information, contact Oona Abrams at 908-461-0515 or [oabrams@chatham-nj.org](mailto:oabrams@chatham-nj.org). To register, visit [nerdcampnj.weebly.com](http://nerdcampnj.weebly.com).

### Healing in the Classroom

The Karen Ann Quinlan Hospice and the Joseph T. Quinlan Bereavement Center in Newton invite teachers, school counselors, social worker, and psychologists to participate in a two-day program designed to help create on-site grief support systems for bereaved students. Learning to recognize possible grief-based behaviors in your classroom will allow you to respond appropriately and to quickly assist your students. These are skills that you can use throughout your career with children of many ages.

The workshop will take place on Thursday and Friday, March 1 and 2. Training topics will include:

- Recognizing grief in children and teens.
- Developmental perspectives in grief.
- Coping strategies/interventions to help support grieving students.
- Emotional development across all content areas.

Participants will each receive a copy of the books *Finding the Words: How to Talk with Children and Teens about Death, Suicide, Funerals, Homicide, Cremation and other End-of-Life Matters* and the *Healing in the Classroom Workbook*.

The event runs 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. each day. The cost is \$200, which includes lunch on both days. The registration deadline is Feb. 23, 2018. Contact Diana Sebzda, Director of Bereavement at 973-948-2283 or [dsebzda@karenannquinlanhospice.org](mailto:dsebzda@karenannquinlanhospice.org). You may visit [www.karenannquinlanhospice.org](http://www.karenannquinlanhospice.org) for more information.

# More to learn across the state

## Art, Storytelling and Social Justice Educational Symposium

This symposium will connect educators with advocates, artists, and system-involved youth. The goal of the symposium is to share information on the juvenile justice system and discuss how educators can help transform the system. Participants will also learn how art can help share the stories of those impacted by the juvenile justice system, including those impacted by the school-to-prison pipeline. Educators will earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for participating in the symposium. Refreshments will be provided.

The symposium takes place on Tuesday, March 6 from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. at the Visual Arts Center of New Jersey, located at 68 Elm Street in Summit. The fee is \$75.

Register at [bit.ly/2j0aumu](http://bit.ly/2j0aumu). (Bit.ly web address is case-sensitive. The “0” is a zero.)

Questions? Call 908-973-9121, ext. 213

## Math workshops offered at Rutgers

The Association of Mathematics Teachers of New Jersey (AMTNJ), with the cooperation of the Rutgers Department of Mathematics and the Center for Discrete Mathematics and Theoretical Computer Science (DIMACS), is offering math workshops for elementary, middle and high school teachers. The workshops are held on Rutgers’ Busch Campus and run from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Following are workshops offered in March and April. Workshops in February and in May can be reviewed at the indicated websites.

### High school workshops

- Mar 16: 32nd Annual Precalculus Conference, Grades 9-14
- Mar 23: Modern Applications of Mathematics to Sustainability of Resources, Grades 10-12
- Apr 3: Building Bridges in Secondary Mathematics Classes - Creating an Environment to Facilitate the “Mathematical Practices” in the Standards, Grades 9-12
- Apr 10: Geometry Today, Grades 8-12
- Apr 12: Formative Assessment, Productive Struggle, and Student Discourse, Grades 6-12
- Apr 18: Developing Mathematical Habits of the Mind: Thinking the Math as well as Doing the Math, Grades 9-12
- Apr 20: A Survey of Vertex-Edge Graphs, Grades 6-12
- Apr 27: Simple Hands-on Activities for Sixth through Ninth Grade Math Students, Grades 6-9

Registration and information: [dimacs.rutgers.edu/grades-9-12-workshops](http://dimacs.rutgers.edu/grades-9-12-workshops)

### Middle school workshops

- Apr 10: Geometry Today, Grades 8-12
- Apr 12: Formative Assessment, Productive Struggle, and Student Discourse, Grades 6-12
- Apr 20: A Survey of Vertex-Edge Graphs, Grades 6-12
- Apr 24: Visualizing Fractions! Grades 4-8
- Apr 27: Simple Hands-on Activities for Sixth through Ninth Grade Math Students, Grades 6-9

Registration and information: [dimacs.rutgers.edu/grades-6-8-workshops](http://dimacs.rutgers.edu/grades-6-8-workshops)

### Elementary school workshops

- Apr 9: Mastering Math Facts and “Perfecting” Place Value: Improving the Teaching of Foundational Skills, Grades 1-3
- Apr 13: Shift Your Problem Solving Paradigm, Grades 3-5
- Apr 24: Visualizing Fractions! Grades 4-8

Registration and information: [dimacs.rutgers.edu/grades-K-5-workshops](http://dimacs.rutgers.edu/grades-K-5-workshops)

## NJASSW announces 57th annual Spring Institute

The New Jersey Association of School Social Workers’ (NJASSW) 56th annual Spring Institute will be held on March 26 Renaissance Woodbridge Hotel, 515 US Highway 1-South, in Iselin.

Participants will receive five continuing education units. The program runs from 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. with continental breakfast and lunch included.

NJASSW is an organization of certified school social workers from the public and private sectors. It provides opportunities for the professional growth of its members and actively supports higher standards for school social work practice.

For more information contact Dawn Clarke at [clarked@comcast.net](mailto:clarked@comcast.net).

## Science Education Institute at RVCC to hold NGSS summer institutes this summer

This summer, the Science Education Institute at Raritan Valley Community College will offer two week-long institutes designed to support teachers and supervisors of grades K-5 and grades 6-12 with the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Participants will receive an in-depth introduction to the vision behind the NGSS and its three dimensions: the core ideas, the practices, and the crosscutting concepts. Participants will experience NGSS-aligned investigations consisting of performance tasks that engage participants in practices and require the use of core ideas and crosscutting concepts to construct explanations for natural phenomena. There will be multiple opportunities for participants to reflect on these investigations and to use a nationally tested lesson idea template to develop performance tasks and plan NGSS-aligned lessons.

The week-long Institutes are held at Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg. Each day begins promptly at 9 a.m. and ends by 3:30 p.m. Light breakfast and lunch will be provided.

Grades K-5: Monday, Aug. 6 – Friday Aug. 10

Grades 6-12: Monday, July 23 – Friday, July 27

The Institute is led by Dr. Wil van der Veen, a nationally recognized expert on the NGSS and science education and a member of the New Jersey State Leadership Team for the NGSS. The institute is co-facilitated by K-12 classroom teachers from the NGSS Teacher Leader Program, collaboration among Princeton University, Rider University, and Raritan Valley Community College.

The fee is \$300 for the week, or \$250 for registrations received by March 31. Register early! The institutes tend to fill up quickly.

For more information and to register visit [www.raritanval.edu/ngss](http://www.raritanval.edu/ngss) or contact Mariel O’Brien at [mariel.obrien@raritanval.edu](mailto:mariel.obrien@raritanval.edu) or 908-526-1200, ext. 8942.

To develop a long-term NGSS professional development plan for your district, contact Dr. Wil van der Veen at [wil.vanderveen@raritanval.edu](mailto:wil.vanderveen@raritanval.edu).

# More to learn across the state

## NJSTA announces Summer Institute

The New Jersey Science Teachers Association (NJSTA) announces the 14th annual Maitland P. Simmons Memorial Award Summer Institute. The five-day institute, titled “3D Learning in Today’s Science Classroom: Lessons that Develop Skills and Create Connections,” will investigate implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards and explore what is meant by three-dimensional learning.

Twenty-four educators will explore science lesson planning from a new perspective, including opportunities for skill development, making connections to real-world phenomena, and the implementation of educational technology.

The institute is scheduled for July 25 through July 29 on the Busch campus of Rutgers University in Piscataway.

Throughout the dynamic sessions, teachers will be offered opportunities to collaborate and enrich their ideas. The productive goal is to transform learning experiences into lessons. Educators will uncover new and innovative ways to craft student centered experiences that prepare all students for the future.

Daily light breakfast, breaks and lunch will be included.

The institute is supported by the Maitland P. Simmons Memorial Scholarship Fund of NJSTA and all costs will be covered. Information and online applications are available at [www.njsta.org](http://www.njsta.org).

Successful applicants will be notified around April 15 and will be required to submit a \$100 reservation fee within one week of notification to be refunded only upon successful completion of the institute. After April 15, any additional remaining spaces will be filled on a rolling basis. All science teachers of grades 6 through 8 are welcome to apply, but teachers who are accepted for the Institute must become NJSTA members in order to participate.

## Camden County College Center for Civic Leadership and Responsibility offers free lecture series

For more information on the items below, visit [www.camdencc.edu/civiccenter](http://www.camdencc.edu/civiccenter) or call 856-227-7200, ext. 4333.

### Art in the Evening

- Feb. 22 – Thomas Cole
- March 8 – Asher B. Durand
- March 22 – Albert Bierstadt
- March 29 – Frederick Edwin Church
- April 5 – Thomas Moran

### Terror in the 21st-Century: Al Qaeda, ISIS and Their Affiliates

- Feb. 28 – Jihadism in Saudi Arabia
- March 7 – The Evolution of Al-Qaeda
- March 28 – ISIS in Europe: Security and Social Implications of Terrorism in the Old Continent
- April 11 – Inside the Caliphate: What ISIS Wants and How It Finally Can Be Stopped
- April 25 – Al Qaeda

### Addictions Awareness Series

- Feb. 21 – Transitioning from Recovery to Advocacy & Clinical Practice
- March 21 – Giving Back: Peer-to-Peer Mentoring
- April 18 – Professional Ethics
- May 16 – Neuroplasticity

## Free one-day social studies workshop programs

The New Jersey Council for the Social Studies (NJCSS), the New Jersey Social Studies Supervisors Association (NJSSSA), and the New Jersey Center for Civic Education are sponsoring two free one-day workshops.

### March 15 – Educating Today’s Students to Sustain Tomorrow’s Democracy

This program takes place at Rutgers University in Piscataway from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Workshops include Logical Standards for Discussion and Debate; Teaching Politics and Elections Through American Ideals; Multiple Perspectives and Civil Discourse in the Classroom; Activities To Develop Listening Skills; How To Evaluate the Veracity of News and Social Media; How To Evaluate Candidates.

Participants will receive a certificate for five hours of professional development and be better prepared to involve their students in future annual mock election.

### March 21 —Project Citizen

This program takes place at Rutgers University in Piscataway from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Project Citizen is a process-based program that actively engages students in identifying, researching, and trying to implement solutions to public policy problems, often focusing on an issue in their local community. Developed by the Center for Civic Education, Project Citizen offers students the opportunity to apply the skills of active citizenship in the real world and promotes competent and responsible participation in public policy-making.

Participants will receive a certificate for five hours of professional development and be better prepared to involve their students in doing Project Citizen projects, including sending their projects to the annual Project Citizen Digital Showcase on June 15. For additional information about Project Citizen, go to [civiced.rutgers.edu/projectcitizen.html](http://civiced.rutgers.edu/projectcitizen.html).

To register for either event, email [arlenega@sas.rutgers.edu](mailto:arlenega@sas.rutgers.edu) with your name, email address, school, district and grade.

## Summer institute sponsored by New Jersey Center for Civic Education

The New Jersey Center for Civic Education is sponsoring a five-day, residential James Madison Legacy Project summer institute focused on the “We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution” materials, which integrate U.S. history, government and law. The program emphasizes the political philosophy that underlies the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights and their application over the course of U.S. history and today.

The summer institute will be held at Rutgers University in New Brunswick from July 15 to July 20. Room and board for the full five-day program are covered. Travel costs will be reimbursed. Participating teachers will receive a certificate for 40 hours of professional development and a free set of classroom materials. After the participants teach their U.S. history or government class enhanced by the We the People professional development, including doing a simulated legislative hearing, during the 2018-19 academic year, they will receive a \$200 stipend.

For additional information about the “We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution” program and to register by completing the Teacher Agreement, go to [civiced.rutgers.edu/wethepeople.html](http://civiced.rutgers.edu/wethepeople.html) or contact Arlene Gardner at the New Jersey Center for Civic Education at [arlenega@sas.rutgers.edu](mailto:arlenega@sas.rutgers.edu).

The registration deadline is April 27. 📅

# Becoming a teacher in spite of a learning disability

By Kiersten Perks, Rutgers University

When I was in high school, I had a class called individual studies. It was a bit like study hall for students who had a special needs classification, but I was convinced that having a learning disability meant that I was stupid. I thought that I was in that class as punishment.

Individual studies is a class where students with an individualized educational program (IEP) meet with the same special education teacher every day for a full period. The special education teacher uses this time to help students get organized, check to make sure students are writing down homework assignments, have students finish tests on which they need extra time, study for upcoming tests, or work on homework. I was the kind of student who would lie and say I didn't have any homework, but I couldn't get away with that in this class, and I was not a fan.

My sophomore year was different. Our first day of class, we had the usual introductions and went over the rules, but that wasn't everything. My individual studies teacher introduced herself, told us that she was a special education teacher, and talked about her learning disability. She didn't say, "I had a learning disability," using the past tense. She said, "I have a learning disability."

I couldn't believe that she was admitting this to a room of 16-year-olds! To someone who thought having a learning disability meant I was stupid, I thought she was actually admitting that she was stupid. For the first time I thought that maybe having a learning disability wasn't something to be ashamed of. This teacher turned out to be the first teacher to show me my IEP, and she was the first teacher to make it a point to teach us how to advocate for ourselves without letting

our frustrations color our intentions. She taught the importance of being assertive while being respectful.

## Teacher preparation with a learning disability

Getting through college and studying to become a teacher is difficult even without a learning disability. I wanted to quit many times. I doubted what I had been telling myself: that I would be a good special education teacher because I relate to students with a classification.

I told my best friend that thinking that my learning disability would somehow make me a good candidate for teaching special education was like saying that a person with a water bottle is a good candidate for putting out a forest fire. With every new challenge that I faced, I referenced this analogy.

As a consequence of both the challenges of my learning disability and my drive to prove myself, I sometimes overcompensated. The first lesson plan that I ever wrote was a complicated mess. It included 10 standards ranging from English language arts to technology and public speaking. Social studies and science were woven in as interdisciplinary components. What I'd written was more like a unit plan than the 40-minute lesson with a class of imaginary second graders. The failing grade I received on that hypothetical lesson only reinforced my belief that I didn't know what I was doing.

I can't even fully describe how awful it was, but do you know what I also can't fully describe? I can't describe the feeling that I get with completing a lesson plan in 20 minutes and then actually teaching it to real students.

I never thought I would be able to get to that point. I never thought that I would

be the person who my friends looked at and said, "How are you always prepared and so organized for teaching?" That sense of amazement dissipates quickly when I remind them of my messy car and my first lesson plan, but it's nice while it lasts!

When I started student teaching, I told my cooperating teachers about my learning disability, but I never revealed this to the students because those classes weren't really my own. Instead, I would tell struggling students, "I had a hard time with this, too" or "I would have to ask my teachers to read things to me as well." I found that telling students that I needed these things reassured them and gave them a push to ask for help.

## A diverse teaching force

Diversity is a major topic in education right now. Inclusion of, and differentiation for, students with special needs is widely discussed. There is an increase in the number of students who receive accommodations. As part of edTPA, even Pearson requires prospective teachers to have students with a 504 plan or an IEP in class during our recorded model lesson.

My hope is that as we more openly discuss learning disabilities and accept differentiation as part of our jobs, we eventually eliminate all stigmas attached to being classified. As we see the number of students who are classified increase, I hope that some of these students consider careers in education, viewing their experiences as assets. I hope that we embrace their different abilities as contributions to a diverse learning experience and appreciate the value of their contributions as we should for the full spectrum of human diversity. 🌈

**This teacher turned out to be the first teacher to show me my IEP, and she was the first teacher to make it a point to teach us how to advocate for ourselves without letting our frustrations color our intentions.**

# NJREA

Past, present and future

## Understanding Optum Rx

As of Jan. 1, retirees who receive their prescription benefits through the School Employees' Health Benefits Program (SE-HBP) now have Optum Rx, not Express Scripts, as their prescription benefits provider. The new carrier serves the same level of benefits—with no change in copays or out-of-pocket maximums—that retirees have enjoyed for the last five years. Members should have received their new prescription cards in late December, prior to the switch on Jan. 1.

### Switch saves \$1.6 billion

Last summer, the state began the bidding process for the prescription drug program because the contract with Express Scripts was set to expire at the end of 2017. For the first time ever, an online auction system designed to make prescription drug benefit providers bid against each other in a transparent and much more competitive way was used to solicit bids. With a cost that is more than 10 percent below what the state was projected to spend on prescription cost, OptumRx, Inc. won the bid for a three-year period beginning this calendar year. Members of both the State Health Benefits Plan (SHBP) and SEHBP will collectively save a total of at least \$1.6 billion during the three-year Optum Rx contract.

However, it is important to note that any changes in copays and out-of-pocket charges that SHBP members incur will **NOT** affect SEHBP members.

OptumRx committed to work with both the Division of Pensions and Benefits and NJEA to ensure that the transition went as smoothly as possible. By now, most mail-away prescriptions should have transferred to OptumRx and will be filled by the new home-delivery services. However, retirees should remember to update their billing information prior to their prescription being filled. Similarly, prescriptions that are filled at a retail pharmacy will need to be updated with a member's new prescription card before refilling those prescriptions.

### How you can learn more

OptumRx has a variety of ways to share information with SEHBP enrollees. For those tech-savvy members, there is a website specifically for public employees in New Jersey [optumrx.com/stateofnewjersey](http://optumrx.com/stateofnewjersey) and an app for your tablet or smartphone.

NJEA has developed a fact sheet for retirees about the switch to Optum Rx as well as provide answers to any immediate questions you may have. This fact sheet was initially distributed at the NJREA Convention in November and is available to view online by visiting [njea.org/njrea/optumrx](http://njea.org/njrea/optumrx).

Should you have any remaining questions, use the Optum Rx website link above or call 844-368-8740.

It's that time again! Read Across America Day is March 2, the birthday of children's author, Dr. Seuss. Retirees are urged to support childhood literacy by reaching out to their local schools to see how they can help. NJREA member Thomas Kroncke continued his long-standing tradition of reading to students during the 2017 Read Across America celebration.

Kroncke is pictured with his daughter, Lisa Kirch, a fourth-grade teacher at the Dater School in Ramsey.

# Around the counties

For questions, call your county REA.

For trip details, check the county newsletter.

**MIDDLESEX COUNTY REA** will hold its next meeting/luncheon on Thursday, March 8 at the Grand Marquis in Old Bridge. An NJEA Member Benefits Fair will be held. The cost is \$30. To attend, call Susan Jaysnovitch at 732-925-1606.

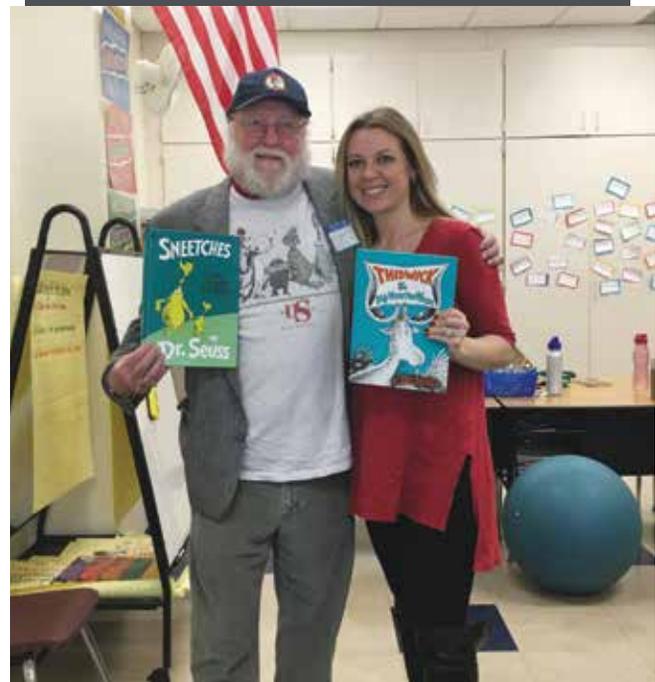
**MORRIS COUNTY REA's** winter meeting/luncheon will be held on Wednesday, March 7 at the Zeris Inn in Mountain Lakes. Charlie Haas will be leading a presentation on the Titanic and recent findings. The cost is \$30. To attend, call Cheryl Doltz at 973-818-1353.

**OCEAN COUNTY REA** invites you to its upcoming meeting/luncheon on Thursday, March 15 at the Holiday Inn in Manahawkin. The cost is \$28. To attend, call Janice Sovinee at 732-477-1711.

**PASSAIC COUNTY REA** welcomes you to its meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, March 28 at the Brownstone House in Paterson. To reserve your place, call Kitty Sausa at 201-445-7577.

Join **SALEM COUNTY REA** for its meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, Feb. 21 at the Municipal Building in Alloway. To attend, call Peggy Kavanaugh at 856-935-0075.

**WARREN COUNTY REA** will hold its next meeting/luncheon on Wednesday, April 4 at the Hawk Pointe Country Club in Washington. The cost is \$30. To attend, call Vicki Rhinehart at 908-319-1995. For more information, visit [www.wcrea-njea.org](http://www.wcrea-njea.org).



## New process for benefits questions

In an effort to facilitate members to access health benefits information that is accurate and efficient, the NJREA Health Benefits Committee is deploying a new communication model. This approach will help the committee better serve NJREA members and allow for more effective communication with the NJEA Research staff.

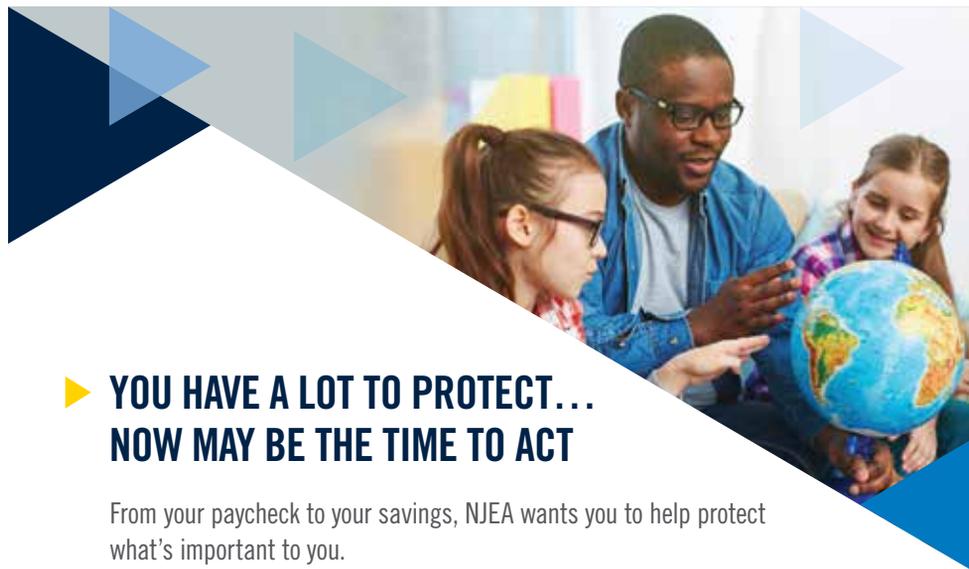
Should you have any questions regarding your state-paid, post-retirement medical benefits, please direct them to your respective county REA president. The presidents and NJREA Health Benefits Committee members (listed below) receive frequent, up-to-date information about retirees' benefits and are aware of the latest issues, as well as how they are being handled.

Should the county REA president not be able to answer your question, he or she will contact the health benefits committee member assigned to your county.

- Members of the NJREA Health Benefits Committee include:
- Chairperson Judith Ruff (Burlington)
- Joseph Fleischner (Essex, Hudson, Union)
- Ron Giordano (Bergen, Passaic, Sussex)
- Linda Chororos (Monmouth, Ocean, Somerset)
- Bette Kirk (Mercer, Middlesex, Salem)
- Susan Jakob (Cape May, Gloucester)
- Barbara Satz (Hunterdon, Morris, Warren)
- William Sia (Atlantic Camden, Cumberland) 🇺🇸



From left: Passaic County Education Association Secretary Dennis Carroll, Wayne Education Association President Eda Ferrante, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty and NJREA President Judy Perkins at the inauguration of Gov. Phil Murphy.



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- Counseling (M.A., Ed.S.)
- Counseling Psychology (Ph.D.)
- Marriage and Family Therapy (M.S., Ed.S.)
- Psychological Studies (M.A.)
- School Counseling (M.A.)
- School Psychology (M.A., Ed.S.)



**An application fee waiver will be issued to all attendees who sign-in at the Open House and then apply to a program.**

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## New offer on home solar!

Thanks to our special relationship with Buyer's Edge, Inc.\*\* NJEA members have a new supplier of residential solar services. GenRenew offers the following benefits:

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For more information, call 800-558-1920 and mention that you are an NJEA member in Group 3386.



Be sure to visit the Member Benefits section at [memberbenefits.NJEA.org](http://memberbenefits.NJEA.org).

## February Web Giveaway

### \$100 Visa gift card from the NEA Retirement Program\*

NJEA local affiliates are encouraged to seek a payroll slot for the NEA Retirement Program (provided through Security Benefit) so that all members have access to DirectInvest, a low-cost solution for tax-favored saving in a 403(b) account. Contact Don Wiley for assistance at [donald.wiley@securitybenefit.com](mailto:donald.wiley@securitybenefit.com) or 609-306-0817. Additional information is available at [neamb.com/retires](http://neamb.com/retires).

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Call 800-472-5625 or visit [www.hrblock.com/hrb-offers/njea](http://www.hrblock.com/hrb-offers/njea) for details of the 2018 H&R Block discount for NJEA members.

### Recent winner:

Olive Giles of Princeton Reg. Ed. Supp. Staff Assn. won \$150 credit toward income tax return preparation from H&R Block.\*

Be sure to **register online** each month for the web giveaway!

\*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.

\*\*Sponsored Vendors: Products and services that are sponsored by NJEA Member Benefits are believed to have broad-based appeal and provide superior quality and value. To the best of NJEA's understanding, these products and services are worthy of sponsorship. However, NJEA cannot be responsible for the quality or performance of these products and services, which ultimately are the responsibility of the vendor.



## NJEA Delegate Assembly

Minutes of Sept. 9, 2017

The NJEA Delegate Assembly met on Sept. 9, 2017, at the Princeton Marriott at Forrestal, 100 College Road East, Princeton, N.J. at 9:30 a.m. President Marie Blistan presided.

Roll call was taken. There were 120 of 127 delegates present. Alternates were seated as follows: Pildis for Vallieu and Clark for L. Zahn (Camden); Roche for Cheli (Cumberland); Rhue for Reed and Crawford for Tomlinson (Hudson); Strzykalski for Simonitis (Middlesex); Farrell for Simon and Vacancy (Morris); Fallon-Tomaino for Vacancy (Somerset) Boyd for Weinberg (Union). Absent were representatives: Meyer (Burlington); A. Zahn (Camden); McCormick and Vacancy (Middlesex); Middlebrooks (Hudson); Vala (Hunterdon); Eschelbach (Monmouth); Vacancy (Salem); Lawler, Lee and Wilczynski (Union);

John Zurka (Union) presented the report of the DA Rules Committee with amendments.

As part of the Induction of Officers, Executive Director Ed Richardson called upon Anthony Rosamilia and Michael Rollins (Essex) to open the meeting with an inspirational message. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, Dr. Eva Diane Lyles-Smith provided a trumpet solo rendition of the national anthem. Mr. Richardson then introduced the Vice President of the National Education Association, Becky Pringle to perform the induction ceremony of the newly elected NJEA Officers, each of whom was provided with a bound copy of the historic documents of the organization dating back to 1853. Each of the officers was inducted individually and with a companion. Husband Bob Blistan and Sue Clark, Gloucester County President, accompanied President Marie Blistan. Lauren Spiller accompanied her husband, Vice President Sean Spiller. Tamara Gross, fiancée, accompanied Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty.

Following the formal induction, Pringle shared her thoughts about the strength of the organization and powerful position, which NJEA holds in the national landscape of public education. Following Pringle's remarks, each of the newly inducted officers were afforded the opportunity to thank family, friends, colleagues and staff for their contributions.

The induction ceremony closed with the singing of "Lift Every Voice and Sing," led by Jacqui Greadington, president of the East Orange Education Association, Gary Melton, President of the Atlantic County Council

of Education Associations, and Olive Giles, President of the Princeton Regional Support Staff Association.

Non-Delegate members wishing to speak to the body were invited to speak. Lori Lalama, teacher of 34 years from Clifton spoke to the positive influence of the Summer Fellows Program. She outlined a list of accomplishments and thanked the NJEA leadership for their vision and support in the creation of the program. Melissa Tomlinson (Atlantic) thanked the county association for their endorsement and efforts to help elect her as Atlantic County Freeholder.

Returning to the agenda, Don Miller, NJEA staff, provided a tutorial on the use of the DA iPads and troubleshooting tips to help delegates negotiate the DA book provided to them electronically. The chair introduced Gary Melton as the Ethnic-Minority member at-large to the NJEA Executive Committee based on the provisional election held in the spring. Robin Holcombe will serve as the Ethnic-Minority member at-large to the NJEA Executive Committee.

President Blistan then gave an overview of the Association's legislative activities since the body last met in May. She highlighted the Murphy gubernatorial campaign and the grassroots efforts in Legislative District (LD) 3 to unseat Senate President Steve Sweeney. She noted that the LD 3 campaign was a direct response from NJEA to address the devastating impact of Ch. 78 and the commitment to ensure economic and social justice for our members. An assortment of television ads were shared with the body and information about the positive feedback being received as a result of those ads. Additionally, there was a report about Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), hurricane relief and the dues freeze sub-committee, convened to address the May DA NBI to investigate possibilities related to the dues rate.

Richardson returned to give the executive director's report in which he gave an in-depth report on the NJEA legislative campaign initiatives throughout the state. He reviewed the manner in which PAC funding is being distributed, how members are being engaged in the grassroots campaigns, as well as referring to the television and other media efforts to engage members, encourage support for endorsed candidates and ensure that once elected those legislators continue to support positions favorable to the NJEA. He closed by recognizing the newest member of the Executive Office, Nancy

Bachrach, Confidential Assistant to Sean Spiller and asked for a moment of silence to recognize the passing of a longtime advocate, leader, and consultant, Margie Clifford.

Convention Chair, Susan Davis (Sussex) and Professional Development and Instructional Issues Director Michael Cohan provided an update on the annual convention activities. They gave special attention to the new registration process, which will afford onsite registration by scanning of the membership card. The chair also outlined the specific duties and activities that all members of the Delegate Assembly were required to participate in as being a member of the DA.

The Elections and the Leadership committees each provided reports without recommendations. The body accepted them as presented.

The presentation of committee reports with recommendations:

The Government Relations Committee report, moved by Dare (Gloucester) and presented by Secretary-Treasurer Steve Beatty – Recommendation 1 provided for members of county LAT committees to receive scholarships to the Summer Leadership Conference. A motion to amend to include retired members of the county LAT in addition to those noted in the published report. The motion as amended was properly moved, and approved. Dare (Gloucester) moved Recommendation 2, delineating awards the committee is recommending be presented as outlined in the report. The motion was properly moved, and approved. Recommendations 3 and 4 were moved as a block. The motion was properly moved, and approved without debate.

Clemens (Bergen) presented the Professional Development Committee report recommending the first increase in the honorarium provided to members conducting professional development at any NJEA event, who are not consultants since 1990. The motion was properly moved and approved without debate.

Jensen (Morris-Retired) presented the Women in Education Committee report, moved by Morgan (Ocean) providing a comprehensive history on the committees award and the recommendation to change the name to the "Elizabeth A. Allen – Women in Education Award." The motion was properly moved, and approved without debate.

Rheault (Atlantic) chair of the Working Conditions Committee presented the recommendations of the committee as delineated in the DA book and moved them as a block. The motion was properly moved, and approved without debate.

New Business Items:

NBI 1 –Schorno (Morris) presented a recommendation to direct the Government Relations Division and any other appropriate staff or leadership to pursue all viable options to provide relief from the current Ch. 78 legislation. The motion was properly moved, and approved without debate.

NBI 2 – Odgers-Lax (Passaic) presented a recommendation to explore moving the present annual budget report which occurs in May, to the March meeting, with a report back to the body by the November 2017 meeting. The motion was properly moved, and approved.

NBI 3 – Zurka (Union) presented a recommendation that all committee reports follow the same consistent format to insure that delegates can easily follow the reports, have supporting information easily accessible as addendums to the report. The motion was properly moved, and approved without debate.

NBI 4 – Cannella (Essex) presented a recommendation to investigate avenues, which all Associations could make events more “parent friendly” for members with children. The motion was properly moved, and after extensive debate, the motion was approved.

A member questioned the feasibility to have all NBIs uploaded to the iPad. The chair explained the DA book is prepared two weeks prior to the meeting to allow members to have time to examine its contents. By rule, that would mean that all NBIs would need to be pre-filed, and in accordance with that timeline. Generally, members of the body develop their NBI the day of the meeting. We do attempt to address them by projecting the NBI text on the screen.

A trio of southern county presidents, Clark (Gloucester); Maniglia (Salem) and Nicosia-Jones (Cumberland) addressed the body regarding the grassroots efforts in LD 3 and encouraged everyone present to join in the activities to help unseat Senate President Sweeney.

Infanger (Essex), a new member of the DA, questioned the three pages of pending items, some of which date back to 2008 which are still under review. She asked why it takes that amount of time to address concerns, and what efforts were feasible to make the process more expedient? The chair noted that staff recently convened to address that very matter. The new leadership team is making every effort to address these items, and the body can expect a report back.

Cannella (Essex) shared that the NEA LGBT Caucus is holding its first ever conference on May 18-20 in Las Vegas, Nevada. He encouraged members to share the information and contact him if they have an interest in attending.

Clemens (Bergen) moved to adjourn at 12:47 p.m. 🇺🇸

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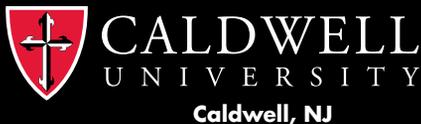
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  - Special Education - March 1, 2018
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# Staff News



NJEA welcomed **GARY MELTON** to NJEA staff on Jan. 2 as an associate director in the Executive Office. Melton previously served as an NEA Director, president of the Atlantic County

Council of Education Associations, senior vice president of the Atlantic City Education Association, and chairperson of the NEA Black Caucus. His experience includes community organizing around education, social justice and political issues.

Prior to joining NJEA staff, Melton was a teacher at the Pennsylvania Avenue School in Atlantic City, where he taught the Responsible Thinking class, which was designed to fight the School-to-Prison Pipeline by focusing on restoring students through completion of interactive behavioral correction activities. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Africana Studies from Rutgers University.

Melton lives in Mays Landing with his wife, Vicky, and sons, Gary Jr., Bo and Malachi.



NJEA welcomed **CARRIE HERBERT** to NJEA staff on Jan. 2 as an administrative assistant in the Legal Services section of the NJEA Executive Office. Prior to joining NJEA

staff, Herbert was employed for more than 22 years as a legal secretary at the Zazzali, Fagella, Nowak, Kleinbaum and Friedman law firm. Through that firm, Herbert has extensive experience working with various NJEA corporate matters, such as contracts, opinions, legislation, research, and maintenance of complex legal files. She has particular expertise the area of school/labor and employment law and the NJEA legal services program.

Herbert lives in Yardley, Pennsylvania with her husband, Mark. 🏡

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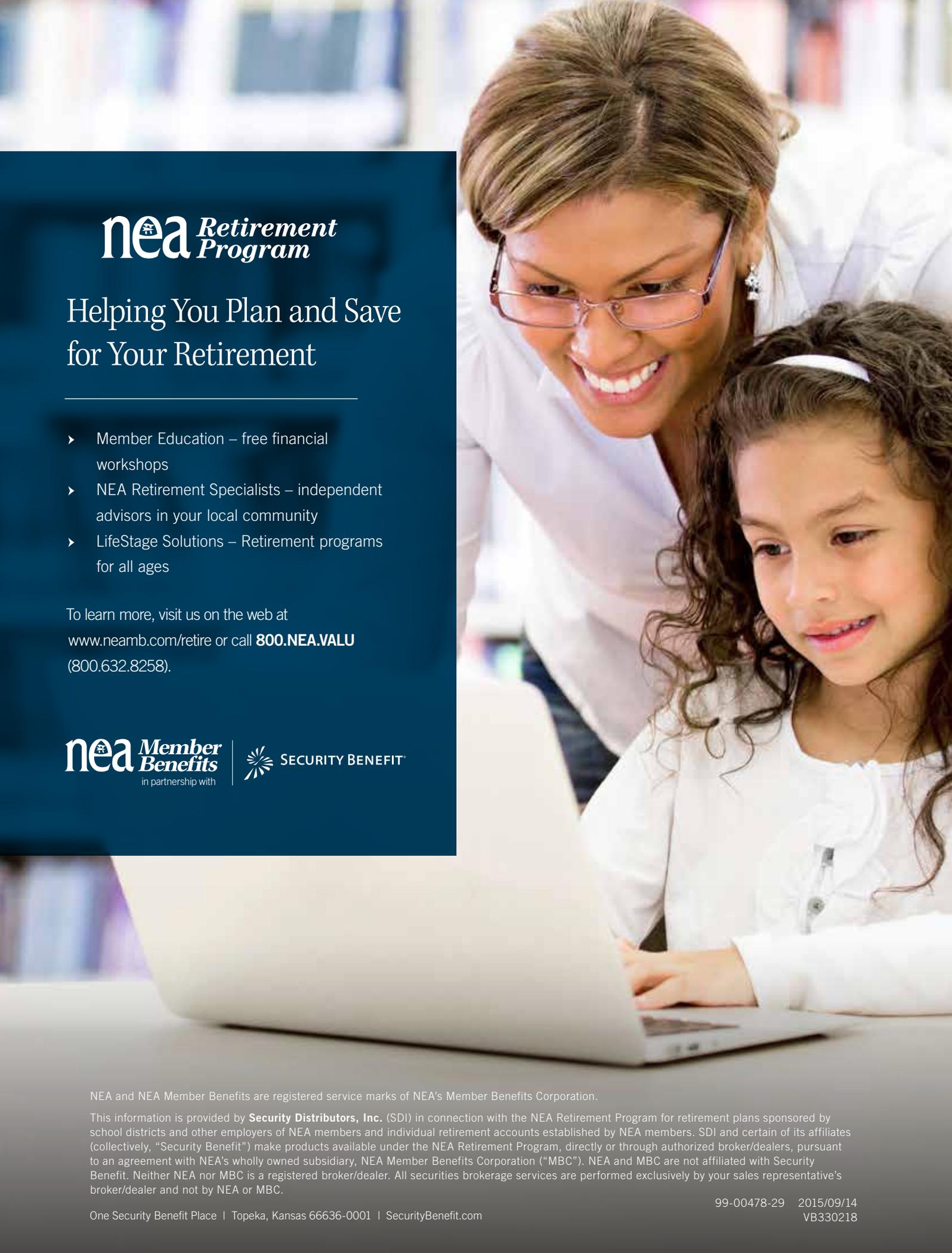
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# February & beyond

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

**2/2-4**

Fri., Sat. & Sun.

**NJEA ESP  
Conference**

**2/16**

Friday

**Executive  
Committee  
meeting**

**2/17**

Saturday

**Legislative and  
Political Action  
Conference**

**3/2-3**

Fri. & Sat.

**Winter Leadership  
Conference-North**

**3/9**

Friday

**Executive  
Committee  
meeting**

**3/10**

Saturday

**Delegate  
Assembly  
meeting**

**3/10**

Saturday

**NJEA  
Preservice  
Conference**

**4/13-14**

Fri. & Sat.

**Higher  
Education  
Conference**

## deadlines

**3/2**

**New Jersey Preservice  
Education Association  
Conference**

Event Date: March 10

**3/23**

**Higher Education  
Conference**

Event Date: April 13-14

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# Save the Date

## NJEA Higher Education Conference

Princeton Marriott at Forrestal  
April 13-14, 2018



# Governor Murphy: his agenda, our realities

When Ambassador Phil Murphy was sworn in as the 56th Governor of New Jersey on Jan. 16, it marked the end of the Christie Era. For the past eight years, the state's top public official has used educators as a political punching bag, often flinging mud to distract from his many failures and always seeking to undermine the power of collective action. Now, as Gov. Phil Murphy takes the reins, a brighter future awaits educators.

But here's the reality: our work begins now.

NJEA members worked very hard to elect Gov. Murphy. Now, we must work even harder to help his administration transform his ideas into action. As NJEA members, we must harness the momentum built during the "Members 4 Murphy" campaign. We cannot sit back and expect good legislation and carefully considered regulation to simply happen.

Murphy's progressive agenda will surely endure political opposition when it challenges the entrenched interests in Trenton. Despite potential opposition, he is poised to make significant progress. NJEA members must work to counteract resistance to the positive legislative and regulatory changes championed by candidate Murphy now that he is Gov. Murphy.

The governor has already demonstrated that he meant what he said as a candidate.

Prior to his official first day, Murphy backed up his commitment to have stronger, more inclusive relationships with educators than his predecessor. First, he nominated life-long educator, Asbury Park Superintendent Dr. Lamont Repollet, as commissioner of education. Then

he announced that he has asked Dr. Repollet, once confirmed, to begin the process of ending the administration of PARCC testing in New Jersey's public schools.

Murphy has many policy goals that would bring positive change to New Jersey's public schools. He wants to sign legislation to grant due-process rights to educational support professionals. He's talked about creative ways to ensure the state fully funds the pension systems. He's committed to work with all relevant stakeholders to take on the challenges posed by a school funding formula that's been largely ignored for eight years. With the help of NJEA members, Murphy can realize these substantial changes for our schools.

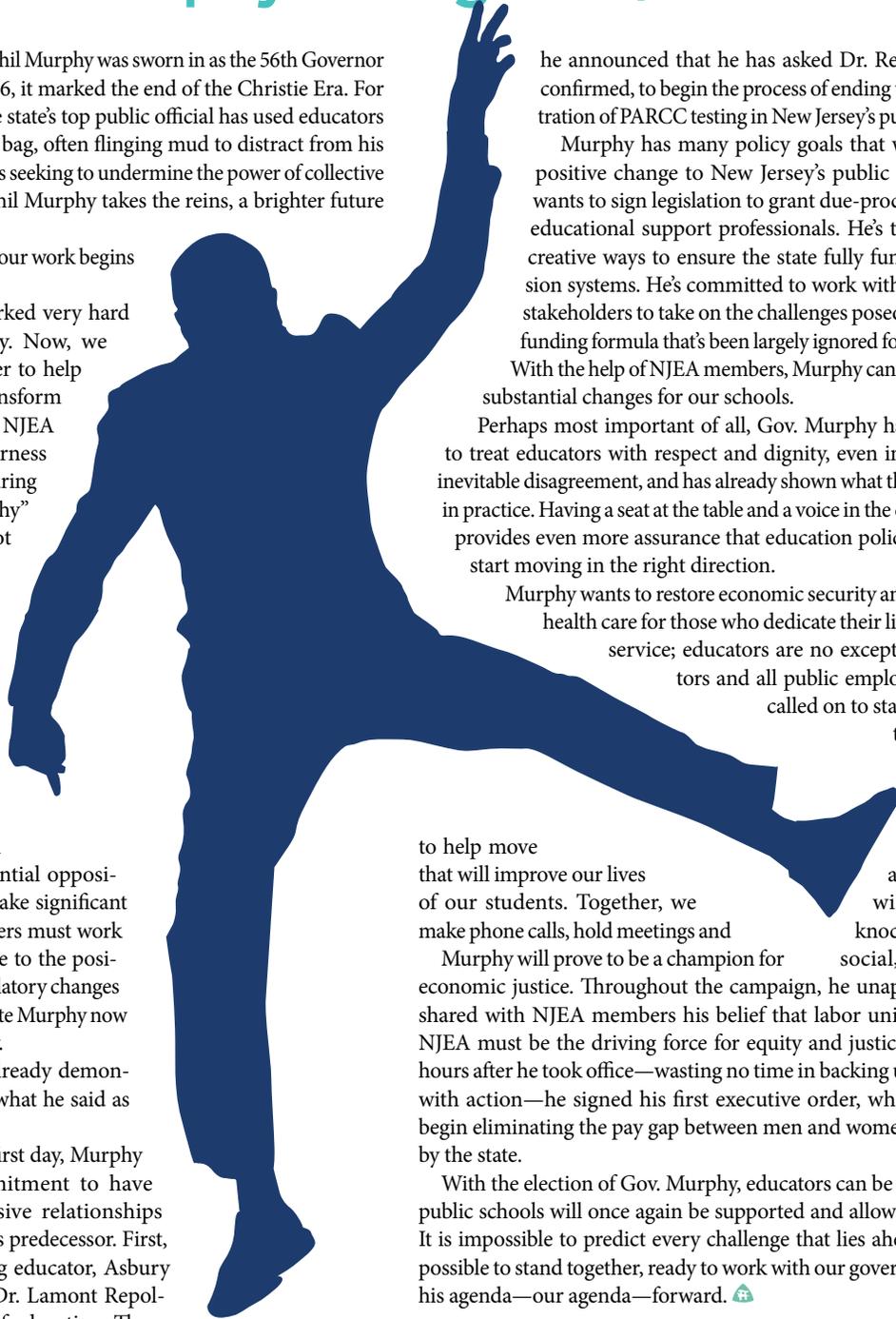
Perhaps most important of all, Gov. Murphy has promised to treat educators with respect and dignity, even in the face of inevitable disagreement, and has already shown what that looks like in practice. Having a seat at the table and a voice in the conversation provides even more assurance that education policy will again start moving in the right direction.

Murphy wants to restore economic security and affordable health care for those who dedicate their lives to public service; educators are no exception. Educators and all public employees will be called on to stand shoulder

to help move that will improve our lives of our students. Together, we make phone calls, hold meetings and to help move that will improve our lives of our students. Together, we make phone calls, hold meetings and

Murphy will prove to be a champion for social, racial and economic justice. Throughout the campaign, he unapologetically shared with NJEA members his belief that labor unions such as NJEA must be the driving force for equity and justice. Just three hours after he took office—wasting no time in backing up his words with action—he signed his first executive order, which seeks to begin eliminating the pay gap between men and women employed by the state.

With the election of Gov. Murphy, educators can be assured that public schools will once again be supported and allowed to thrive. It is impossible to predict every challenge that lies ahead, but it is possible to stand together, ready to work with our governor to move his agenda—our agenda—forward. 🇺🇸



**NJEA members worked very hard to elect Gov. Murphy. Now, we must work even harder to help his administration transform his ideas into action.**



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