

REVIEW
SEPTEMBER 2025

NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

SEPTEMBER
2025
njea.org

REVIEW



an education and advocacy resource



26 SOLIDARITY FOREVER!
MEET NJEA PRESIDENT STEVE BEATTY

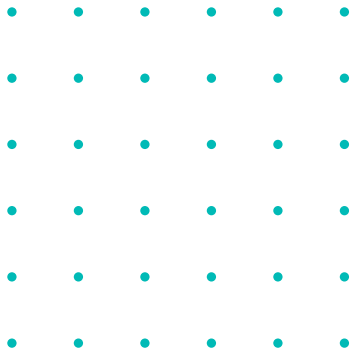
32 ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE
CONFRONTS HEALTH DISPARITIES

36 ALL IN FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

42 JEWISH IDENTITY AND
THE NEED FOR ALLYSHIP

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engaged members*

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Ana

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Gabrielle

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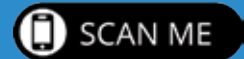
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NJREA President Joan Wright shares a lighthearted moment with members during an NEA RA breakfast in Portland. Wright completed her term as president on Aug. 31.



From left: Brian McLaughlin, NJREA; Christa McLaughlin, Brian's wife and first-grade teacher in Franklin Township, Somerset County; Fay Weatherington, Irvington; Dr. Manuela Jimenez, Perth Amboy Public Schools; Karen Cubberly, Hopatcong, and Katherine Beggiano, Hunterdon Central Regional High School, stop for a quick pose during the NJEA PDII Impact Conference on July 16.



Keynote speaker and author Dr. Bettina L. Love (l) signs her book for Paterson EA member Nicole Fuller during the R.I.S.E. Summit, hosted by NJEA's Office of Human and Civil Rights, Equity and Governance, on July 23.



FEATURES

26 MEET NJEA PRESIDENT STEVE BEATTY

NJEA President Steve Beatty believes the strength of our union comes from a membership that is deeply engaged. And those members look to the union to care about members' working conditions and students' learning conditions, based on justice and equity. In an interview prior to taking office, Beatty shared his vision for NJEA.

By Patrick Rumaker



26

32 ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE CONFRONTS HEALTH DISPARITIES

Inspired by a new law that requires New Jersey school districts to provide free menstrual products to students who need them, NJEA members at Essex County College applied for a grant from the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education to offer the same access to their students.

By Kathryn Coulibaly

36 ALL IN FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

The NJEA Consortium empowers educators with resources and collaborative platforms to navigate modern education and champion equitable outcomes for all students. Their initiative builds strong community relationships, offers professional development, and fosters discussions to ensure New Jersey's diverse population sees and recognizes itself reflected within New Jersey schools.

By Dr. Kim Pinckney, Michele Gardner, Fred Buglione and Camy Kobylinski



32

42 JEWISH IDENTITY AND THE NEED FOR ALLYSHIP

Antisemitism is not history. It is a persistent reality that has shaped Jewish life for millennia. Many American Jews feel a deep and disorienting sense of isolation. Much of this isolation stems from a lack of awareness about Jewish identity, culture and the modern forms antisemitism takes. This article broaches topics that offer a path forward for educators ready to become true allies.

By Rebecca Zarabi and Brittany Goodman



36

“

Jewish students and staff deserve to be seen, understood, and included.

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Political action matters



The number \$21.4 billion

Total New Jersey Department of Education state budget appropriation for Pre-K – 12 education for school year 2025-26, including required pension payments.

Source: NJ Public Laws of 2025, Chapter 74.

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NJEA BUDGET SUMMARY

Fiscal year ending Aug. 31, 2026



NJEA's new leadership team. From left: NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Tina Dare, NJEA President Steve Beatty and NJEA Vice President Petal Robertson.

PHOTO BY John O'Boyle



Did you know? Free life insurance

✦ NJEA and NEA members enjoy discounts and free services as a benefit of their membership. For example, every member has access to free life insurance through NEA.



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REVIEW



180 W. State St., P.O. Box 1211, Trenton, NJ 08607-1211 • 609-599-4561 • NJEA.org

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Executive Director: Kevin Kelleher | Deputy Executive Director: Denise Graff Policastro

Editorial Director Steven Baker
Editor Aiat Oraby
Editor Patrick Rumaker
Associate Editor Kathryn Coulibaly
Art Director Gregg Poserina
Graphic Designer Jennifer Larson
Advertising Sara B. Ream

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Email: NJEAreview@NJEA.org**EDITORIAL COMMITTEE**

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Send address changes to:
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Organizational Directory**NJEA headquarters, Trenton**

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

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

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

Communications Division: responsible for all aspects of the association's communications efforts, both internal and external. The division produces the *NJEA Review* and *njea.org*; manages the Hipp Foundation and assists local and county affiliates with internal and external communications.

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

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

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

UniServ regional offices

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

UniServ South

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

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

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

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

UniServ Central

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

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

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

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

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

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

UniServ Northeast

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

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

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

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

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

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

UniServ Northwest

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

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

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

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

MEMBERSHIP

Active professional: \$1,127 (full time); \$225.40 (full time *low-earner); \$563.50 (part time); \$563.50 (on leave); \$225.40 (part time *low-earner). Active supportive: \$534 (full time); \$106.80 (full time *low-earner); \$267 (part time); \$106.80 (part time *low-earner); \$267 (on leave). Retired professional: \$97; \$1,850 (retired life). Retired ESP: \$50; \$905 (retired ESP life); NJAEA \$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. *Low-earner threshold 2025-26 is \$23,800.



President's Message



We fight for our members and students TOGETHER

Thirty-two years ago, I stepped into the classroom for the first time as an educator and union member. I was excited and eager to contribute to my school community, and I benefited from sharing an office and working closely with seven other teachers in "Project '79," an alternative school within Westfield High School. Right from the beginning of my career in education, I understood the value of collaboration, authenticity and solidarity.

Since that time, I've served as a history teacher, swim coach, union building representative, local and county president, NJEA Government Relations Committee chair and NJEA officer. I know firsthand the important connection between nurturing and maintaining relationships and accomplishing goals. During my tenure as an NJEA officer, I have visited more than 300 local associations, sitting and talking with members across the state about what matters most to them and what they want their union to focus on.

We have big goals for this organization, and they reflect your priorities as a member-led union. Together, we will continue the fight for competitive salaries, for safe and fair working conditions,

for our pensions and health benefits, for respect for educational support professionals and for social, racial and economic justice.

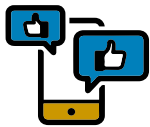
What I have learned through all these formative experiences, and now as NJEA president, is that if you want to get members and staff to buy in and stand in solidarity toward authentic and sustained union power, they need to know "why?"

If we are honest with ourselves and are inclusive and transparent with all of our members and staff, nothing can stop us in our mission.

As I take office alongside Vice President Petal Robertson and Secretary-Treasurer Tina Dare, I want you to know that I will always be available to listen to you and your concerns. Together, as a united union, we are in the strongest and best position to advocate for our members and for New Jersey's 1.3 million K-12 public school students and 230,000 community college students.

I wish you all a happy September and a wonderful start to a new school year.

In Solidarity,



officers online

STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: Thirteen months ago, I was tasked with leading the NJEA contingent to the State Evaluation Task Force Review Committee along with Elisabeth Yucis from PDII and Dayna Orlak, chair of our Instruction committee. Joined by 12 others representing other education stakeholder groups, we embarked on a journey to rethink and reimagine a better evaluation system - and one without SGOs. Selected as vice-chair along with Karen Bingert from PSA, we convened our groups and delved into the subtopics that would define the scope of our work. Meeting many times, our dedicated group finished the task and submitted our report with recommendations to the governor. From our recommendations was born the working group to flesh out the details. After months of meetings with a wider group of dedicated educators, we completed the work that now is now subject to new DOE guidance on evaluations. Coming full circle, I had the pleasure to present our work to a group of over 50 administrators and educators as part of the "DOE Summer Road Show" along with Karen Bingert, and our DOE guru, Pete Mazzagatti.

On Aug. 7, NJEA President Steve Beatty shared photos from the NJDOE Training. He stated, "It's our profession - we should always be at the table advocating for what we know to be best practices."

PETAL ROBERTSON

Facebook

@PetalforNJEA: NJEA Summer Leadership Conference was just the energy we needed to refresh, recharge, and get ready! Thank you to every participant, presenter, and organizer. #readyforthenewschoolyear

On Aug. 2, NJEA Vice President Petal Robertson shared photos depicting moments at the 2025 NJEA Jack Bertolino Summer Leadership Conference (SLC). The SLC offered two sessions from July 26 to July 30 at Harrah's in Atlantic City. Both sessions offered a variety of workshops to equip new and veteran union leaders with the skills necessary to support members in their local and/or county associations.

TINA DARE

Facebook

@TinaDareforNJEA: Off and running here in Portland for the NEA Representative Assembly! From the welcome party last night to an energizing NJEA caucus meeting this morning, followed by connecting with colleagues at the MOC reception—and ending the day with inspiration at the HCR dinner. Grateful to be here, representing for the work ahead!

On July 2, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Tina Dare shared photos from her time in Portland, Oregon during the 2025 National Education Association Representative Assembly. The NEA RA is the largest democratic decision-making body and the world's largest democratic deliberative assembly.

The ADVOCATE

RESOURCES FOR YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATION

Nominations open for six awards recognizing achievement in equity and justice

Nominations are now open for six awards that will be presented during the NJEA Dr. Martin Luther King Human and Civil Rights Celebration on Jan. 17, 2026.

The awards open for nomination are:

- **Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Human and Civil Rights Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Human and Civil Rights Committee. Nominees may be an individual, group or organization working in the area of civil rights, and if eligible, NJEA members.
- **Equality Champion Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee. This award honors a member who has been a champion of human and civil rights, and who has had a significant impact on education and the achievement of equal opportunity for those facing discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Elizabeth A. Allen Women in Education Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Women in Education Committee. Named for NJEA's first female president, the award honors a member or an individual living or working in New Jersey who promotes women's rights and equality for all persons, particularly in education.
- **Dr. Judith Owens Spirit Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Minority Leadership and Recruitment Committee. Named for Dr. Judith Owens, the first African American president of NJEA, this award honors a member who has been a champion of ethnic minority rights and issues and who has had a significant impact on education and the achievement of equal opportunity for those facing discrimination because of their ethnicity.
- **Urban Educator Activist Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Urban Education Committee. The award honors active and retired members who have been champions for urban education and the well-being of all stakeholders in urban communities.

- **Marie Blistan Advocacy Award:** This award is conferred by the Exceptional Children Committee. Up to two awards may be made annually—one designated for NJEA active or retired members and one designated for other community members. The award honors active and retired members who have been champions for the rights of children and adults with exceptionalities.

Nomination forms and documentation for any of these awards are due **Nov. 1, 2025**.

For awards criteria and to make a nomination, go to njea.org/mlk-hcr-nominations.

For more information, contact Colleen Lopez at clopez@njea.org or 609-599-4561, ext. 2290.

NJEA expands Hardship Relief Program

Now includes loss of classroom supplies due to worksite mold

The NJEA Hardship Relief Fund is administered by the NJEA Member Benefits Fund and provides eligible members with grants from \$500 to \$2,500 for certain losses (primary residence displacement, food insecurity and loss of classroom supplies) resulting from a fire or natural disaster.

At its Jan. 11, 2025, meeting, the NJEA Delegate Assembly made a change to this program to include loss of classroom supplies and materials as a result of mold infestation at the worksite. To be eligible, the mold incident must have occurred on or after Jan. 11, 2025.

Members can apply or learn more at hardshiprelief.njea.org.

NJEA endorses candidates for 2025 general election

The New Jersey Education Association's 125-member political action committee (NJEA PAC) has been screening and endorsing candidates for the state legislature for the general election on Nov. 4. Legislative and gubernatorial screenings are ongoing. Below are the endorsements to date. This information will be updated at njea.org as new endorsements are made.

LD 3: Assemblywoman Heather Simmons (D) and Assemblyman David Bailey Jr. (D)

LD 4: Assemblyman Cody Miller (D) and Assemblyman Dan Hutchison (D)

LD 5: Assemblyman William Moen (D) and Assemblyman William Spearman (D)

LD 6: Assemblyman Lou Greenwald (D) and Assemblywoman Melinda Kane (D)

LD 7: Assemblywoman Carol Murphy (D) and Assemblyman Balvir Singh (D)

LD 8: Assemblywoman Andrea Katz (D) and Anthony Angelozzi (D) for Assembly

LD 9: Assemblyman Brian Rumpf (R)

LD 11: Assemblywoman Margie Donlon (D) and Assemblywoman Luanne Peterpaul (D)

LD 13: Assemblywoman Vicky Flynn (R)

LD 14: Assemblyman Wayne DeAngelo (D) and Assemblywoman Tennille McCoy (D)

LD 15: Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson (D) and Assemblyman Anthony Verrelli (D)

LD 16: Assemblywoman Mitchell Drulis (D) and Assemblyman Roy

Freiman (D)

LD 17: Assemblyman Joe Danielsen (D) and Assemblyman Kevin Egan (D)

LD 20: Assemblywoman Annette Quijano (D)

LD 25: Assemblywoman Aura Dunn (R) and your choice of Steve Pylypchuk (D) or Marisa Sweeney (D) for Assembly

LD 27: Assemblywoman Rosaura Bagolie (D) and Assemblywoman Alixon Collazos-Gill (D)

LD 28: Assemblywoman Cleopatra Tucker (D) and Chigozie Onyema (D) for Assembly

LD 31: Assemblyman William Sampson (D) and Jerry Walker (D) for Assembly

LD 32: Ravi Bhalla (D) and Katie Brennan (D) for Assembly

LD 33: Assemblyman Gabriel Rodriguez (D)

LD 34: Assemblywoman Carmen Morales (D) and Assemblyman Michael Venezia (D)

LD 35: Senator Benjie Wimberly (D), Assemblyman Al Abdelaziz (D) and Kenyatta Stewart (D) for Assembly

LD 36: Assemblyman Gary Schaefer (D) and Assemblyman Clinton Calabrese (D)

LD 37: Assemblywoman Shama Haider (D) and Assemblywoman Ellen Park (D)

LD 38: Assemblywoman Lisa Swain (D) and Assemblyman Chris Tully (D)

LD 39: Andrew LaBruno (D) and Donna Abene (D) for Assembly

LD 40: Assemblyman Al Barlas (R) and Assemblyman Christopher DePhillips (R)

43rd Annual AUTISM CONFERENCE

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- Compassionate & Ethical Care
- Let's Be Friends
- Dissecting Peer Interactions & Bullying
- Program Quality Indicators for Ages 18-21
- Transitional Programming Using EFL
- Collaboration in School Autism Programming
- Early Learners & ASD Supports
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Higher Education programs at the NJEA Convention

Attend the NJEA Higher Education Members Luncheon

Sheraton Atlantic City Convention Center
Hotel, Crown Ballroom
Friday: 1-2:30 p.m.

Held in coordination with the NJEA Convention in Atlantic City, NJEA higher education members and supporters are invited to attend the higher education luncheon and presentation. The luncheon speaker is Ian Gavigan, executive director, Higher Education Labor United (HELU).

HELU is the national coalition of higher education union locals that is building a wall-to-wall, coast-to-coast movement to transform colleges and universities into public goods in the public interest.

In 2021, Gavigan co-founded the organization while serving as an elected leader of Rutgers AAUP-AFT. A specialist in labor and political history, he received his Ph.D.

from Rutgers University in 2024. Gavigan also has worked as a UAW organizer, political communicator and movement strategist with deep roots in the fight for education and economic justice in his home state of Pennsylvania and adopted city, Philadelphia.

Registration is required. It must be done in advance and will be available soon. For information regarding the higher education luncheon, contact NJEA's Region 29-Higher Education office at HigherEd@njea.org or 609-689-9580.

Other NJEA Convention programming

The NJEA Convention Program will arrive in the mail in early October. NJEA's higher education members are encouraged to review the entire program. In addition to the Higher Education Luncheon, many programs will be of interest and value to community college staff.

Workshops and sessions for all members that are applicable to higher education will be noted as such. Higher education members are especially encouraged to attend the convention's keynote speakers on Thursday and Friday mornings.



“A new order is at hand...” -Jim George



OCT. 24-25, 2025

Doubletree Hotel & Conference Center
200 Atrium Drive • Somerset, NJ

Conference Costs:

Single: \$406
Double: \$327
Commuter: \$259
Friday only: \$143



You must register online with the QR Code.

This year's Jim George Collective Bargaining Summit will include workshops such as constructing a salary guide, preparing your local for job actions, bargaining equity for ESP members and more.

Regardless of whether you are a seasoned negotiator or new to the team, the Jim George Collective Bargaining Summit has something for you!

SUMMIT AGENDA

Friday, Oct. 24, 2025

3:30-6 p.m.	Registration
5-7 p.m.	Buffet Dinner
7:15-8:15 p.m.	Breakouts
8:30-9:30 p.m.	Program/Awards Ceremony
9:45-11 p.m.	Dessert Reception

Saturday, Oct. 25, 2025

7:30-9 a.m.	Registration Buffet Breakfast
9-11 a.m.	Session I
11-11:30 a.m.	Break/Check Out
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.	Session II
1:30-2:30 p.m.	Lunch

WORKSHOPS:

1. All About Bargaining for ESP
2. Bargaining Strategies (Intermediate)
3. Salary Guide (Intermediate)
4. Basic Salary Guide Construction
5. Introduction to Bargaining
6. Current Issues in Bargaining Health Benefits (Intermediate)
7. From Impasse to Impassioned: A guide for Local Action Teams
8. Power and Participation in Bargaining
9. Privatization
10. Is your Contract Ready for Negotiations?
11. Bargaining for All: Crafting Equitable Contract Language for Fairness and Inclusion

Registration REQUIRED by Sept. 26, 2025.
DEADLINE FOR REFUNDS IS OCT. 2, 2025

ADVANCE

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VISIT US AT **BOOTH 1317** AT THE CONVENTION!



COOL STUFF



MOCK TRIAL COMPETITIONS SEASON IS OPEN

Free teacher workshops planned

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation's [NJSBF] mock trial competitions, for grades 3 through high school, include: Law Fair (for grades 3-6), Law Adventure (for grades 7-8), and, for grades 9-12, the Vincent Apruzzese High School Mock Trial Competition, Courtroom Artist Contest and Courtroom News Reporter Contest. All provide interactive, civics-related learning experiences for students. Teacher workshops are scheduled for October. Visit mocktrial.njsbf.org for more information about the competitions, the workshops and to register to compete. There is no charge to attend workshops or to register to compete.



NJSBF SPEAKERS BUREAU

Request a speaker for your class

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation offers a free Speakers Bureau, where volunteer attorneys address school groups throughout the state on numerous areas of the law (and on career days!). Attorneys typically speak for approximately 60 minutes, including time for questions. Please allow at least 60 days for the arrangement of your request. Flexibility in date selection is appreciated. In-person and virtual options are available. Visit speakers.njsbf.org.



NJHOF EDUCATOR PREVIEW DAY

Visit the New Jersey Hall of Fame (NJHOF) at American Dream on Saturday, Sept. 27 from 10 a.m. to noon, to tour the space, explore lesson tie-ins and discover how its interactive exhibits can inspire your students. Educators who RSVP may bring up to two guests free of charge. Visit bit.ly/NJHOFeduPreview for details and to register.



PLAN A FIELD TRIP TO NJHOF

Start the school year with a field trip that inspires greatness.

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A+ EFFORT

NJ Teacher inducted into National Teachers Hall of Fame



Michael Dunlea (front row, second from left) was among the five National Teacher Hall of Fame inductees featured on "CBS Mornings." Visit njea.org/dunlea to watch the segment.

Michael Dunlea, a fifth-grade teacher in Tabernacle and 2021 Burlington County Teacher of the Year, is one of only five teachers nationwide to be inducted into the 2025 class of the National Teachers Hall of Fame. This prestigious recognition was announced nationally on "CBS Mornings" on May 19.

Dunlea previously taught in Ocean County. While teaching at Ocean Acres Elementary School in Stafford Township, he was named the 2011-12 Ocean County Teacher of the Year.

"As a fifth-grade teacher at Kenneth R. Olson Middle School, I've dedicated my career to building inclusive classrooms where students feel valued, celebrated and empowered to thrive," said Dunlea. "This honor reflects not just my work, but the efforts of students, colleagues, families and the community I've had the privilege to serve."

Glenn Robbins, superintendent of Tabernacle Public Schools from 2016 to 2020, initially hired Dunlea to teach in Tabernacle.

"I have watched him reach students in ways no other educator has been able to," Robbins wrote.

Robbins recalled a student entering Dunlea's classroom who had severe physical limitations since birth. She struggled in classrooms, especially socially, until she entered Dunlea's room.

"Michael's student-centered classroom that focuses on the social and emotional as much as academic was a special place for her," Robbins added. "Where she once

struggled socially, she now thrived. Students took their cue from the teacher and learned to welcome this little girl in ways no one had seen up to that point."

Susan Grosser, former principal of Kenneth R. Olson Middle School, agreed.

"He has a rare talent for drawing out the best in his students, inspiring them to believe in their capabilities and embrace their unique qualities," Grosser wrote. "Michael's dedication to fostering tolerance, acceptance, and respect for diversity is at the heart of his teaching philosophy."

Dunlea began his teaching career with one year at Saint Francis Preschool followed by 13 years in the Stafford Township School District. He has taught in the Tabernacle Township School District since 2017. He is also actively involved in his communities. While teaching in Stafford Township, he founded START—Stafford Teachers and Residents Together—a grassroots organization created to respond to the devastation brought by Hurricane Sandy.

In addition to his other accolades, just at press time, Dunlea learned that he has been named a fellow in the Fulbright Teachers for Global Classrooms program for 2025-26. In December he will find out which of these 10 countries he'll be participating in a two- to three-week field experience: Brazil, Colombia, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Peru, Philippines, Senegal or Uruguay.

To learn more about the National Teacher Hall of Fame, or to nominate a teacher for the Class of 2026, visit nthf.org.



Haddonfield ESP member and students surprise Camden nonprofit

By Dawn Hiltner

As the CEO and founder of the nonprofit organization Women of the Dream, fundraising is a major component of Leslie Morris's job. She spends countless hours applying for grants, meeting with donors and rallying support to empower, cultivate and inspire young women in Camden Public Schools. So when she received a \$500 check in April from the Haddonfield Public Schools, she was stumped.

"I hadn't done any programs in Haddonfield, nor had I met anyone from there who pledged support," Morris said. "So, I called the school business administrator, whose name was on the check, and she agreed to investigate."

Morris soon learned that the check was a donation from the Central School Student Council. Under the guidance of advisor Darlene Carlton, student council members from third, fourth and fifth grades research nonprofits and develop plans to support them. Fourth-grade student Olivia May, her mother Kristin, Carlton and her



Darlene Carlton, a school secretary at Central Elementary School in Haddonfield is the adviser to the school's Student Council. (Photo by Christopher Collins.)

husband Ian, along with Central School principal Shannon Simkus, attended the Ninth Annual Women of the Dream Scholarship event on May 31 as Morris's special guests.

"In March, we thought it would be a good idea to support an organization in honor of Women's History Month," Olivia said. "My mom helped me look for organizations in our area and found Women of the Dream."

Olivia presented her idea to the Student Council, and members voted unanimously to support it.

"Olivia loves to bake, so she was able to combine two

Dawn Hiltner is a retired NJEA staff member and, as a former public-school teacher in New Jersey, is an NJREA member. Hiltner serves on the NJREA Editorial Committee. She is currently a teacher of English learners in the School District of Philadelphia.

of her favorite things—helping others and baking—for a good cause,” added Kristin. Olivia’s specialty baked goods are madeleines.

“We were sold out in about 15 minutes!” noted Carlton. “The fundraiser was a huge success.”

From corporate banking to student council adviser

Carlton, the school secretary, enjoyed a successful career in corporate banking before joining the school district.

“When I first came here, I taught technology,” she said. “As much as I love being the school secretary, I miss the day-to-day interactions with students. When the adviser position for Student Council opened, I asked our principal if I could take it. She agreed. I really enjoy working with the students and watching them grow into leaders.”

“Mrs. Carlton does amazing work with our Student Council,” said Principal Simkus. “Our school’s focus is on the power of education. I was especially proud of the Student Council for selecting an organization that is

helping young women achieve their educational goals. It’s a great fit.”

“You may not realize it yet, but what you did is powerful,” Morris wrote in a letter to the students. “Your kindness, teamwork and desire to help others have made a real difference. Because of your hard work and big hearts, 27 girls in our program will receive scholarships to help them go to college this fall.”

The scholarship recipients are graduates of Camden High School, Creative Arts High School, Brimm Medical Arts High School and Big Picture Learning Academy. Many are the first in their families to attend college. Since 2017, Women of the Dream has awarded scholarships to 81 young women totaling \$233,520.

“Sometimes when we dedicate ourselves to helping others, we wonder if anyone cares or if we are really making a difference,” added Morris. “But when I learned what these precious students did for our Camden girls, I felt like the universe was sending me a message. The world needs more people like them.”

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Updates on educator evaluation

By Kaitlyn Dunphy, Esq. and Elisabeth Yucis



On June 30, Gov. Phil Murphy signed legislation that extends the pause on student growth objective (SGO) collection for tenured teachers and administrators until the AchieveNJ (N.J.A.C. 6A:10, Educator Effectiveness) regulations are readopted with amendments. The law alleviates the burden of the SGO process for tenured educators, while giving stakeholders more time to devise a suitable replacement for SGOs that would fulfill the existing statutory requirements.

The law applies to tenured teachers, principals, assistant principals, vice principals and supervisors, and extends the exemption to those who will achieve tenure on or before Feb. 15 of the school year in question. Tenured educators who want to voluntarily opt-in to the SGO process may do so by notifying their supervisor and building principal in writing by Sept. 30.

Nontenured teachers and administrators are still required to complete SGOs in accordance with the existing regulations. Any teaching staff members who hold educational services endorsements (nurses, school counselors, etc.) may still be directed by their district to complete SGOs, regardless of tenure status, but this is not and has never been a requirement in regulation. All other evaluation requirements remain in effect, including median student growth percentile (mSGP) components for those educators where it applies.

In July, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) issued new evaluation guidance documents created by the Evaluation Implementation Workgroup, which included the input of NJEA staff and members as well as other stakeholders. The guidance provides a comprehensive overview of all aspects of the educator evaluation system, including statutory or regulatory requirements, where there are existing flexibilities, and recommended best practices. See the sidebar to access the guidance.

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

Elisabeth Yucis is an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division (PDII). She can be reached at eyucis@njea.org.

Among the existing flexibilities and best practices is a wealth of information that can alleviate the burdensome compliance paperwork often associated with SGOs. Although the AchieveNJ regulations remain in effect and SGOs are currently paused for tenured educators, districts can make improvements in SGO implementation that will remove unnecessary administrative burdens and improve the usefulness of the SGO process. When it comes to artifacts and data, the guidance repeatedly supports quality over quantity, and using existing instructional activities rather than creating instruments solely for the purpose of assessment. Additionally, the guidance promotes the use of nonclassroom activities as an alternative to evaluating traditional classroom work, such as science fairs, performances and IEP meetings.

For example, the guidance features six new commissioner-approved options for evaluating highly effective teachers, such as action research, data protocols and other reflective exercises. These new options were developed by a team of practitioners, alongside the NJDOE, with the intention of helping individual educators to align their evaluations with their individual professional learning goals. The guidance also encourages alignment of SGOs with professional development goals, to avoid duplication of efforts.

NJEA appreciates the opportunity to partner with stakeholders and the NJDOE in crafting this guidance, which represents one step toward reimagining the evaluation system. As the 2025-26 school year gets underway, NJEA will be communicating with local association leaders to give them the information they need to analyze any local changes and engage in advocacy with their district leadership teams. [🔗](#)



NJDOE Educator Evaluation Guidance

A PDF of the Educator Evaluation Guidance can be found at bit.ly/njdoe-eeg.

To access a mobile-friendly format of the guidance, scan this QR code.

the NJEA REPORT

Member engagement leads to legislative wins

By Marybeth Beichert

In June, Gov. Phil Murphy once again showed his commitment to New Jersey's public schools and educators as he signed his final budget into law.

The historic budget includes a fifth consecutive full payment of \$7.2 billion to the pension system, funding for post-retiree health benefits and full funding of the School Funding Reform Act (SFRA). The budget also restored \$20 million for community colleges, expansion of pre-k funding and student teacher stipends.

When NJEA first endorsed Murphy for governor he promised to right the wrongs of previous administrations and their neglect of pension funding. During his eight years in office, he lived up to that promise by making full pension payments—the first governor to do so since 1996.

“

Legislative victories like this happen because NJEA members engage in the campaigns and elections of pro-labor, pro-public education candidates.

In another win for educators, right after signing the budget, Murphy signed a bill that extends the pause on the creation and use of student growth objectives (SGOs) for tenured staff until new regulations to improve the evaluation system can be implemented.

Legislative victories like this happen because NJEA members engage in the campaigns and elections of pro-labor, pro-public education candidates—and Murphy is the perfect example of that involvement.

Organizing makes the difference

Over the last year members have met with legislators, made calls and sent emails about many pieces of legislation. While some may think these efforts are futile, NJEA, NJREA and NJAEA members showed just how valuable member engagement is. A few days before the budget vote, a last-minute bill was introduced that would have made harmful changes to post-retirement medical benefits.



NJEA President Steve Beatty testifying last spring, while he was serving as NJEA vice president, on a bill to continue the pause on student growth objectives. NJPSA GR Director Debra Bradley also testified.

Members immediately organized and let their legislators know the negative impact the bill would have. They sent 25,000 emails over a three-day period, and the senator who introduced the bill withdrew it from the files.

That is the power of collective action.

Still work to do

NJEA members will need to continue to organize around the pension justice bills we have been working on for the last two years. One of those bills, the Break in Service bill, was voted out of the Legislature, and, as of press time, sits on Murphy's desk. Members have been writing and calling the governor to sign it before the Legislature returns to work in the fall.

NJEA is also ramping up the efforts to achieve a Tier 1 pension for every public school employee. The campaign continues, and we know that to achieve this victory, it will take all of us working together to get these bills to the governor's desk before he leaves next January.

Stay tuned to see how you can do your part.

Marybeth Beichert is an associate director in the NJEA Communications Division. She can be reached at mbeichert@njea.org.

Closter EA partners with Rise Against Hunger to fight global hunger

The Closter Education Association (CEA) launched its inaugural Gather for Good community service initiative on March 2. The initiative aims to strengthen the bonds within the school community through collective volunteering opportunities.

The CEA represents teachers, educational support professionals, custodians, maintenance staff and secretaries who work in Closter Public Schools.

For the first event, the CEA partnered with Rise Against Hunger to help combat world hunger. Approximately 200 volunteers worked together to package more than 20,000 meals for distribution at schools in Kenya. The assembled kits contain nutritious, easy-to-prepare meals designed to provide essential sustenance to families facing food insecurity around the world.

To offer additional support the local community, every volunteer brought donations for the Closter Food Pantry in exchange for the opportunity to participate in the event. More than 1,000 items were collected and delivered to the pantry.

During the event, the CEA provided resources to families on bullying prevention, mental health awareness, inclusivity initiatives, promoting positive social interactions, and addressing academic and wellness challenges.

"We were really proud to be able to do something to alleviate global hunger around the world and in our own community," said Laurie Rochlin, learning disabilities teacher consultant and CEA member. "We want people to know that we can take action together to build a stronger, healthier, and more connected community. We will continue to undertake community service projects together."

Students at Hillside Elementary School will participate in a follow-up experience by collecting items and assembling birthday kits for the Closter Food Pantry. The kits will include a box of cake mix; a can of soda, which can be used in baking as a substitute for eggs and oil; a container of frosting, sprinkles and candles packed inside a baking tray.

For more information on Rise Against Hunger, visit riseagainsthunger.org.



From left: Closter EA member Eileen Kennedy, Laurie Rechlin and Closter EA Vice President Joanne Iyo at the Gather for Good community service initiative.



Over 200 volunteers packaged more than 20,000 meals for schools in Kenya.



Volunteers also brought 1,000 items for the Closter Food Pantry.

Belleville Education Association brings all voices to the table to bargain a landmark agreement.

By David Yastremiski



The BEA bargaining team. From left: President Michael Mignone, Grievance Chair Kara Suttora, Ann Monahan, Charles Moran, Christine Hurta, Alison Joyce and Joy Alfano.

The Belleville Education Association (BEA) recently settled a transformative agreement, built on the largest and most inclusive negotiations team in the association's history, which led to the association becoming a finalist for the 2024 Jim George Bargaining Award.

With 12 members representing every unit across all school levels, from teachers and counselors to nurses, specialists and child study team members, the team brought a wide range of experience and voice to the bargaining table, leading BEA to achieve a five-year contract that made significant improvements to the salary guides and after-hours stipends.

BEA President Michael Mignone credits the team's diversity and experience for settling the agreement.

"Team members had their fingers on the pulse of their individual units," said Mignone. "They understood the

intricacies of each job and could personally speak from experience. There was no longer a loss of translation between the members and the negotiations team because a member of each unit was present and could explain things."

At the table, Mignone was joined by several BEA leaders, including Professional Rights and Responsibilities Committee Chairperson Kara Suttora and Treasurer Peter Ayal. They prioritized a diverse group of roles and experienced association leaders, including negotiations chairperson Ryan Sheridan, along with Ann Monahan, Charles Moran, Christine Hurta, Denise Gizzo, Joy Alfano and Lynne Padalino. In addition, joining the team for their first round of negotiations were Alison Joyce, Joette Nigro and Michelle Anders.

Preparation and focus

Central to the team's effectiveness was its emphasis on preparation and focus. Every proposal brought forward was backed by a clear, researched rationale, ensuring that

David Yastremiski teaches English and communication at Ridge High School in Bernards Township. Yastremiski is a part-time NJEA Communications Consultant. He can be reached at dyastremiski@njea.org.

arguments were not just compelling but well-reasoned and supported by data. However, selling those arguments was not always easy.

"The team weathered what were often contentious bargaining sessions without backing down from the positions they committed to," said UniServ Field Representative Adrian Rodriguez.

Over the years, BEA has experienced a range of interactions with the district's leadership. But Mignone emphasized that BEA still maintains a foundation of mutual trust, carefully built over time.

"A good relationship takes a long time to develop respect and trust," Mignone noted. "But it pays off in the end."

One of BEA's primary goals in this round of negotiations was to establish a more competitive starting salary.

"We knew we needed a better starting rate to attract good teachers to our district," Mignone said. "That's how we build a stronger future for all our members."

Beyond immediate outcomes, Mignone and the BEA team kept their sights set on the long term.

"We may not get everything we want at first," he explained, "but once something is in the contract, it's there—and that creates an opportunity to maximize its impact in future negotiations."

This forward-thinking approach allowed the team to strategize their proposals, ensuring that any current gains can pave the way for continued growth and improvement in future bargaining.

A strong advocate for member engagement, Mignone encourages local leaders to bring all voices into the fold, even the dissenting ones.

"One piece of advice I can offer is to welcome your critics," he said. "If someone has questions or concerns, bring them to the table. If someone is unhappy, start planning with them. Members can't just complain; we need to solve the problem together."

This latest contract marks BEA's second five-year agreement, a structure that Mignone believes offers clarity and consistency for everyone involved.

"During year one, you discover the kinks in the new agreement," Mignone said. "In years two and three, you observe and reflect. That gives you time to determine what needs to be improved for the next round. You can't just always react to problems—you need time to build real solutions."

With a strategic focus, deep member engagement, and a clear vision for the future, the Belleville Education Association has secured a contract that not only honors the immediate contributions of its members but also lays a strong foundation for continued progress and success in years to come.



From left: Charles Moran, Christine Hurta, Ann Monahan, Alison Joyce, Joy Alfano, Kara Suttora and Michael Mignone.

The agreement included:

- A 20.7% increase for all units over the five years of the agreement
- A 4.1% annual increase average compared to the county average of 3.6%
- An increase in the starting salary of \$16,000 over the term of the contract.
- Significant increases in class coverage and after-hours work including coaching stipends, curriculum work, home instruction and summer hours.
- Increased coaches' stipends for the first time in five years.
- An increased in the tuition reimbursement pool by \$25,000
- Added longevity after 10 years of service.

Ewing Township EA supports children's dental health

By Kathryn Coulibaly

On Feb. 20, Jesse Ambriz, a seventh-grade math teacher at Ewing's Fisher Middle School, unloaded piles of books at the Laundry Depot of Ewing on North Olden Ave.

Ambriz has organized a variety of community activities over the years, many of them held at the Laundry Depot, a hub of the community.

Joined by representatives from Ewing Township's police department; fire department; Liberty Dental Plan; Wellpoint, a health insurance company that offers plans in New Jersey, including Medicare, Medicaid, and individual and family plans; and the Laundry Depot's parent company, Suds Management, Ambriz gave out a variety of materials related to dental health for every age.

Middle school drummer Tyonne Fisher provided the musical entertainment as families circulated among the tables, talking to representatives and picking up information and giveaways.

Thanks to a Public Education Partnership [PEP] grant from NJEA, the Ewing Township Education Association (ETEA) provided bright yellow bags filled with dental health supplies, including a toothbrush holder, mini toothpaste, mouthwash and a container to collect lost teeth. The association also provided a water bottle.

In addition, Ambriz distributed books for children and parents, some in English and Spanish, and had raffle prizes from the Trenton Thunder, Sesame Place and McCarter Theatre. Attendees also received a dental health-themed bag with an electric toothbrush and full-sized products. Parents could also pick up sparkly certificates from the Tooth Fairy for when their child lost a tooth.

"We're so happy to be able to provide resources and materials to help children and parents maintain their dental health," Ambriz said. "We've built a large coalition of groups in the area who are always willing to step up and participate in these community outreach activities. The health and safety of our community's children and families are a priority for all of us."

Ambriz has worked with Suds Management to provide year-round activities and resources for the patrons of the Laundry Depot. There are hundreds of age-appropriate books for families to use while they take care of their laundry chores.

"Helping children develop a love of reading is one of the most important things that we can do to ensure their success in school and in life," Ambriz said. "Several years ago, we created this educational space at the Laundry Depot for children and families and to provide them with an opportunity to start or expand their own libraries at home. We've been very pleased with the response from families and the community."



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.

Ewing Township EA works with Laundry Depot and other community partners to help children develop a love of reading.

New Jersey Schoolwomen's Club celebrates 100 years

By Kimberly Crane



The New Jersey Schoolwomen's Club with four of the six scholarship recipients. From left: NJSC 2nd VP Alicia Somers, NJSC President Ginger Isaksen, recipients Ciara Mary O'Keefe, Isabella Arbelo Miranda, Lisette Kiran Szeman and Sofia Alexandra Parillo, and two of the three scholarship committee members, Linda Pesce and Judy Jordan.

At its 1924 convention, the of the New Jersey State Teachers' Association, which later became the New Jersey Education Association a group of 29 women educators, from eight counties, met to discuss forming a schoolwoman's association, similar to such organizations for male teachers, such as the New Jersey Schoolmaster's Club or Schoolmen's Club. The organization's first meeting was held May 2, 1925, at the Stacy Trent Hotel in Trenton with 176 members present. Membership grew to 359 by 1968.

On May 3, members of the New Jersey Schoolwomen's Club (NJSC) celebrated the organization's centennial with a luncheon at the Forsgate Country Club in Monroe Township.

Small but mighty

Today, club membership averages 40 members.

"A lot has changed in over 100 years," NJSC 2nd Vice President and Membership Chair Alicia Somers said. "We are a small but mighty group of women in the field of education who continue to believe in and uphold the purpose and mission of the NJSC."

Kimberly Crane is an NJEA Communications Consultant and former president of the Highland Park Education Association. She can be reached at kcrane@njea.org.

A mission of service, support and scholarships

The club's first service project began in 1927 with a donation of \$100 to flood relief. In 1948, a scholarship fund was created. Presently, NJSC conducts several annual projects including school supply donation, hat and glove drives, food pantry support, and collecting pajamas and books for women's shelters.

Every May since 1948, NJSC holds a scholarship award luncheon. Each year, six women who are preparing for a career in education each receive a \$1,000 scholarship. This year's scholarships were awarded to Ella Megan Rajeok, Ciara Mary O'Keefe, Isabella Arbelo Miranda, Lisette Kiran Szeman, Sofia Alexandria Parillo and Julia Rose Thompson.

NJSC membership

NJSC represents all units of active and retired educators who are teachers, therapists, paraprofessionals, administrators, supervisors and other women in the field of education. Woman dedicated to improving public education and supporting other woman educators may receive an invitation to join from any current member.

Contact Iris Tonti at iristonti@msn.com or 609-915-3986 to learn more about the New Jersey Schoolwomen's Club.

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MEMBER BENEFIT PLAN REPORT AVAILABLE

This is a summary of the annual report for the New Jersey Education Association Member Benefit Fund, Employer Identification Number 21-0524390, Plan No. 510 for the period from Oct. 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024. The plan provides for group insurance and other welfare benefits. The annual report has been filed with the Employee Benefits Security Administration, as required under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act of 1974 (ERISA).

Insurance information

The plan sponsor, NJEA, has a group contract with Prudential Insurance Company of America to pay temporary and long-term disability claims incurred under the terms of the plan. The premiums under this contract are paid by those NJEA members who chose to select coverage under the contract. The total premiums paid for the plan year ending Sept. 30, 2024, were \$34,358,987.

Basic financial statements

The value of plan assets, after subtracting liabilities of the plan was \$1,641,803 as of Sept. 30, 2024, compared to \$1,745,761 as of Oct. 1, 2023. During the plan year, the plan experienced a decrease in its net assets of (\$103,958). During the plan year, the plan had total income of \$540,913, including earnings from investments of \$51,987 and other income of \$488,926.

Plan expenses were \$644,871. These expenses included \$58,506 in administrative expenses and \$586,365 in membership benefits paid on behalf of participants and beneficiaries.

Your rights to additional information

You have the right to receive a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, on request. The items listed here are included in that report: an accountant's report; financial information and information on payments to service providers; insurance information, including sales commissions paid by insurance carriers; assets held for investment; and transactions in excess of 5% of plan assets.

To obtain a copy of the full annual report, or any part thereof, write or call the office of Beth Schroeder Buonsante, NJEA, Member Benefit Fund, 180 W. State Street, Trenton, NJ 08607-1211, Phone: 609-599-4561. The charge to cover copying costs will be \$5 for the full annual report, or \$0.15 per page for any part thereof.

You also have the right to receive from the plan administrator, on request and at no charge, a statement of the assets and liabilities of the plan and accompanying notes, or both. If you request a copy of the full annual report from the plan administrator, these two statements and accompanying notes will be included as part of that report. The charge to cover the copying costs given above does not include a charge for the copying of these portions of the report because these portions are furnished without charge.

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Irvington students visit Visions Federal Credit Union for financial literacy lesson

Last March, Irvington teacher Lauren Greenfield brought her community-based instruction class to the Visions Federal Credit union in Fairfield.

Visions staff gave a banking presentation and played bank bingo with the students.

"It was fabulous," Greenfield said. "Nikeisha Feliciano and the rest of the staff were great! One of our students even won a gift card for winning bingo!"

In 2021, Visions made a 10-year, \$1 million commitment to support the work of NJEA. Part of the donation is used to fund innovative educational project dedicated to social justice. Visions' history with NJEA and New Jersey educators dates back much further. The financial institution began as TriCo Federal Credit Union, which was founded in 1936 in a closet in Morristown High School. A group of nine teachers got together and, with \$50 each, they formed a credit union for teachers.

Visions is also an NJEA Member Benefits partner. The credit Union provides resources and training on paying for college and financial wellness and funds projects for educators in their service region. You can read about those at visionsloveseducators.com.

Learn more about Visions overall at visionsfcu.org.



Visions Federal Credit Union gave a banking presentation to Irvington students.



Irvington teacher Lauren Greenfield (third from right) with her students at the Visions Federal Credit Union presentation.



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When we fight for fair contracts, that is justice. When we fight for ESP members, that is equity—especially in a profession dominated by women.

A STRONG UNION OF ENGAGED MEMBERS – SOLIDARITY FOREVER!

Meet NJEA President Steve Beatty

By Patrick Rumaker

NJEA President Steve Beatty believes the strength of our union comes from a membership that is deeply engaged. And those members look to the union to care about members' working conditions and students' learning conditions, based on justice, ensuring that every child gets a great education, regardless of their ZIP code.

Just prior to taking office on Sept. 1, Beatty spoke passionately at the NJEA Jack Bertolino Summer Leadership Conference about solidarity and NJEA's power when the union's diverse members understand their organization's "why?" and are unified around a common mission, vision and goals.

"Individual members from every nook and cranny of the state have found their way into the union to unite around our chief purpose: solidarity to obtain the things we so richly deserve," Beatty said. "We fight for them together."

In an earlier interview, Beatty shared his vision for NJEA.

"A strong union of engaged members is the bottom line," Beatty says.

As a statewide officer for the last eight years, four as secretary-treasurer and four as vice president, listening to members has been a hallmark of Beatty's leadership. Since taking statewide office in 2017, he has visited well over 300 local associations, meeting members where they work at his "lunches in locals." He's had one-on-one conversations in faculty rooms, breakrooms, classrooms, school buses, main offices and everywhere in a school district where members are found—bringing lunch with him to break bread with colleagues. He's also visited countless local and county association rep council meetings, workshops and events to further foster the ties that bind.

While he meets plenty of highly engaged members,

much of his time has been spent with members and potential members who are not as engaged, and this is where our incoming president helps them find their on-ramp into the union.

Beatty knows from conversations with members and surveys conducted by NJEA that pensions and health benefits are the number one issue for all members, followed closely by salary increases, respect for educational support professionals (ESPs), racial and social justice and opposition to private-school voucher schemes.

"All of these issues are interconnected," Beatty says. "When we fight for fair contracts, that is justice. When we fight for ESP members, that is equity—especially in a profession dominated by women."

Beatty notes that while pensions, benefits, salaries and working conditions are top-line issues for all members, there are many on-ramps to the highway of the NJEA.

For some the pathway is what are typically called the "bread and butter" union issues. But members also become engaged in the union when they see that it is involved in curriculum, school climate, social-emotional learning, working conditions for ESP members, policy, protections for LGBTQIA+ rights, racial and social justice, standing against antisemitism, opposing Islamophobia, teacher leadership, politics, workplace safety and health, student growth objectives, high-stakes standardized tests and myriad other issues.

Beatty calls the issues that inspire members "ladders to engagement." In a union as large and diverse as NJEA, Beatty recognizes that the union can address many issues. Championing any one cause does not detract from the association's commitment to all its goals and values.

Patrick Rumaker is the editor of the NJEA Review.



From left: NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Tina Dare, NJEA President Steve Beatty and NJEA Vice President Petal Robertson.

“We can walk and chew bubble gum at the same time,” Beatty insists. “We must listen to our members and what they care about. And we need to act on what members care about. Whatever affinity, affiliation, or ‘care’ members find as their on-ramp, we then need to bring them on to the main road of our union, building authentic and sustained power.”

Learning to be a good teacher

A Rutgers graduate, the future president of NJEA’s first position as a teacher was to fill a semester-long sabbatical position at Westfield High School in February 1993.

He shared an office with seven other seasoned teachers—eight altogether—in “Project ‘79,” an alternative program for at-risk students. They were two teachers for each of the four major subjects. They taught the students throughout the morning, and in the afternoon, the students were mainstreamed into general education classes.

“When we finished teaching for the day, we didn’t have assigned duty periods,” Beatty recalls. “Instead, we sat down with each other, with child study team members and with counselors, talked about our kids, and planned collaboratively, with the whole child in mind.”

At the time, Beatty optimistically believed that districts everywhere ran like the one at Westfield.

“To be in that circumstance has meant so much to me throughout my entire life, both personally and professionally,” Beatty says. “I learned so much about how to be a good teacher, regardless of the subject at hand. The most important lesson I learned was to be authentic—to take the time necessary to get to know the kids and get them to buy in.”

When the semester ended, so did Beatty’s full-time job at Westfield. In the fall of 1993, he cobbled together two part-time jobs: teaching two history classes at Westfield first thing in the morning, then making his way down Route 22 to Bridgewater-Raritan High School to teach three history classes in the afternoon.

A union activist from the start

After a year of shuttling between high schools, Beatty finally landed a full-time teaching position in Bridgewater-Raritan, where he has taught ever since. He was barely there before he showed that he would not shy away from taking stands—even without tenure.

It was the fall of 1994, and Bridgewater-Raritan Education Association (BREA) members were working without a contract. Beatty recalls the BREA meeting where members voted to not come to work on Veterans Day. Public school employees in New Jersey have the right to be excused

from work on state holiday, provided they make up that missed day later in the academic year.

Those seated around the 24-year-old Beatty at the meeting said, “Well, you’re nontenured, so you’re going to go to school, right?”

Beatty’s response?

“Nope! There’s no way I’m crossing that line, not after what my parents and grandparents instilled in me.”

He quickly became known as a union guy.

“Lead, follow, or get out of the way,” Beatty says. “That’s my credo.”

A family history of union engagement

Beatty isn’t a “union guy” by accident.

On proud display in his office is an orange-colored union card, carefully preserved in a glass frame. Dating back to 1935, it belonged to Morris Beatty, his paternal grandfather. The 12 stamps adhering to it demonstrate that Steve Beatty’s grandfather, a dental technician who made molds for teeth, was a dues-paying member of the International Jewelry Workers’ Union-Local 93.

“He understood as a Jewish immigrant how important unions were and what they meant as a way to a better life for working people,” Beatty says.

All four of Beatty’s grandparents immigrated to the U.S. from Eastern Europe in the early 20th century.

“They came from what’s now Poland and Ukraine,” Beatty says. “They settled in Newark—some part of the family owned a dry goods store and a clothing store, and some sold linens—a typical Jewish immigrant story.”

Beatty’s mother Susan worked much of the time, most of it as a lecturer for Weight Watchers.

“As a young boy, I would often go with my mom to her meetings and watch, listen and learn about connecting to people,” Beatty says. “That would serve me well.”

His father Gerry was an editor and writer, working with various publications over the years. Sports themes were his true love. Beatty recalls his father being on strike when he was a sports editor for the New York Post.

“So, growing up, I knew nothing else,” Beatty says. “I was a union guy from the start.”

Beatty, who graduated from Columbia High School in Maplewood, vividly recalls that while he was a student at Seth Boyden Elementary School in the South Orange-Maplewood School District, the local association was nearing a possible strike.

“My parents told me, ‘If you go to school and those teachers are out there, you don’t cross that picket line, you turn right around,’” Beatty remembers.

He’s quick to note that at nine years old, it would be an unexpected and welcome thrill to not to have to go to school if the staff went on strike.



Steve Beatty speaking at a No Kings rally.



The Beatty family. From left: Tamara, Lindsay, Morgan and Steve Beatty.

"But my parents wanted me to understand what that meant," Beatty says. "To understand what the staff was going through—to walk the line."

Beatty says that his grandparents and his parents imparted to him how unions are a force for equality and justice; thus, informing his stance years later at Bridgewater-Raritan High School.

"I get it from that," Beatty says. "Their wisdom lives on."

A pathway to union leadership

Beatty sees his deeper involvement in the union as a typical story for eventual union activists.

"I don't remember what it was, but I was upset about something," Beatty recalls. "So, I went to the BREA office, which happened to be close to my classroom. At the end of our conversation, the BREA president at the time, Bob Braun, said 'You should be an AR.'"

An AR is a local association representative—commonly called a building rep in many locals.

By the following school year, Beatty was the chief AR for Bridgewater-Raritan High School and before long, he was all in.

"Right after I became chief AR there was a dispute between the phys ed teachers and administration over a handshake agreement," Beatty recalls. "I'm sitting there in a meeting with the superintendent and the assistant



Steve and Tamara Beatty at the NEA Representative Assembly.

superintendent and I'm thinking, 'What the heck is going on here?'"

Beatty was grateful his UniServ field rep, Ann Rowbotham-Krauth, was there to assist him in his new role.

"I called the assistant superintendent by the wrong name and thought, 'OK! I'm fired by tomorrow,'" Beatty remembers. "But Ann reminded me that in meetings like that as an association rep, you're here as an equal to the administration."

Beatty's confidence grew and with it, his engagement as a union leader deepened. Sent by Rowbotham-Krauth to the first-ever class of NJEA Union School, he went on to serve as BREA's grievance chair and 2nd vice president before ultimately serving for 12 years as BREA president.

At the same time, he was getting involved at the county level and became part of a new leadership team in the Somerset County Education Association (SCEA) where he says they were the "original coup" to become county leaders. He first served as 2nd vice president along with then-SCEA President Barbara Parker and then SCEA Secretary Denise Graff (now NJEA Deputy Executive Director Denise Graff Policastro.)

In 2008, NJEA President Joyce Powell appointed Beatty to serve as a Somerset County representative to the NJEA Government Relations Committee and in 2011, NJEA President Barbara Keshishian appointed him to chair that committee.

By 2011, he was SCEA president. As a county president he also was a member of the statewide County Presidents Council, serving first as its treasurer and ultimately as its president.

A family steeped in public education and unions

Every member of Beatty's immediate family interacts with public education every day, and two are already NJEA members. His wife, Tamara, is a special education teacher at Cinnaminson High School and serves as president of the Cinnaminson Education Association, chair of the NJEA/NEA Activities Committee, and as the Burlington County representative to the NJEA Executive Committee.

They also have two daughters; Morgan is a senior at Montclair State University majoring in theater education. She is a member of the MSU chapter of the New Jersey Aspiring Educators Association, an affiliate of NJEA that supports college students preparing to become teachers. Lindsay is a sophomore at Ridge High School in Bernards Township.

"Better kids a parent couldn't ask for," Beatty says.

Beatty is also proud of his career as head coach of the boys Bridgewater-Raritan swim program, taking his team to 12 county and conference championships and three Central Jersey state championships. He was named Coach of the Year by the Star-Ledger for the 2003-04 school year.



Steve Beatty proudly displays his grandfather's union card in his office. Morris Beatty was a dental technician.

He also loves to play guitar and will play at school concerts if asked!

A new leadership team

Beatty is joined in leading NJEA with Vice President Petal Robertson and Secretary-Treasurer Tina Dare.

Robertson is an English teacher in Montclair who has served as NJEA secretary-treasurer since 2021. Before becoming an NJEA officer, Robertson served as the president of the Montclair Education Association and was a member of the NJEA Executive Committee. Robertson had also served as a member of the NJEA Delegate Assembly, the NJEA Pandemic Response Subcommittee, the Property and Personal Committee and the NJEA PAC Operating Committee.

Dare is a high school chemistry teacher at Delsea Regional High School, in Gloucester County. She has held a number of union leadership positions, including president of the Delsea Education Association, treasurer of the Gloucester County Education Association and chair of the NJEA Government Relations Committee, in addition to serving on the NJEA PAC Operating Committee.

"With Petal and Tina, I know we are prepared to fight," Beatty says. "I know that with them, we have the wisdom, the strength and the tenacity to work for members and with members."

As Beatty becomes president of NJEA, he reflected on what he learned from his grandparents, his parents, his family and his own experiences as an educator and union advocate.

"All that I have learned and been through has led me to this," Beatty says. "I'm ready for the challenge. I'm excited for the challenge. We are facing opponents who are systematically trying to dismantle the working class and to dismantle public education.

"Unions are the bulwark against that," Beatty concludes. "Every. Single. Time." 🇺🇸

Essex County College confronts health disparities

Period poverty project attacks health disparities,
educates students on advocacy

By Kathryn Coulibaly

Judith Celestin, director of the Adult Learning Center and president of the Essex County College Administrative Association, first got involved in period poverty advocacy after a college-wide meeting with the college president Dr. Augustine Boakye, faculty, staff and students to discuss changes they'd like to see in the school.

"Samirah Scantling, who was president of Phi Theta Kappa at the time, explained that the restrooms at the college do not have free sanitary products," Celestin recalls. "Judith pointed out that Sen. Teresa Ruiz had sponsored a bill providing access to free menstrual products for New Jersey students in grades six through 12, a bill that Gov. Murphy had recently signed, and it would be ideal to have it expanded to include higher education. President Boakye asked us to work on period equity at Essex County College."

Ruiz is the state Senate majority leader and represents communities in Essex and Hudson counties.

Celestin volunteered to work on the project and began to assemble a team of co-workers, which included Angela

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.



ECCAA Membership Chair Angela McKinney (l) and ECCAA President Judith Celestin show off the new Flow Free-Vend dispenser.



Representatives from the Essex County College Administrative Association, Essex County College administration, the Haitian Student Association, Phi Theta Kappa and the Student Government Association celebrate the opening of restrooms that accommodate menstruating students and staff.

McKinney and Choudhury Sanghamitra, from the college to look at the law and invite speakers to meet with them. The college’s Haitian Student Association (HSA), of which Celestin is an adviser, quickly became a major part of the team.

To help with funding, Celestin looked to NJEA for resources and learned about the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Grants for Excellence in Education.

“We thought the Hipp grants would be a good fit for what we were trying to do,” Celestin said. “We applied for a \$10,000 grant in March 2024 to help us provide free menstrual products to students and staff at the college while promoting awareness about menstrual equality, reducing the stigma associated with menstruation and educating the students about how to effect change in their community.”

Celestin’s grant, “Period Poverty – Awareness and Activism,” was selected for funding and Celestin and her team began to implement the project during the summer of 2024.

Understanding the need for period equity

Nationally, more than 16 million people who menstruate live in poverty and experience period poverty, according to the National Institutes of Health. Nearly one in four

teenagers who menstruate have struggled to afford period products, and 84% have missed school, or know someone who has had to miss school, due to lack of period protection. Black and brown households are disproportionately affected by period poverty, according to Brookings. The consequences of period poverty include increased risk of urinary tract infections and other poor health outcomes, including a negative impact on mental health.

“Essex County College is located in a county with a growing immigrant population and high levels of poverty, unemployment and the need for public assistance,” Celestin says. “Once our students and staff identified period poverty as an urgent and unaddressed barrier to student well-being and academic success, we put our energy into this project to install free dispensers stocked with menstrual pads and tampons in restrooms across campus.”

Increasing awareness and teaching advocacy skills

Celestin and her team researched their options and found Aunt Flow, a woman-owned company that provides organic cotton period products and is committed to sustainability. In addition, they are working to support



ECCAA President Judith Celestin and ECC President Dr. Augustine Boakye cut a ribbon opening the fully stocked restroom. From left: Former Phi Theta Kappa President Samirah Scantling, Celestin, Boakye and Dean Elvira Vieira.

people who menstruate by advocating on their behalf and providing resources and information to help them advocate for themselves. On their website, goantflow.com, you can find educational resources as well as information on how to advocate for free-vend dispensers in schools and workplaces.

While Celestin used the Hipp grant to fund the dispensers and period products, the group also focused on teaching students how to advocate for themselves on this issue, as well as any others impacting them and their community.

“We showed the students how to do surveys and collect data,” Celestin said. “We invited Mikal Jenkins, a policy analyst for the New Jersey Council of County Colleges, to talk to the students about how a bill becomes a law, how to track a bill and how to advocate for something they believe in. Jenkins shared a roadmap for the students that they can adapt for other issues.”

In March, Essex County College held an unveiling of the fully stocked free-vend machines in restrooms across campus.

“The campus unveiling and reception served as a visible demonstration of our united commitment to equity, access and student success,” Celestin said.

Addressing students’ priorities led to improved outcomes



Judith Celestin (l) and Angela McKinney receiving their NJEA Hipp Foundation grant.



Vanessa Previlon, former Student Government Association vice president, and SGA President Cynthia Fracher.

Celestin and the team evaluated the project at the end of the grant year and found that the project helped raise the administration’s awareness of how period poverty impacts student performance and highlighted the need to better support students facing these challenges. At the same time, the project empowered students through leadership roles in the awareness campaigns, community education and advocacy efforts.

“We also found that students felt an improved sense of personal dignity,” Celestin said. “In addition, class attendance improved, and retention increased within our department. We will continue to monitor future attendance and retention outcomes collegewide through surveys and data review.”

Celestin encourages other NJEA members, particularly those at the community college level, to apply for an NJEA Hipp grant and to consider implementing period poverty projects in their schools.

“This project not only addresses a critical and often overlooked barrier to student success—period poverty—but it also creates a more inclusive, respectful and equitable learning environment. This project improves student attendance, engagement and well-being, while fostering empathy, social awareness and community responsibility within the classroom and beyond. It’s a simple, impactful solution that removes obstacles to learning and promotes a culture of care and dignity.” 📌



Apply for an NJEA Hipp grant

Grants from the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education help educators bring creative ideas to life. The only foundation of its kind in New Jersey, the Hipp Foundation supports initiatives to promote excellence in education. These grants are available to educators directly.

Since 1993, more than \$2.6 million in grants have been awarded to public school educators for innovative educational projects that represent a bold, fresh approach.

Apply for a Hipp grant and bring your innovative ideas to life. The deadline is March 1, 2026. Grants range from \$500 to \$10,000. Learn more at njea.org/hipp.

Accessing NJEA PEP and FAST Grants

In addition to NJEA Hipp grants, NJEA has two other grant programs to promote community involvement in schools, highlight the value of New Jersey’s great public schools and foster a stronger connection between families and the school community.

Public Education Partnership (PEP) grants cover a variety of topics and areas, including combating privatization, passing school budgets, addressing drug and alcohol issues in the community, and helping to keep teen drivers safe. For more information about PEP programs and how to use them to increase community awareness of the great things happening in our public schools, go to njea.org/pep.

NJEA FAST grants, or Families and Schools Together Work for Children, seek to involve parents and families in their children’s education through programs and events to help improve student achievement and ensure that families feel welcome and connected to our schools. For more information, go to njea.org/fast.

Contact your local association president to identify your PEP and FAST chairs.

Beyond the buzzword: Demystifying authentic inclusion for New Jersey educators

A joint venture between NJEA Consortium and All In for Inclusive Education

By Dr. Kim Pinckney, Michele Gardner, Fred Buglione and Camy Kobylinski



The NJEA Consortium empowers educators with resources and collaborative platforms to navigate modern education and champion equitable outcomes for all students. Our initiative builds strong community relationships, offers professional development and fosters discussions to ensure New Jersey's diverse population sees itself reflected in our schools.

Committed to creating truly inclusive learning environments, we partnered with All In for Inclusive Education, an organization deeply aligned with our vision for an equitable, community-anchored public education system. Despite significant strides in special education over the past 50 years, continued advocacy and implementation of best inclusive practices remain critically needed. Through this partnership and article, we aim to demystify inclusion by offering actionable information to combat myths, clarify actual practice and empower educators to go all in for inclusion.

The journey to inclusion: A history of educating students with disabilities

Special education has seen its most significant progress in the last 50 years. This history helps educators understand the profound struggles families of students with disabilities have faced. For nearly two centuries after 1776, children with disabilities were largely excluded from formal education. By the early 1970s, millions were still denied appropriate schooling. The turning point came with legislative and judicial reforms, driven by early parent advocacy from the 1930s through the 1960s. These grassroots efforts influenced funding and teacher training leading to landmark court decisions in the 1970s that held states accountable for providing special education.

Major federal milestones followed. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973 required school accommodations. This was followed by the 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EHA), which guaranteed a free appropriate public



education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Reauthorized in 1997 as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), it mandated individualized education programs (IEPs) and emphasized evidence-based, tailored instruction.

A pivotal federal push for inclusion came with the Regular Education Initiative (REI) in 1985, which aimed to integrate students receiving special education services into general classrooms. These efforts ultimately shaped today's dynamic, rights-based system, focused on inclusion, equity and individualized support—a testament to decades of sustained advocacy and legal advancements.

The legal and civil rights imperative of inclusion: Understanding the least restrictive environment

The LRE is a legal requirement ensuring students with disabilities are educated alongside their nondisabled peers to the greatest extent appropriate. Removal from general education settings only occurs if, even with supports, an effective education isn't possible there. While terms like "mainstreaming" are used, LRE is the legally defined standard.

Landmark court decisions, such as *Oberti v. Board of Education of the Borough of Clementon* (1991), reinforce this. This ruling strongly favored placing students with disabilities in regular classrooms, emphasizing supplementary aids and services to facilitate inclusion and clarifying LRE requirements under the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

New Jersey's LRE landscape: Requirements and realities

New Jersey law (N.J.A.C. 6A:14-4.2) mandates that students with disabilities be educated in the LRE, meaning alongside nondisabled peers whenever appropriate. School districts must prioritize inclusion, ensuring removal from general education only occurs when a disability prevents satisfactory learning, even with supports. Placement decisions, reviewed annually, must be based on each

Kim Pinckney, Ph.D. (kpinckney@njea.org) is an associate director within the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues (PDII) Division and the Consortium Coordinator.

Michele Gardner, M.Ed. (michele@allinforinclusiveed.org) is the executive director of All in for Inclusive Education.

Fred Buglione, M.A., M.Ed. (fred@allinforinclusiveed.org) is the CEO of All in for Inclusive Education.

Camy Kobylinski (ckobylinski@njea.org) is an associate director in the NJEA PDII Division.



All In celebrates the incredible work Mainland Regional High School is doing in inclusive education. Maddie is a standout student, and her mom has been a constant source of support along the way.

student's IEP, keeping the educational setting as close to home as possible. Crucially, students cannot be placed in more restrictive settings solely due to curriculum needs; program choices must always reflect individual student needs and consider success in general education with supports.

Despite these clear directives, New Jersey's LRE statistics are alarming. The state ranks 50th for including students with disabilities in general education for 80% or more of the day. Only 45% of New Jersey's students with disabilities meet this level of inclusion—far below the national average of 66%. New Jersey remains the only state where less than half of its students with disabilities spend the majority of their day in general education. We must do better to ensure our students with disabilities receive the inclusive education they deserve.

Inclusive practices and mindsets

Mindset shifts involve profound changes in how we perceive and react to the world, adopting new perspectives and core beliefs. These shifts extend beyond superficial adjustments—they are essential for personal growth, problem-solving and resilience. Embracing authentic, intentional and equitable inclusion in K-12 education requires such shifts.

The benefits are far-reaching: they empower individuals to transcend limitations. We advocate for releasing limiting beliefs about diverse learners and embracing data supporting their vast possibilities. The following sections will illustrate frameworks that support inclusive general education classrooms, built on these essential mindset shifts.



Each year, All In honors school districts and educators that exemplify inclusive education. Dr. Michael Conti Public School in Jersey City is among the select few that have been recognized over the years.

Universal Design for Learning

To effectively support and include all students, frameworks, processes, and strategies can be employed. Within the work of the Consortium, we strive to not only amplify underrepresented voices but also to ensure that the professional development and instructional materials we produce are accessible. To that end, we implement the Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework—not as a pedagogical trend, but as a foundational shift in how we approach teaching and learning for all students in New Jersey.

UDL asks educators to proactively design instruction that is accessible and engaging from the start. Rather than retrofitting accommodations, UDL considers the diverse strengths, challenges and preferences of learners upfront. Its strength lies in three key principles: providing multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression.

By consciously building these options into our lessons, we eliminate barriers before they arise, ensuring every student has pathways to access content, process information and demonstrate their understanding in ways that genuinely work for them.

Embracing UDL means moving beyond traditional, “one-size-fits-all” instruction. It’s about designing universal Tier 1 instruction with high quality and flexibility that inherently meets the needs of a broader range of learners. This proactive approach significantly reduces the need for extensive individual modifications later on, making teaching more efficient and effective for everyone in the classroom.

For example, in a unit on the American Revolution:

- Multiple means of engagement (The “why”): An educator could offer students choices to “hook” into the topic, such as watching a documentary, engaging with a primary source letter or debating related to modern issues.
- Multiple means of representation (The “what”): Information on the causes of the American Revolution could be presented through a textbook reading, an audio recording, a graphic organizer or short video explanations.
- Multiple means of action and expression (The “how”): Students might demonstrate understanding by writing an essay, creating a historical comic, giving a presentation or building a diorama, allowing them to leverage their strengths.

Ultimately, UDL empowers New Jersey educators to create dynamic, equitable classrooms where all students, regardless of their learning profiles, are set up for success from day one, reflecting our collective commitment to an equitable, representative and community-anchored public education system.

Multi-tiered systems of support

Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) is a whole-school, proactive framework designed to provide increasing levels of support to all students. MTSS is a framework that creates several layers of intervention called tiers.

- Tier 1 is the universal tier. This is the basic instruction and intervention that all students receive. It calls for high-quality, research-based instruction usually using UDL as the foundation. This high-quality instruction is provided to all students in general education classrooms.
- Tier 2 is the first add-on to Tier 1. All further tiers are additional to the ones before them. Tier 2 intervention occurs two to three times a week for students in small groups (five to eight learners) on a particular skill. These interventions occur outside of the time scheduled for Tier 1. This instruction does not replace instruction in Tier 1. This intervention is usually provided for six to eight weeks, and teachers progress monitor student performance once every other week.
- Tier 3 instruction occurs four to five times a week for students in very small groups (one to three learners). Progress monitoring occurs on a weekly basis and students will receive this intervention for eight to 16 weeks—12 weeks is the most common duration.

MTSS is a proactive process. A data team makes decisions on levels of intervention and the students assigned to those interventions. There may be a single data team or multiple data teams, depending on the size of the school.

Three times per year, all students take a universal screener (a 60-minute assessment that includes the skills the interventions will support). There are a variety of universal screeners that districts can choose from. Most incorporate literacy and mathematics.

The results of the universal screener are analyzed by the data team, and based on those results, the data team selects students for Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions. The data team then meets monthly and analyzes progress monitoring data to make decisions about the interventions.

The power of this framework lies in its adaptability and commitment to all learners. At its core, MTSS is about data-driven decisions regarding interventions. When a student receives Tier 2 support, their progress is closely monitored. If they excel, that intervention can be phased out. If they continue to struggle, the data team strategically considers continuing Tier 2, escalating to more intensive Tier 3 support, or even exploring a special education evaluation.

Importantly, Tier 1, the universal instruction all students receive, must be high-quality and incorporate UDL principles, ensuring learning is accessible and engaging from the outset, not just for some, but for everyone.

MTSS is not a separate track for students with disabilities; it's an inclusive system where any student needing support receives it, regardless of classification. This means that if a student with a disability in a general education classroom

would benefit from an MTSS intervention, they should receive it.

Beyond academics, MTSS can be leveraged for behavioral, mental health and social-emotional learning interventions, making it a truly comprehensive schoolwide framework. When implemented with fidelity, MTSS demonstrably reduces referrals for special education evaluations, minimizes teacher workload, and, most importantly, significantly improves student outcomes, proving its effectiveness as a proactive, holistic approach to education.

Myths vs. facts: Unpacking common misconceptions about inclusive education

Myth-busting is essential for shifting mindsets about inclusive education. Many myths stem from misunderstandings, limited collaboration, insufficient resources and a lack of experience with effective inclusion. Addressing these misconceptions helps pave the way for more informed, supportive and inclusive practices in schools. Here are some common myths about inclusive education, along with the facts that dispel them.

Myth: General education students will suffer when attention is diverted from them to students with disabilities.

This myth assumes that inclusive education is a zero-sum game, where supporting one student takes away from another. In reality, inclusive classrooms benefit all students. Research shows that when teachers use differentiated instruction, cooperative learning and UDL—core strategies in inclusive education—academic outcomes improve across the board. Inclusive settings foster empathy, collaboration and a deeper understanding of individual differences, preparing all students for diverse workplaces and communities. Inclusion doesn't mean less attention for some—it means better, more responsive teaching for everyone.

Myth: By including all students in general education, we are doing a disservice to students who need special education services.

Inclusive education is not about placing students with disabilities in general education settings without support—it's about providing the proper supports within those settings so all students can thrive. Research consistently shows that students who receive special education services often make greater academic and social gains in inclusive classrooms than in segregated ones. Inclusive environments offer access to the whole curriculum, higher expectations and meaningful interactions with peers—all of which contribute to stronger outcomes and a greater sense of belonging. Far from being a disservice, inclusion is a pathway to opportunity and equity.

Myth: Inclusion is too hard. It's "one more thing" on the educator's already full plate.

There is no doubt about it: educators DO have a lot on their plates. However, inclusion isn't "one more thing"—it is THE thing. Inclusive practices like UDL, MTSS, differentiated instruction and flexible grouping make teaching more effective for all students, not just those with identified needs. While it may require a shift in mindset and some initial effort, inclusion ultimately creates a more supportive, collaborative classroom where all learners can succeed—and where educators feel more empowered, not burdened.

Fact: Specially designed instruction is integral for all learners.

Inclusive education means more than just placing students with IEPs in general education classrooms—it means ensuring they receive the specially designed instruction outlined in their IEPs, which can and should occur within the MTSS framework. Specially designed instruction is what makes inclusion meaningful and effective, allowing students with disabilities to access the curriculum, meet their goals and participate alongside their peers. When implemented within inclusive settings, specially designed instruction strategies—such as modeling, visual supports and chunking—enhance learning for all students. Inclusion works best when specially designed instruction is part of the plan, not an afterthought.

Fact: Students DO NOT have to earn the right or pass criteria that entitle students to be included.

Inclusion is a right, not a reward. All students, regardless of ability or disability, have the right to learn and participate in general education settings alongside their peers. Requiring students to "earn" inclusion by meeting specific criteria reinforces the ableist practice of exclusion and denies them equitable access to the curriculum, community and social experiences of school. True inclusive education starts with the belief that every student belongs, all students are ours, and that it's our responsibility to create environments where they can thrive.

Embracing the future: Our collective commitment to inclusive education

The journey toward truly inclusive education in New Jersey is both a legal imperative and a moral calling. As we've explored, the history of educating students with disabilities has come a long way, yet significant disparities persist, as is particularly evident within our state's least restrictive environment statistics.

Through frameworks like UDL and MTSS, coupled with essential mindset shifts, educators have powerful tools

to dismantle barriers and create classrooms where every student's diverse strengths are not just accommodated but celebrated. This partnership between NJEA Consortium and All In for Inclusive Education is dedicated to empowering educators with the knowledge and resources to make this vision a reality.

We will continue to spread awareness that inclusion is not a burden; it is the fundamental principle that enriches our schools and communities. We will continue to address misconceptions, embrace evidence-based practices, and support educators and staff in optimizing environments where all learners can thrive. Together, we can collectively transform New Jersey's educational landscape. 🌍



Visit learning.njea.org/consortium.



Success stories

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SEEING US CLEARLY

Jewish identity, misconceptions and the need for allyship

By Rebecca Zarabi and Brittany Goodman

Antisemitism is not history. It is a persistent reality that has shaped Jewish life for millennia; from ancient exile to the Holocaust to the violent attacks of Oct. 7. In its aftermath, many American Jews feel a deep and disorienting sense of isolation. In response, we, a group of Jewish educators, came together to share our stories, support one another and confront the silence.

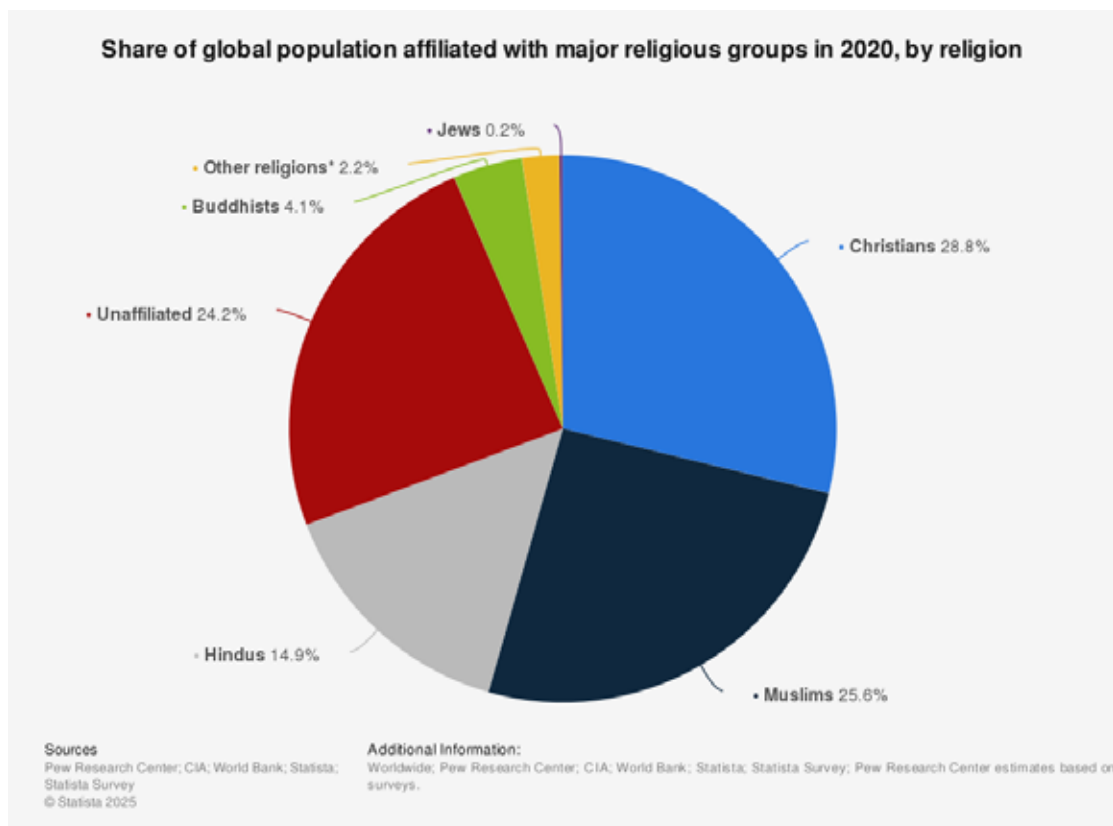
We realized that much of this isolation stems from a lack of awareness about Jewish identity, culture and the modern forms antisemitism takes. So we spoke up. We brought our experiences to district leadership, and what we shared was met with surprise, gratitude and a willingness to learn. But the conversation cannot stop there. Jewish students and staff deserve to be seen, understood and included. This article broaches topics that offer a path forward for educators ready to become true allies.

Judaism: Ethnicity or religion?

Judaism is an ethno-religion, meaning it encompasses not just a religion, but also an ethnicity and a culture. Jewish identity includes a shared history, culture and connection to an ancestral homeland.

A common misconception is that Judaism is only a religion, but being Jewish is not solely about religious practice. Jews identify in various ways: secular, cultural, Reform, Conservative or Orthodox. Some see their Jewishness as primarily ethnic or cultural.

While Judaism certainly has a strong religious component, it also encompasses a rich cultural, historical and ethnic identity that distinguishes it from many other religions. This misunderstanding not only leads to the exclusion of Jews from diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, where Jewish identity doesn't fit neatly into standard categories, but it also reinforces narrow stereotypes that erase the rich tapestry of Jewish life globally.



But you don't look Jewish...

There are approximately 15.8 million Jews worldwide; just 0.2% of the global population. To put that in perspective, the world's three largest religions, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism, make up roughly 28%, 25% and 15% of the global population, respectively.

Although Jews share common ancestral roots, centuries of persecution, exile and migration due to antisemitism led Jewish communities to settle across the globe. This history has resulted in significant cultural, ethnic and racial diversity.

Some Jews settled in Eastern Europe and are often referred to as Ashkenazi Jews; others established thriving communities in North Africa, the Middle East, Iran and Spain, giving rise to Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewish traditions. As a result, Jewish people today represent a wide range of appearances, languages and cultural customs.

Jews living outside of Israel are collectively referred to as part of the diaspora, communities that maintain a shared identity and a continuous connection to Zion (Israel) despite geographic dispersion.

The first Jewish community in the United States consisted of Sephardic Jews who were escaping persecution in Brazil. Over time, Jews from many other regions also sought refuge in the United States to escape antisemitism and oppression. Although Jewish refugees faced antisemitism upon arriving in the United States, including exclusion from social clubs, universities and certain professions, the U.S. was still safer than most other places at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century.

The antisemitism problem we can't escape

Jews make up a very small percentage of the global population yet are disproportionately targeted in hate crimes. According to New Jersey State Police Bias Incident's Report, anti-Jewish incidents comprise 21% of the hate crimes and are second only to anti-Black hate crimes. The numbers from January to June of 2025 reflect a similar pattern. (See bit.ly/nj-bias-incidents.)

Nationally, the numbers reveal a similar pattern: anti-Black hate crimes are the most frequently reported, followed by anti-Jewish and then anti-gay incidents. (See bit.ly/us-bias-incidents.)

At times antisemitism sits at a simmer, but it's always there, either overtly or covertly. There has been considerable debate around what constitutes antisemitism. It can manifest in slurs, threats or physical attacks, but also in exclusion from DEI conversations, stereotyping, erasure or questioning Jewish identity. This dual nature makes it especially difficult to confront and often easier for others to overlook.

Some expressions, both blatant and subtle, are unmistakably antisemitic and fall into well-established categories: accusing Jews of having undue power or control, perpetuating myths of dual loyalty, denying or distorting the Holocaust, and rejecting the Jewish right to self-determination.

This last form often appears as anti-Zionism. While it is entirely legitimate to criticize the policies or actions

of the Israeli government, just as one might criticize any other government, denying the legitimacy of the state of Israel or promoting its elimination crosses the line into antisemitism. Anti-Zionism is, at its core, antisemitic because it denies Jews the same right to a homeland that is granted to other ethnicities. Zionism is simply the belief in the Jewish right to a homeland.

The United States has officially adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. This definition explicitly includes

two examples related to the state of Israel, recognizing that attacks on its legitimacy can be a modern form of anti-Jewish hate. The first is, "Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavor." The second is, "Holding Jews collectively responsible for actions of the state of Israel."

One popular test of whether criticism of Israel is considered antisemitic was created by Natan Sharansky. Sharansky, a former Soviet dissident and human rights activist, developed a framework to help differentiate between fair criticism of Israel and antisemitic rhetoric disguised as political debate. Known as the "3D Test," this framework helps to distinguish between legitimate



Jewish students and staff deserve to be seen, understood, and included.

Rebecca Zarabi and Brittany Goodman are educators and NJEA members in Union County.

critique of Israeli policies and antisemitic rhetoric disguised as political discourse. The three D's stand for:

- **Demonization** – Does the criticism portray Israel as inherently evil, using extreme or dehumanizing language (such as comparing it to Nazi Germany or labeling it genocidal)?
- **Double standards** – Is Israel unfairly singled out or held to standards not applied to other countries with similar actions or challenges?
- **Delegitimization** – Does the criticism deny Israel's right to exist or reject the Jewish people's right to self-determination, a right that is recognized for other groups?

Holocaust education isn't enough

Holocaust education, while vital, often falls short, concluding with an oversimplified moral: "Be kind to others." This generalization, though well-intentioned, overlooks the nuanced and horrific history. The Holocaust was not an isolated event. It was the culmination of decades of antisemitic propaganda, normalization of hate, indoctrination in schools and attacks on Jewish identity. Nor was it the first or last time Jews were persecuted and killed.

Holocaust education is frequently presented in a vacuum. We rarely teach who Jews were before the Holocaust or who they became after. The years leading up to the genocide, and the societal conditions that made it possible, are often left out. Similarly, the powerful stories of survival and resilience that followed are often erased. We rarely discuss the antisemitism survivors faced upon returning to homes that no longer belonged to them, or how they were forced to rebuild their lives in unfamiliar countries with nothing. We gloss over the immense trauma, displacement and strength required to reconstruct families and communities.

Instead, what persists today are microaggressions that characterize Jews as universally privileged, less than a century after a genocide that destroyed two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population. This erasure not only distorts history but also fuels ongoing antisemitism by ignoring both its roots and its aftermath.

From grief to isolation: The lasting effects of Oct 7

The Jewish people are small in number, and the community is close-knit. When a tragedy occurs, it often feels deeply personal. In the case of Oct. 7, many American Jews had direct connections; they knew someone who was murdered, injured, or taken hostage.

In the aftermath, the rise in antisemitism here in the United States, combined with Israel's vulnerability, created a profound sense of unease. For the past 50 years or

so, American Jews had largely felt a relative sense of safety and security in this country, a period during which we thrived and contributed significantly to American society through innovations, discoveries, philanthropy and leadership in countless fields. With antisemitism rising and Israel under threat, however, a new and unsettling question has emerged for many: If things get worse, where would we go? Israel is central to Jewish identity for many American Jews, not only as a homeland, but as a safeguard in a world where Jews have historically had nowhere else to go.

Our collective memory includes centuries of being pushed out of countries and fleeing violence. That history lives in our families and our cultural DNA. Jews around the world often see themselves as part of one extended family. Centuries of persecution, including the Holocaust, have created a deep sense of communal vulnerability.

Immediately following Oct 7, instead of finding ourselves surrounded by the allies that we supported, we found ourselves alone. The very groups we had supported and stood beside in solidarity were silent, or worse, absent, when we needed them most. Even some educational institutions, which should be champions of fact-based information and critical thinking, have at times enabled or ignored antisemitic rhetoric and behavior.

How to be an ally

The Hebrew phrase *tikkun olam* means "repairing the world" and reflects a core Jewish value: the responsibility to improve society through justice, compassion and action. This principle is deeply woven into Jewish culture and identity. It's one reason why Jews have long stood in solidarity with other marginalized groups and are often among the first to support social justice movements.

And yet, despite being a minority group that experiences hate crimes, exclusion and microaggressions, Jews are often not recognized as such. Until Oct 7, many of us believed that DEI efforts included Jews. Since then it has become painfully clear that in many spaces, they do not. Too often Jews are not seen as an oppressed or vulnerable group, and as a result, we are frequently left out of conversations about equity and justice.

What Jews need now, more than ever, are allies; non-Jews who will speak out against antisemitism, stand with Jewish communities publicly and help educate others. Many of us have friends who say they support us privately, but their silence in public spaces, especially on social media, is deafening. Some of these same individuals have spoken out in support of other minority groups yet say nothing when Jewish people are targeted. Public solidarity matters. We see who shows up and who doesn't.

Being an ally can be as simple as reaching out. Ask, "Are you okay?" or "How can I support you?" Events happening

globally, especially those affecting Israel, can have a deep and personal impact on Jews living in the U.S. Acknowledging this and showing that you care makes a difference. Ask how they're doing. Let them know that your classroom or office is a safe and supportive space.

You can also demonstrate allyship by acknowledging, respecting and allowing accommodations during Jewish holidays and heritage months. Learn how to appropriately greet someone observing a holiday. For example, Yom Kippur is a solemn day of fasting and reflection; instead of saying "Happy Yom Kippur," the appropriate phrase is "Have an easy and meaningful fast."

In addition, Jewish holidays follow a lunar calendar, therefore often fall on weekdays. Students or staff may be absent for these holidays or refrain from eating certain foods or using technology. A quick search or asking a Jewish friend can help ensure you're honoring these moments with sensitivity.

School districts should actively integrate Jewish identity and antisemitism into their DEI frameworks and curricula, ensuring comprehensive training for staff. They should also review and update school policies to explicitly address antisemitism and provide clear reporting mechanisms for incidents.

Feeling seen heard and supported

As with any other group, Jews are not a monolith. Jewish identity is multifaceted and cannot be reduced to religion alone. Understanding Jewish identity requires more than recognizing religious practices; it calls for acknowledging a rich cultural heritage, centuries of resilience and the persistent threat of antisemitism.

As educators, colleagues and community members, we must commit to learning, listening, and standing in solidarity. When Jewish students and staff feel seen, heard and supported, we create spaces that are truly inclusive. Cultural competency isn't just about awareness, it's about action. 🧠

Resources

Organizations

Jewish members and their allies may join:

- NEA Jewish Affairs Caucus
neajacaucus.org
- Jewish NJEA Member Network
bit.ly/njea-jmn

Podcasts

- Being Jewish with Jonah Platt
- Unorthodox

Articles and videos

- Speaking About Antisemitism with Students
mjhnyc.org/antisemitism
- U.S. State Department
"Defining Antisemitism"
state.gov/defining-antisemitism
- Mallory Simon
"Not just neo-Nazis with Tiki Torches: Why Jewish students say They also Fear Cloaked Anti-Semitism"
bit.ly/cloaked-as
- Anne Frank House
"Is All Criticism of Israel Antisemitic?" (video and article)
bit.ly/anne-frank_as
- October 8th (Movie)
- Antisemitism Uncovered
antisemitism.adl.org
- The Atlantic (requires subscription to access)
"Is Holocaust Education Making Anti-Semitism Worse?"
By Dara Horn
bit.ly/atlanticmag-as

Books

- How to Fight Antisemitism, by Bari Weiss
- People Love Dead Jews, by Dara Horn
- Uncomfortable Conversations with a Jew, by Emmanuel Acho and Noa Tishby
- A Convenient Hatred: The History of Antisemitism by Phyllis Goldstein (Facing History and Ourselves)

LEAD IN WATER

Time for action on school test results

By Dorothy Wigmore



What's on your to-do list for the new school year?

Consider checking your district's lead in drinking water test results and if your district has applied for (or received) a New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) Water Infrastructure Improvement grant. The application deadline had been extended to Aug. 31, and it may be again.

Why the fuss?

Lead is a public, environmental and occupational health issue. It affects anyone who drinks contaminated water. As the state's 2022 fact sheet clearly states, there is no safe level of lead in the body.

Lead's hazards have been known for centuries. Children's growing bodies make them more vulnerable—impacting learning, behavior and more. Lead also affects healthy pregnancies and fertility for all sexes. Adult hazards include behavioral changes (such as violence), increased blood pressure, kidney damage and hearing loss.

What's this mean for schools?

Like residences and other buildings, schools may have lead in their water systems or lines (including brass fixtures) from corroded plumbing and that leach into drinking water.

Advocacy groups like Lead-Free NJ (LFNJ), Healthy Schools Now (HSN) and Jersey City Together (JCT) have pushed for solutions. Regulations limit lead in plumbing.

Grants help fund pipe replacements, fixture upgrades and filtration systems. Resources about lead hazards and fixes are available on government and advocacy websites.

Until plumbing is fully replaced with lead-free materials, temporary solutions include filters and regular outlet flushing.

New Jersey requires school districts to test all drinking and food preparation outlets every three years and after any plumbing changes. Besides using testing protocols, districts must:

- Notify parents within 24 hours after reviewing the test report if levels exceed 15 parts per billion (ppb) or 15 micrograms per liter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{l}$).
- Stop the use of affected outlets immediately.
- Provide alternative drinking water to students and staff.
- Post results publicly and submit them to the NJDOE.

All districts had to complete testing by June 30 and post results on their websites. Not all have complied. Some issued inaccurate or misleading information, saying only "high levels" matter.

Stopping the use of an outlet is common but problematic. JoLynn Moloughney's recent study found this happens more in low-income districts. She notes that young children may not understand "handwash only" signs, and cutting off outlets removes water access, while leaving the lead hazard.

How can reports be used?

"Everybody should be keeping a watch out for the results," says Sheila Caldwell, a school nurse, NJEA member and co-chair of LFNJ's health committee. "The key is to know where those levels are in the building."

"Start asking questions," she adds. "Have they started work to address this? Will there be additional testing after they put in a new filtration system?"

Caldwell also suggests contacting the administration or emailing the NJDOE if the report is missing, samples were

Dorothy Wigmore is a long-time health and safety specialist and WEC consultant. She has worked in Canada, the U.S. and Mozambique, focusing on prevention and worker participation to fix job-related hazards.

not taken throughout the building or nothing is done about problematic results.

Results and reports can lead to solutions, says Jersey City Together leader Jim Nelson. In March, the group celebrated a major win after years of advocacy: lead-free fountains in all the city's schools.

"It's about connecting civic engagement and civil engineering," Nelson says.

Reports are often long and technical. So the group also wants plain-language summaries "interpreting the results and their significance, and how this community investment ties to human and environmental health," Nelson says. They also want a format that lets families translate content into other languages.

Follow-up and a proper maintenance are essential, Caldwell and Nelson say. What has happened since fountains were turned off? Are there new filtration systems? Were systems flushed after summer vacations? Are filters tracked and replaced? Is the maintenance log updated?

Lead isn't the only concern.

"We celebrated in March," Nelson says, "and we put this district on notice that we still want conversations about the need to monitor for other contaminants."

His suggestion for health and safety committees or others reviewing reports?

"Look for any exceedance that requires action; it's going to be highlighted and flagged," Nelson says. "But the question is whether the tests were comprehensive through a school building or just representative of a floor or a building."

Another idea: support student-led water testing projects to ensure regular checks between testing years.

What can health and safety activists or committees do?

It's hard to keep up with the rules and players, but NJEA members can use union connections to advocacy groups. Committees and activists can do the following.

Work with the local association executive committee and UniServ field representative to request the district provide the committee:

- All water test results with plain language summaries of testing and findings.
- Short-, medium- and long-term plans for results above 15 ppb ($\mu\text{g}/\text{l}$), with awareness that other states use 5 ppb (e.g., see DEP's "Lead sampling information").
- The district's water system(s) maintenance plan and activity logs.
- Opportunities to discuss and evaluate follow-up.

Map the results and share them with members, along with explanations of their meaning, the district's proposed solutions and the local association's proposed response(s).

Review the district's public information to ensure it clearly says there is no safe level.

Use members' skills (e.g., science, statistics) and other resources (below) to:

- Advocate for filters first, not outlet shutoffs.
- Push for more frequent tests (including student projects).
- Encourage preventive action for results under 15 ppb/ $\mu\text{g}/\text{l}$.

Work with community groups (e.g., HSN, LFNJ) to ensure healthy school water reaches all classrooms — especially where it's needed most.

Check out Lead Free New Jersey's booth and session at the NJEA Convention on Nov. 6-7.



References and resources

New Jersey Department of Education

Securing Our Children's Future Bond Act: Water Infrastructure Improvement Grant
nj.gov/education/facilities

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

Schools – Lead Sampling Information
nj.gov/dep/watersupply/schools.htm

Campaign for Lead-Free Water

campaignforleadfreewater.org

Jersey City Together

Water in Jersey City Campaign
njtogether.org/water

Healthy Schools Now Coalition

njwec.org/healthy-schools-now

Lead-Free New Jersey

leadfreenj.org



PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Caffeinated Conversations

Brewing community, one cup at a time

Something warm is brewing across New Jersey this fall—and it is not just the pumpkin spice lattes. It is connection, community and conversation, served up with a side of caffeine.

Caffeinated Conversations, NJREA's newest statewide initiative, invites retired educators to gather at cozy local coffee shops for relaxed, small-group discussions about the future of their retiree associations and the future of public education.

Funded by an \$8,500 grant from NEA-Retired (NEA-R), the program provides each of New Jersey's 21 counties with \$404 to host a conversation-driven meetup this fall. The goal is to bring members and nonmembers together in an informal and inclusive setting to share ideas, build relationships and explore how NJREA can better serve its vibrant community of retired educators.

The initiative also reflects NJREA's broader commitment to investing in the neighborhoods our members call home.

More than just a cup of coffee

Beyond the warm beverages and pastries, Caffeinated Conversations is an opportunity to strengthen and reimagine what NJREA can be for its members. The small group format encourages everyone to contribute. Whether you've been an NJREA member for years or are simply curious about joining, you're welcome at the table.

Coming to a coffee shop near you

Caffeinated Conversations will be rolling out across the state throughout the fall. Each county will choose its own date, time, and venue, so keep an eye out for invitations from your local association. To keep things cozy and conversational, space will be limited, so be sure to RSVP as soon as possible.

If you're a retired educator looking to reconnect, get more involved, or just enjoy a latte with like-minded educators, Caffeinated Conversations is your invitation to be part of something meaningful.

Come for the coffee. Stay for the camaraderie. Let's build together.

Around the counties

For questions and/or concerns, or if your county is not listed, please check your county newsletter, or reach out to your county REA for more information. For trip details, check your county newsletter.

Atlantic County REA

Oct. 22: Fall business meeting and luncheon at the Flanders Hotel in Ocean. Reservation deadline is Oct. 15, and the cost is TBD. To attend, call Charles "Chic" Brandt at 609-774-3452.

Bergen County REA

Oct. 14: Fall luncheon meeting at Seasons Catering. Reservation deadline is Oct. 6, and the cost is \$60 for members. To attend, call Marie Papaleo at 201-407-2543.

Burlington County REA

Oct. 16: Fall luncheon meeting at Marco's at Indian Spring Country Club in Marlton. Reservation deadline is Oct. 2, and the cost is \$25. To attend, call Donna O'Malley at 609-268-0838.

Camden County REA

Oct. 14: Fall business luncheon meeting at Adelpia Restaurant in Deptford. The entertainment is TBA. Reservation deadline is Oct. 3, and the cost is \$30. To attend, call Diane Merlino at 856-498-9593.

Retired Educators Association of Cape May County

Oct. 22: Fall business meeting and luncheon at the Flanders Hotel in Ocean. Reservation deadline is Oct. 15, and the cost is TBD. To attend, call Charles "Chic" Brandt at 609-774-3452.

Cumberland County REA

Oct. 1: Fall luncheon meeting at The Millville Motorsports Park in Millville. To attend, call Pam Garwood at 856-392-6909.

Essex County REA

Oct. 15: Fall luncheon meeting at The Hanover Manor in East Hanover. The guest speakers will be the NJEA Officers. Reservation deadline is Oct. 8, and the cost is \$40. To attend, call Kathie McKoy Osborne at 973-715-6591.

Gloucester County REA

Oct. 23: Fall luncheon and general membership meeting at the Seven Star Diner in Sewell. Reservation deadline is TBA, and the cost is \$25. To attend, call Margery Walsh at 856-381-1123.

Hudson County REA

Oct. 1: General membership luncheon meeting at LaReggia Restaurant in Secaucus. Reservation deadline is Sept. 19, and the cost is \$40. To attend, call Donna Middlebrooks at 973-610-7129.

Hunterdon County REA

Sept. 18: Fall luncheon meeting at Mountain View Chalet in Asbury. There will be guest speakers from our NJREA Officers and NJEA Government Relations. Reservation deadline is Sept. 2, and the cost is \$35. To attend, call Maryann Sajor at 908-625-8911.

Mercer County REA

Oct. 22: Fall luncheon meeting at the Mercer Oaks Golf Course in Princeton Junction. The entertainment is TBA. Reservation deadline is Oct. 12, and the cost is \$36. To attend, call Lisa Rizziello at 609-577-6158.

Middlesex County REA

Oct. 16: Fall luncheon meeting at The Grand Marquis in Old Bridge. Reservation deadline is Oct. 6, and the cost is \$46. To attend, call Susan Jaysnovitch at 732-925-1606.

Monmouth County REA

Oct. 14: Fall luncheon meeting at Yesterday's in Hazlet. Presentation to the G2G Grant Recipients. Reservation deadline is Oct. 3, and the cost is \$45. To attend, call Debbie Adamchak at 848-459-2672.

Morris County REA

To attend either MCREA event, call John Williams at 609-504-9681.
Sept. 10: General luncheon meeting at Birchwood Manor. Reservation deadline is Sept. 1, and the cost

is \$35 for members and \$53 for guests. "Liberty of the Road" will be presented by Michaela Piepoli from Kean University.

Oct. 8: General luncheon meeting at Birchwood Manor. Reservation deadline is Oct. 1, and the cost is \$35 for members and \$53 for guests. Anthony Duke Claus, singer from Broadway, Elvis, and Rat Pack tunes will be the entertainment.

Ocean County REA

Oct. 16: Fall luncheon meeting at The Clarion Hotel in Toms River. The speaker is to be announced. Reservation deadline is Oct. 1, and the cost is \$32. To attend, call Pam Raynor at 862-268-5210.

Passaic County REA

Sept. 10: Luncheon meeting at The Brownstone in Paterson. The meeting is for members only. To attend, call Karen Monaco at 201-317-6869.

Salem County REA

Oct. 27: Fall luncheon meeting at Woodstown Diner. There will be a presentation on Pension Benefits. Reservation deadline is Oct. 12, and the cost is \$20. To attend, call Rosemma Ward at 856-467-4795.

Somerset County REA

Oct. 8: Fall luncheon meeting at Somerville Elks Club in Bridgewater. Reservation deadline is Oct. 2, and the cost is \$28. To attend, call Kathy Kapp at 908-722-7715.

Union County REA

Oct. 7: Fall luncheon meeting at Casa del Rey in Roselle Park. There will be a presentation from NJEA Government Relations and Hearing Life. Reservation deadline is Sept. 30, and the cost is \$40. To attend, call Luanne Lohman-DiCicco at 732-882-1688.

Warren County REA

Sept. 3: Luncheon meeting at Hawk Pointe Golf Club in Washington. The entertainment is TBA. Reservation deadline is Aug. 27, and the cost is \$33. To register, call Deb Polhemus at 908-328-8817 or visit warrencountyrea.org/meetings.





WHAT DID I KNOW ABOUT HIGHER EDUCATION?

By Tiffany Harris-Greene

One of the first things I learned is this: our community college members are deeply dedicated to the ongoing education of students.

We are all fighting for the same things: respect, fair wages, and a sense of belonging.

For 26 years, I was a special education teacher in the Pre-K to 12 world. What did I know about higher education? Honestly—very little. Sure, I had attended college, but that’s like when a politician claims to know how schools work just because they went to school. The truth is, I knew nothing.

But in Year 27, I got an education of my own.

Since the fall of 2024, I’ve had the extraordinary opportunity to work alongside NJEA community college members as an NEA Organizing Fellow. I was granted a year-long sabbatical from my teaching position in Mount Laurel to get experience what it is like to be a UniServ field representative. For the first time, I stopped being a union member and instead worked for the members.

One of the first things I learned is this: our community college members are deeply dedicated to the ongoing education of students—many of whom I’ve had the privilege of teaching in my own classroom. That education is supported by everyone on campus—from school counselors to security guards, administrators, professors, nursing faculty, chef educators and countless others.

As an NEA Organizing Fellow, I was able to support community college units in a wide range of ways—from helping with grievances and enforcing workplace safety, to assisting with contract negotiations and organizing member engagement activities. This experience gave me a firsthand look into the inner workings of community colleges—an environment that, while sometimes vastly different from Pre-K to 12, is built on the same foundation of commitment, care and professionalism.

During my fellowship, I also had the opportunity to assist in organizing our community college members of color on several campuses. I helped coordinate initial

Tiffany Harris-Greene is a teacher at Hartford School in Mt. Laurel. She recently became an NJEA UniServ consultant, serving higher education members. She can be reached at tharris-greene@njea.org.



Mt. Laurel teacher Tiffany Harris-Greene served NJEA higher education members as an NEA organizing fellow for the 2024-25 school year.

meet-and-greet events with members of color across the state, creating a space for connection and shared purpose. In addition, I supported locals in organizing member rights workshops, social events and activities focused on engagement and learning the full value of union membership.

A national perspective

This journey wasn’t limited to New Jersey. I traveled across the country working alongside other NEA Organizing Fellows, collaborating to build a more active, engaged and powerful union movement—one that centers equity, inclusion and collective strength.

To tell the truth, I would never have fully understood the challenges and triumphs of our community college colleagues without living this experience.

And here’s the most valuable lesson I’ve taken away: we are more alike than we are different.

Whether you’re in Pre-K or teaching college-level biology, whether you’re supporting students in the classroom or on campus grounds—we are all fighting for the same things: respect, fair wages and a sense of belonging.

It is through organizing, engaging and connecting that we will build a stronger bridge between Pre-K to 12 and community college members. On that bridge, we will find our truest union voice and collective power.

“

One of the first things I learned is this: our community college members are deeply dedicated to the ongoing education of students.

A renewed purpose

Now that my yearlong sabbatical has come to an end, I'm returning to my classroom in Mount Laurel with renewed purpose. This past year—dedicated to advocating, empowering and promoting positive work environments with livable wages—has been nothing short of transformative. I'll now lead from the classroom, carrying with me all I've learned, and continue the fight alongside my colleagues for fair wages, safe workplaces and collective power.

The collective voice of our members—raised together in unity—will be heard far and wide, and I'm proud to be one of them.

Interested in a fellowship?

If you're wondering, "How can I do that?" let me shine a light on the NEA Organizing Fellowship Academy, or NOFA. This yearlong fellowship, sponsored by NEA and NJEA, trains member-leaders in the essential skills of organizing and advocacy.

If you're passionate about supporting your fellow union members and strengthening our collective voice, this program is for you, whether working in a Pre-K to 12 district or on a community college campus. You'll dive headfirst into the work of a UniServ field representative, assisting local districts and community colleges in building leadership, partnerships and solutions that protect member rights, wages and workplace safety.

You'll also have the extraordinary opportunity to connect with NEA members from across the country and travel to promote union solidarity on a national scale. This program equips you to champion unity and teamwork among all public education workers—because your voice, your passion and your dedication can transform not only New Jersey, but the entire nation.

To learn more about NOFA or to apply for the next cohort, visit nea.org/nofa.

A note of thanks

Finally, I want to personally take a moment to express my heartfelt thanks to the community college members I had the pleasure of working closely with this year. It's been



Tiffany Harris-Green at an event with NJEA members at Camden County College.

a true joy collaborating with you, and I'm excited to see the great work you'll continue to do on your campuses.

With a heart full of gratitude, I also want to thank my Region 29 colleagues and NJEA staff. The NJEA UniServ Region 29 office provides support to higher education members and local leaders. To my mentor, UniServ Field Rep Marcia Kleinz—thank you for the countless hours, thoughtful guidance and unwavering support throughout my fellowship. My professional growth this year is a direct reflection of your dedication.

To UniServ Field Rep Maury Koffman, Administrative Assistant Karen "Skip" Perry and Office Assistant Marissa Mayor—thank you for welcoming me into the Region 29 family and for the encouragement and support you've shown me along the way. Community college members across New Jersey are fortunate to have such passionate and selfless professionals advocating for them every day.



What new NJ teachers need to know about certification

Starting your teaching journey? Don't miss these certification essentials

If you're a new educator in New Jersey, understanding the certification process is essential for a successful start. Here are five key facts every novice teacher should know—plus an invitation to learn more in our upcoming certification webinar.

1. You must be enrolled in the Provisional Teacher Process within 60 days.

If you're hired with a Certificate of Eligibility (CE) or Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS), your district must enroll you in the Provisional Teacher Process (PTP) within 60 days of your start date. While the district initiates this, it's your responsibility to make sure it happens. Check with your Human Resources office and log into the NJEdCert system to confirm your certificate status.

2. Your provisional certificate is district-specific.

If you switch districts during your provisional period, your new district must file for a new provisional certificate—again, within 60 days of your start date. A delay could impact your ability to work or progress toward standard certification.

3. You may only teach subjects or grades listed on your certificate.

You must stick to the subject areas and grade levels covered by your CE, CEAS or standard endorsement. While certified teachers can occasionally substitute outside their certification area, there are limits. Time spent teaching out-of-scope does not count toward obtaining your standard certificate.

4. Out-of-state certificates aren't valid for teaching in New Jersey.

If you're moving to New Jersey from another state, you must apply for a comparable New Jersey certificate through the reciprocity process before you begin teaching. If your out-of-state certificate isn't equivalent to New Jersey's standard certificate—or if you lack recent successful teaching experience—you'll need to complete all of the state's requirements, including coursework and testing.

Camy Kobylinski is an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. She can be reached at ckobylinski@njea.org.

5. Limited certificates don't require extra steps once issued.

Limited CE and CEAS certificates are issued to candidates who were exempted from one of the traditional requirements, such as GPA or Praxis scores. These certificates can only be used in participating districts—but once you're hired, you follow the same Provisional Teacher Process requirements as any other CE/CEAS holder. Interestingly, the New Jersey Department of Education reports that educators with Limited certificates have higher job satisfaction and retention rates!

Want to learn more?

Join us for our upcoming **Certification 101** webinar! We'll cover all these topics in more depth and walk you through how to navigate the NJEdCert system, meet certification requirements, and stay on track.

Webinar – Certification 101: A Panel for Novice Educators

Thursday, Sept. 25, 4:30 p.m.

If you're just starting out as a teacher in New Jersey, figuring out the certification process can feel overwhelming. Featuring a panel of experts, this webinar will break it all down. We'll walk you through the different types of certificates and endorsements, how to apply through NJEdCert and how to move from provisional to standard certification. You'll also get tips on timelines, avoiding common mistakes and where to find support.



To learn more, visit learning.njea.org. To register right away, scan this QR-code.

Start strong. Stay certified.
We're here to help.



BACK TO SCHOOL FOR NJAEA

BY AMANDA KUNKEL

As we approach the upcoming school year and begin preparing for the start of the fall semester, NJAEA has also taken the time to set goals for our operations this year. We want to end 2025 and begin 2026 as a strong, well-organized collective of aspiring educators who can work alongside the rest of NJEA to succeed in our goals as a union.

This summer, I attended the National Education Association's (NEA) Aspiring Educators Conference as well as the NEA Representative Assembly. I learned a lot from local and state leaders from other states and saw many different examples of both successful and struggling aspiring educator programs.

This experience taught me that almost the entire country is fighting for the same issues as New Jersey, such as ending voucher programs and offering paid student teaching—and that most of their aspiring educator programs were struggling to participate in this fight due to low membership numbers and problems with recruitment.

In order to help prevent similar issues within NJAEA, our three main goals for this upcoming year are:

- Focusing on recruitment
- Creating new local chapters
- Strengthening connections between new and existing chapters

With these goals in mind, my fellow NJAEA officers and I will be starting off strong by planning campus visits to all of our current chapters to meet our local leadership and establish strong connections.

“

NJAEA is strongest when we are unified, focused and well-organized.

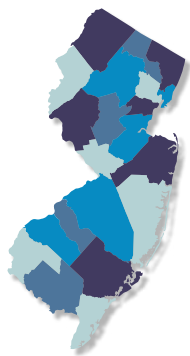
We are also already reaching out to schools that are interested in starting chapters or affiliating existing clubs with the union. We will continue to reach out to more schools, particularly community colleges. We are lacking representation at these institutions and since our new leadership team includes students from Passaic County Community College, we are now uniquely equipped to start bringing in aspiring educators and education professionals from two-year institutions.

Once we have established chapters at community colleges, we're planning to connect them with nearby or associated four-year schools so that we can have strong coalitions rather than isolated chapters. We would also like to hold a few regional events, such as community closets, which would also help to bring members and potential members together.

Just like the rest of the union, NJAEA is strongest when we are unified, focused and well-organized. We want to represent every part of the state and every type of student we possibly can so that we can do better work to advocate for both aspiring educators and public education at large.

We can't wait to get back to school!

Amanda Kunkel is a student at The College of New Jersey and vice president of NJAEA.



SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

Workshops and conferences highlights

Civics, science standards
and selective mutism

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FROM RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

NGSS workshop series

The Science Education Institute at Raritan Valley Community College offers a series of workshops for K-12 teachers and supervisors on how to support students as they investigate and make sense of phenomena in the classroom. Through these workshops, participants will explore all aspects of effective Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) aligned instruction.

Led by Dr. Wil van der Veen, author and a nationally recognized expert on the NGSS and science education, the workshops will be held at Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg.

Oct. 29: Using Core Ideas to Construct Explanations for Science Phenomena

Dec. 10: Engaging Students in Practices Using Performance Tasks

Feb. 4: Making Crosscutting Concepts Explicit

Feb. 25: Using Explanation and Argument to Assess Student Learning

March 18: Defining Problems and Designing Solutions for Engineering Phenomena

Climate change workshop series

The Science Education Institute at RVCC also offers a series of workshops for K-12 teachers and supervisors on how to support students as they investigate and make sense of Climate Change related phenomena. We will explore how K-12 educators can meet the increased focus on Climate Change in the revised New Jersey Students Learning Standards for Science.

Dec. 3: Using Foundational Science Ideas to investigate Causes of Climate Change: Part 1

Jan 21: Using Foundational Science Ideas to investigate Causes of Climate Change: Part 2

For both the NJSS and the climate change series, each workshop begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 3 p.m. Light breakfast and lunch will be provided.

The fee is \$150 per workshop per teacher. Participants will receive five professional development units for completing each workshop.

To register for either the NGSS or Climate Change workshops, visit tinyurl.com/RVCC-REG24-25. For more information contact Donna Frasca-Brady at donna.frasca-brady@raritanval.edu or 908-526-1200, ext. 8942.

USE STARLAB TO MAKE SCIENCE COME ALIVE

Starlab is an inflatable dome on which you can project vivid images of the night sky, ancient mythological characters, our solar system and galaxy, Earth's weather patterns and geological features, or the biological cell. Starlab is easily transportable and fits into a small car. It can be set up in 15 minutes and accommodates up to 30 students. The Starlab dome requires a clean floor space of 20 x 22 feet and a 12-foot-high ceiling.

A Starlab Training will be held in-person on Nov. 18 at Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg and will begin promptly at 9 a.m. and end by 4 p.m. At the training, participants will learn how to set up, maintain, and repack the Starlab system. Light breakfast and lunch will be provided.

The training fee is \$175. Teachers who complete the training are eligible to rent Starlab for a fee of \$450/week (\$350/week between June 1 and Dec. 1).

To register online use tinyurl.com/RVCC-REGSLT. For more information contact Donna Frasca-Brady at donna.frasca-brady@raritanval.edu or 908-526-1200, ext. 8942.

ATTEND THE 2025 NJCSS CONFERENCE

The New Jersey Council for the Social Studies will hold its annual conference on Monday, Oct. 20, from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. The theme is "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness: Reflecting, Debating and celebrating for 250 Years!" The conference will be held at the Busch Student Center at Rutgers University in Piscataway.

Registration is \$90 and the conference fee includes a one-year NJCSS membership (Sept. 1, 2025, through Aug. 31, 2026.)

The three workshop sessions will be one hour long and run from 8:45 a.m. to 1:05 p.m. There will be a "business breakfast" and the names of local eateries for your lunch. Visit njcss.org and click on the conference link for registration, continuing updates and the overall program.

Questions? Send an email to Hank Bitten at hbitten@optonline.net.

NEW JERSEY CENTER FOR CIVIC EDUCATION Offers free workshops for educators

The New Jersey Center for Civic Education will offer a series of free, all-day workshops for teachers during the 2025-26 school year.

Workshops will be held at Rutgers University's Piscataway campus from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., with continental breakfast and lunch provided. Sessions are supported by state funding and are free to school districts.

The schedule includes:

- **Teaching about Elections** — Sept. 18, 2025
- **Middle School Civics** — Oct. 13, 2025
- **Infusing Civics, Economics and N.J. History into High School U.S. History** — Oct. 13, 2025, and March 26, 2026
- **Project Citizen** (grades 4-12) — Dec. 9, 2025
- **We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution** (grades 5-12) — Dec. 9, 2025
- **Civics for K-5** — March 10, 2026
- **The Development of Democracy in Ancient Civilizations** (middle school) — March 20, 2026

For more information and to register, visit njaap.org/ghm or contact Program Manager Tizana Hoggs, MPA at THoggs@njaap.org.

SELF-PACED COURSE IN SELECTIVE MUTISM

The Selective Mutism in the School Self-Paced Course by the SMart Center provides school professionals with practical, evidence-based strategies to support children and teens with selective mutism, social anxiety and extreme shyness. Learn how to assess, develop accommodations and implement effective interventions to help students speak confidently at school. This flexible, online training empowers teachers, counselors and staff to create a safe and supportive classroom environment—so every student can find their voice.

The course is \$250. NJEA members receive a 10% discount with the code "NJEAFriend" when they register.

The course is available through March 2026. Visit selectivemutismcenter.org and click on "Continuing Education" for details.

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Shaping the future through inclusive pedagogy

Meet the NJEA Consortium Design Team Ambassadors

By Dr. Kim Pinckney

Imagine classrooms across New Jersey where every student not only learns but truly sees themselves and others reflected in the curriculum. This powerful vision is the driving force behind the NJEA Consortium and our Design Team Ambassadors (DTAs), a dynamic group of passionate educators dedicated to crafting inclusive and representative learning experiences for all students.

DTAs are members with expertise in diverse content areas committed to deepening their skills through professional development and immersive field trips to design inclusive performance tasks, champion equity and justice, and serve as model classrooms for inclusive education. These dedicated individuals work collaboratively to curate impactful and intersectional curriculum, ensuring that the beautiful diversity of New Jersey's public schools and communities is authentically represented in instructional resources.

Join us in celebrating the impactful work of our current and former Design Team Ambassadors. Together, we can ensure that every classroom in New Jersey is a space where every student thrives.

Learn more about the work of the NJEA Consortium at learning.njea.org/consortium.

For any questions, please feel free to contact us at consortium@njea.org.

Dr. Kim Pinckney is an associate director in the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. Pinckney coordinates the NJEA Consortium. She can be reached at kpinkney@njea.org. For more about the NJEA Consortium, visit learning.njea.org/consortium.



A Legacy of Impact: Meet Our Ambassadors

We are incredibly proud of the work accomplished by both our current and previous Design Team Ambassadors.

Current Design Team Ambassadors



Alamelu Sundaram-Walters, Mount Laurel Public Schools



Allison Connolly, Township of Ocean Public Schools



América Sotelo, Passaic Public Schools



Erin Putman, Voorhees Township Public Schools



Felicia Panny, Englewood Public Schools



Gabby Guzman, Montclair Public Schools



Lisa Dolby, Delsea Regional School District



Mary Joyce Laqui, Teaneck Public Schools



Stacy Schiller, Hazlet Township Public Schools



Steve Koumoulis, Middletown Township Public Schools



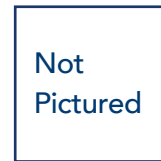
Tamar LaSure-Owens, Pleasantville Public Schools



Tariq Raheem, Irvington Public School District



Shihong Zhang, Glen Ridge Public Schools



Nina Balestriere (D'Urso), Middletown Township Public Schools



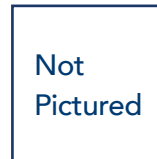
Kate Okeson, New Jersey Advisory Commission on Advancing LGBTQIA+ Youth Equity and Inclusion in Schools / Make it Better 4 Youth



Sundjata Sekou, Irvington Public School District



Taleena Lachelle Queen, College Achieve Public Schools and Word Seed Inc.



Mel Katz, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at The College of New Jersey



Cherry Hill's Thomas Paine Elementary Uses LMC to impact social and emotional learning

By Kimberly Crane

When Thomas Paine Elementary School Principal Melissa Gleason reviewed data points from the New Jersey School Climate and Inventory Survey, she found two areas that consistently scored low across all 19 district schools. The areas were interpersonal relationships and collaboration time between teachers and staff.

"The entire district scored low in those two areas," said Gleason, "so we decided to talk about both of them in our LMC."

The Labor Management Collaborative (LMC) focused first on interpersonal relationships. Gleason worked closely with school counselor Missy Santiago and colleague Christopher Gaffney to investigate the reasons behind the low scores. They discovered that students weren't saying kind things to one another or showing mutual respect—an issue that, if left unaddressed, could escalate into ongoing conflict.

While the district's guidance office staff were already providing targeted social and emotional learning (SEL) instruction during classroom visits, the building's LMC recognized the need for a broader approach, like implementing a common lesson on empathy. One challenge was how to fit additional lessons into an already tight schedule while gaining schoolwide buy-in from staff.

Santiago and Gaffney presented an evidence-based goal-setting and problem-solving strategy called WOOP (Wish, Obstacle, Outcome, Plan) at a faculty meeting. Staff were given time to collaborate and work through each of the four WOOP components to create a plan that would optimize SEL for both students and staff.

Since all students attend specials, such as music and art, at scheduled times, staff agreed that SEL could be integrated into the special classes without disrupting academic instruction.

"The kids now break off to do different SEL activities with the music teacher, art teacher and other specialists," said Santiago, "They might be leading a breathing strategy or doing other mindful activities with the goal of improving respect for themselves and others."

As a result, Thomas Paine students now have a common language to help them refocus, remember helpful strategies and resolve conflicts appropriately throughout the week. If students need to go to reset, they can visit familiar, trained staff members for support. Schoolwide, everyone is now speaking the same SEL language.

"After integrating special subject areas with SEL, the specials' teachers expressed feeling like they have more of a voice in our school community," Gleason said, "We've also received some amazing feedback from the kids. They've told me that they find Mindful Mondays very calming."

Thomas Paine Elementary students have become empowered. The changes in their school's SEL program allow students to resolve conflicts independently, talk through problems using shared SEL language and tools, and seek adult help if there are still challenges. Some older students have become so skilled that they're able to coach peers in using the SEL strategies.

"We want everything in their hands, but we need to teach them these skills because they're still young," Gleason said. "I used to have a line of kids sitting in my office after every recess, and now it's not as often. Empowering our kids with the skills to resolve interpersonal conflicts has made a big difference."

Kimberly Crane is an NJEA Communications Consultant and former president of the Highland Park Education Association. She can be reached at kcrane@njea.org.

For more information on the New Jersey Labor Management Collaborative email Mike Ritzius, NJEA liaison to the New Jersey LMC at Mike@lmcpartnerships.org.



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HOLDING POWER

Start strong and stay aware

By Amy Moran, Ph.D. and Allison Connolly

Welcome back! As we begin the 2025-26 school year, wonderful possibilities exist for deepening our practice as educators while staying informed about how students, educators and communities are being influenced by our nation's political and cultural climate. Returning in conversation is Allison Connolly, Holocaust education expert, to chat about the current state of affairs and broader implications for our work.

Amy: Given all that's been happening, what's on your mind this September?

Allison: Well, federal decisions around identity and personal rights will impact students when they come through the doors. How many students might not return because our government is now disappearing people who are legally attending immigration court appointments and U.S. citizens through racial profiling? Many students will be coming into our classrooms with unprecedented trauma and concern for their family's safety.

Amy: Exactly. I'm also reminded of other hard truths, such as how the president approved student loan forgiveness for Immigrations and Custom Enforcement (ICE) agents but not teachers, how more students are impacted by food scarcity because the government rolled back Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, and how bullying and harassment are on the rise as intersex, transgender and nonbinary students work to find safety in a country whose current federal government says they don't exist.

Allison: Teachers might come to school scared too, afraid of choosing culturally responsive pedagogies in a political climate that vilifies diversity, equity and inclusion. Let's remember that New Jersey is still a bastion of progressive education practices, which helps us remain among the top in the nation for education overall.

Amy Moran, Ph. D. (she/her) is an out queer educator, advocate and activist working to make education inclusive and affirming for all students and colleagues. She is a 31-year middle school teacher, was a high school GSA advisor for 16 years, served on NJEA's Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee and received NJEA's Equality Champion Award.

Allison Connolly (she/her) is a veteran educator and president of the Township of Ocean School Education Association. She also serves as the chair of the New Jersey Advisory Commission on Advancing LGBTQIA+ Youth Equity and Inclusion in Schools and as a member of the NJDOE Commission on Holocaust Education.

Amy: True, but these federal policies' implications and shifting cultural norms are concerning. "The American Dream" is now elusive, resulting in worsening outcomes for future generations, severe economic inequality, and the erosion of civil rights, social safety nets, and even basic empathy for others.

Allison: Yes. Schools have been safe places where free public education helps students achieve upward economic mobility. But when kids don't feel safe coming to school, we see increasing rates of absenteeism and dropouts. 2024 data indicates that 57% of New Jersey's LGBTQIA+ youth experienced harassment related to their sexual orientation or gender identity. It feels like we're going backwards.

Amy: I hope teachers continue using LGBTQIA+ affirming pedagogies—like the New Jersey mandate requires—to support trans, nonbinary and queer kids who may now be less likely to confide privately in teachers and counselors, given the rhetoric they may hear on the news.

Allison: Students also know not all teachers are invested in creating a safe environment, which impacts their ability to learn and thrive.

Amy: So what are some things we can actually do?

Allison: Remember that if you're aligning your pedagogy to state standards and mandates, no one can push back on your instructional content.

Amy: And although the U.S. Supreme Court recently ruled that families of K-5 students can opt out of LGBTQIA+ affirming literature, include it nevertheless. And New Jersey's mandates still say that students in grades 6-12 are to receive affirming content about the contributions of LGBTQIA+ people.

Allison: Also, the New Jersey Commissions exist to support teachers in their pedagogies around marginalized communities, supporting our instruction of social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies as well.

Amy: While it's pretty brutal at times, it's important that we stay aware of cultural and political developments in this unprecedented era of harmful change.

Allison: Overall, it's about impact. Even one supportive adult can help students thrive in adversity. Maintaining an environment that is conducive for all students, regardless of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity/expression, their skin color or languages, their documentation status, their food insecurity and more makes good teaching and yields excellent outcomes.

STAFF NEWS

HIRES AND PROMOTIONS



NJEA welcomed **AIAT "AYA" ORABY** as the editor of the NJEA Review on Aug. 1. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Oraby had been a special education teacher/resource in the Paterson School District since May 2017. She holds a master's degree in special education from Montclair State

University, with a focus on inclusive education. Before transitioning into education, Oraby built a distinguished career as a television presenter, political analyst and journalist, writing over 13,000 articles on critical Middle Eastern issues. She served as editor-in-chief of the first bilingual Arab American women's magazine and hosted a program on Al Jazeera analyzing international media coverage of Middle East affairs. Her commentary has been featured on multiple global news outlets.

In addition to her work in education and media, Oraby is a committed union leader. She served as a senior delegate in her school, an NJEA Delegate Assembly member for two years, an executive board member of the Passaic County Education Association and a member of NJEA's Minority Leadership Committee. She is also a former executive board member of the Paterson Education Association.

Oraby lives in Nutley with her husband and four children.



NJEA welcomed **AARON MCCLENDON** as an associate director in the Office of Policy and Politics in the Government Relations Division on June 2. Prior to joining NJEA staff, McClendon most recently worked as assistant director of the Princeton University Office of Government Affairs based in

Washington D.C., where he led advocacy campaigns and engaged members of Congress. He received his bachelor's degree in English language and literature with a double minor in political science and legal studies from Fairleigh Dickinson University. He earned a master's degree in public administration from the University of Pennsylvania. McClendon lives in New Brunswick.



NJEA welcomed **BRUCE APPEL** as chief-business services in the Accounting Office of the Business Division on Aug. 1. Appel has worked in accounting departments for more than 30 years in retail, research, and amenities and property management. He holds a bachelor's degree in accounting from The College of New Jersey. He lives in Monroe, Middlesex County.



NJEA welcomed **ROBERT "BOB" HOWE** as an associate director – senior information technology (IT) support specialist in the Information Systems Office in the Business Division on Aug. 1. Howe comes to NJEA with over 20 years of experience in the IT field. He last worked as an IT Services manager for a global firm specializing in outdoor/exterior products. He earned his bachelor's degree in computer science and information systems with a minor in business from Stockton University. Howe lives in Berlin with his partner, Crystal.



NJEA welcomed **DONALD "DJ" MILLER** as a computer technician in the Information Systems Office in the Business Division on Aug. 1. He is a familiar face at NJEA, have served first on a temporary status for the previous year. Miller has several years of experience as an IT technician for an IT Services and Solutions company serving customers in New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania and New York. He lives in Berlin with his family.



NJEA welcomed **AKWASI OSEI** as a bookkeeper in the Accounting Office of the Business Division on June 16. Osei has several years of experience in accounts payable and billing. He is currently pursuing his bachelor's degree in accounting from Lehman College/City University of New York.



NJEA welcomed **DANIELLE EARLE** as an associate director-video production in the Communications Division on June 4. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Earle worked as a digital media and filmmaking teacher at Orange High School. She had represented Essex County as a Delegate Assembly member since 2024. Last year,

she was appointed to the National Education Association Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Committee. Earle was honored with the NJEA Equality Champion Award in 2024 and the Essex County Education Association (ECEA) LGBTQIA+ Justice Advocacy Award in 2023 for her commitment to equity and inclusion. As a member of the ECEA LGBTQ+ Committee, she worked with county and local association leaders to organize events and workshops.

Earle holds a bachelor's degree in animation and visual effects from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco and is currently pursuing a master's degree in teaching in special education at New Jersey City University.



NJEA welcomed **PATRICIA KEBRDLE** as a UniServ field rep in the Region 21 office in Livingston. Prior to joining NJEA full-time staff, Kebrdle was a social studies, special education and psychology teacher at Lakeland Regional High School in Wanaque, where she served as president of the Lakeland Education Association among other offices. She represented Passaic County on the NJEA Delegate Assembly, the Leadership Committee, the Budget Committee and the Congressional Contact Committee, which she chaired for 12 years.

For eight years, she served as the co-chair of the political action committee for NJEA's delegation to the NEA Representative Assembly. Since February 2014, Kebrdle was an NJEA UniServ consultant in the Region 21 office and, since December 2021, she was a consultant in the Member and Political Organizing Office of the Government Relations Division.

Kebrdle earned her bachelor's degree in history education from Kings College and her teacher certifications in special education and psychology from Montclair State University. She lives in Wanaque with her husband, Rich, and their two children, Rich and Emily.

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SEPTEMBER 2025

- 15 Degrees Not Debt:** Student Loan Debt Relief @ 5 & 7 p.m.
- 17 What You Should Know About 403(b) Retirement Plans** @ 4:30 p.m.
- 17 Ways to Pay for College:** FAFSA 101 @ 7 p.m.

OCTOBER 2025

- 1 Cost-Cutters:** How Your NJEA Member Benefits Save You Money @ 4:30 p.m.
- 8 What is Income Protection & Why is it Important?** @ 4:30 p.m.
- 8 Accessing Your Member Benefits & Ambassador Training** @ 7 p.m.

NOVEMBER 2025

- 12 Holiday Shopping & Car-Buying & Identity Theft Tips:** @ 4:30 p.m.
- 17 Degrees Not Debt:** Student Loan Debt Relief @ 5 & 7 p.m.
- 24 Road to Wellness:** Interactive Wellness Strategies @ 4:30 p.m.

JANUARY 2026

- 7 Travel Planning** @ 4:30 p.m.
- 12 Degrees Not Debt:** Student Loan Debt Relief @ 5 & 7 p.m.
- 21 Dollars & Sense:** Meeting Your Personal Finance Goals @ 4:30 p.m.
- 24 Ways to Pay for College:** FAFSA 101 @ 10 a.m.

FEBRUARY 2026

- 4 Unlocking Member Benefits** for NJREA Members @ 10 a.m.
- 5 Formas de pagar la Universidad:** FAFSA 101 (Español) @ 7 p.m.
- 11 Ambassador Training:** We LOVE Our Ambassadors @ 7 p.m.

MARCH 2026

- 4 NJEA Homebuying Helpers** @ 4:30 p.m.
- 16 Degrees Not Debt:** Student Loan Debt Relief @ 5 & 7 p.m.
- 18 Ways to Pay for College:** FAFSA 101 @ 7 p.m.

APRIL 2026

- 2 Cost-Cutters:** How Your NJEA Member Benefits Save You Money @ 4:30 p.m.
- 9 Ambassador Training:** Planning for Next Year @ 7 p.m.

MAY 2026

- 11 Degrees Not Debt:** Student Loan Debt Relief @ 5 & 7 p.m.
- 13 Summer Savings & Car-Buying Tips** @ 4:30 p.m.
- 27 What You Should Know About 403(b) Retirement Plans** @ 4:30 p.m.

OTHER RESOURCES

Retirement Planning & MBOS:
njea.org/retirement-planning

Professional development virtual webinars:

[Learning.njea.org](https://learning.njea.org)

QUESTIONS or recordings? Contact Beth Buonsante
at bbuonsante@njea.org

revised 5/16/2025

NJEA BUDGET SUMMARY

FISCAL YEAR
ENDING AUGUST 31

PROPOSED INCOME AND EXPENDITURES (EXCLUSIVE OF PRIDE)

	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Prop Budget	Budget Variance
INCOME				
NJEA Membership Dues	\$ 130,578,885	133,985,770	139,291,110	3.96%
NEA Funds	5,482,726	6,074,000	5,524,000	-9.05%
General Income	16,043,345	2,193,630	2,252,290	2.67%
Publications	157,694	185,000	175,000	-5.41%
TOTAL INCOME	152,262,650	142,438,400	147,242,400	3.37%
EXPENDITURES				
PROGRAM SERVICES				
Governance	5,964,758	5,902,000	6,181,200	4.73%
Legal Services	12,573,586	13,307,900	13,355,200	0.36%
Organizational Activities	2,497,945	4,583,200	5,365,000	17.06%
Organizational Projects	8,534,061	36,750,000	7,000,000	-80.95%
Communications	6,448,675	7,159,600	6,937,600	-3.10%
Government Relations	4,872,521	5,758,100	6,030,100	4.72%
Organizational Development	5,265,747	5,919,600	5,945,500	0.44%
UniServ Regional Offices	23,709,530	26,452,700	27,111,200	2.49%
UniServ Field Office	8,415,139	8,614,700	8,815,200	2.33%
Prof Development	4,558,391	5,051,100	4,971,900	-1.57%
Research & Economic Services	6,243,735	6,599,300	6,442,400	-2.38%
Conventions	3,597,685	3,777,100	3,794,100	0.45%
Organizational Mgmt	8,226,800	8,488,100	8,688,100	2.36%
Membership Organizing	155,367	340,500	433,500	27.31%
ADMINISTRATIVE & GENERAL				
Executive Office	6,135,830	6,971,900	7,710,500	10.59%
Business and Finance	17,301,986	19,092,900	19,730,500	3.34%
TOTAL PROGRAM, ADMINISTRATIVE & GENERAL EXPENDITURES	124,501,757	164,768,700	138,512,000	-15.94%
NET INCOME BEFORE USE OF FUNDS	27,760,893	(22,330,300)	8,730,400	-139.10%
USE OF FUNDS				
Current Postretirement	323,593	500,000	500,000	0.00%
VEBA - Cash Funding Adj	11,445,433	11,060,200	10,930,400	-1.17%
Pension - Cash Funding Adj	(2,195,147)	(3,360,000)	(2,700,000)	-19.64%
	9,573,879	8,200,200	8,730,400	6.47%
NET INCOME (EXP) CASH BUDGET	18,187,013	(30,530,500)	-	-100.00%
ADJ BACK TO ACCR'L REPORTING				
VEBA - Cash Funding Adj	(11,445,433)	(11,060,200)	(10,930,400)	-1.17%
Pension - Cash Funding Adj	2,195,147	3,360,000	2,700,000	-19.64%
	(9,250,286)	(7,700,200)	(8,230,400)	6.89%
NET INCOME ACCRUAL BASIS	<u>27,437,299</u>	<u>(22,830,300)</u>	<u>8,230,400</u>	<u>-136.05%</u>

NJEA OTHER FUNDS: PRIDE DUES

	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Prop Budget	Budget Variance
REVENUE				
Dues	\$ 13,190,291	\$13,511,100	\$14,021,800	3.78%
TOTAL REVENUE	13,190,291	13,511,100	14,021,800	3.78%
EXPENDITURES				
Communication 3650	8,296,549	8,348,500	8,348,500	0.00%
Organizing 3907	4,965,701	5,162,600	5,673,300	9.89%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	13,262,250	13,511,100	14,021,800	3.78%
INCREASE IN NET ASSETS	<u>(71,959)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0.00%</u>

COMPARATIVE INCOME

	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Prop Budget	Budget Variance
DUES INCOME				
Active Professional	\$ 113,954,716	\$116,739,000	\$121,618,000	4.18%
Active Supportive	15,786,539	16,551,900	17,003,000	2.73%
Retired Members	831,072	691,870	667,110	-3.58%
General Members	4,250	2,500	2,500	0.00%
Subscribing Members	1,750	500	500	0.00%
Aspiring Members	558	0	0	0.00%
TOTAL MEMBERSHIP DUES	130,578,885	133,985,770	139,291,110	3.96%
NEA FUNDS				
Uniserv Grant	3,169,705	3,417,000	3,517,000	2.93%
Uniserv Option Program	400,000	407,000	407,000	0.00%
Legal Defense (DuShane)	1,049,833	1,500,000	1,500,000	0.00%
Legal Fee Reimbursements	30,953	50,000	30,000	-40.00%
Member Benefits Grant	96,913	70,000	70,000	0.00%
Cooperative Projects	733,668	630,000	0	-100.00%
Travel Expense Reimb	0	0	0	0.00%
Preservice Reimbursement	1,653	0	0	0.00%
TOTAL NEA FUNDS	5,482,726	6,074,000	5,524,000	-9.05%
GENERAL INCOME				
Convention Exhibits & Fees	392,274	406,500	437,000	7.50%
Interest & Investments	14,376,314	500,000	500,000	0.00%
Conference & Workshop Fees	1,014,247	960,000	986,000	2.71%
Teacher Leader Academy	61,710	156,000	156,000	0.00%
Member Benefits Income	49,409	30,000	30,000	0.00%
Grant Income	100,000	100,000	100,000	0.00%
Miscellaneous	49,391	41,130	43,290	5.25%
TOTAL GENERAL INCOME	16,043,345	2,193,630	2,252,290	2.67%
PUBLICATIONS INCOME	157,694	185,000	175,000	-5.41%
TOTAL INCOME PROJECTION	<u>152,262,650</u>	<u>142,438,400</u>	<u>147,242,400</u>	<u>3.37%</u>

NJEA OTHER FUNDS: CAPITAL ASSETS

	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Prop Budget	Budget Variance
REVENUE				
Investment Income	\$ 6,682,811	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	0.00%
TOTAL REVENUE	6,682,811	500,000	500,000	0.00%
EXPENDITURES				
Capital Assets	6,622,909	5,933,300	7,235,100	21.94%
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	6,622,909	5,933,300	7,235,100	21.94%
INCR/(DECR) IN NET ASSETS	<u>59,902</u>	<u>(5,433,300)</u>	<u>(6,735,100)</u>	<u>23.96%</u>

PROPOSED EXPENDITURES

	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Prop Budget	Budget Variance
GOVERNANCE				
Executive Committee 0400	\$ 3,130,645	2,813,000	2,962,000	5.30%
Delegate Assembly 0410	280,474	345,000	358,000	3.77%
Elections 0430	349,981	352,000	352,000	0.00%
Officers 0440	2,007,983	2,058,600	2,208,900	7.30%
Committees 1400	195,675	333,400	300,300	-9.93%
TOTAL	5,964,758	5,902,000	6,181,200	4.73%
ORGANIZATIONAL ACTIVITIES:				
Organizational Activities 0470	1,953,814	3,683,200	4,525,000	22.86%
Human/Civil Rights and Equity 0450	269,433	530,000	540,000	1.89%
Equity Alliance Conference 0455	274,698	280,000	210,000	-25.00%
Celebration of Women 0458		90,000	90,000	0.00%
TOTAL	2,497,945	4,583,200	5,365,000	17.06%
ORGANIZATIONAL PROJ 0471	8,534,061	36,750,000	7,000,000	-80.95%
LEGAL SERVICES PROG 0465	12,573,586	13,307,900	13,355,200	0.36%
ORGANIZATIONAL MGMT 0565	8,226,800	8,488,100	8,688,100	2.36%
COMMUNICATIONS				
Communications Office 0600	4,712,859	5,110,200	4,908,900	-3.94%
Other Services 0605	112,050	252,000	252,000	0.00%
Consultants 0615	92,891	170,400	149,700	-12.15%
Review 0660	1,449,849	1,627,000	1,627,000	0.00%
Women in Edu Celebration 0680	81,026			0.00%
TOTAL	6,448,675	7,159,600	6,937,600	-3.10%
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS				
Gov Relations Office 0700	4,059,927	4,546,300	4,861,300	6.93%
Legislative Field Proj 0720	752,039			0.00%
Legislative Initiatives 0725		1,100,000	1,055,000	-4.09%
Legislative Publications 0730	21,853	33,000	35,000	6.06%
Consultants 0740	38,703	78,800	78,800	0.00%
TOTAL	4,872,521	5,758,100	6,030,100	4.72%
UNISERV PROGRAM REGIONAL OFFICES				
Regional Offices 0899	21,349,378	23,686,900	24,372,100	2.89%
01 Galloway 0800	188,985	187,800	196,900	4.85%
02 Mullica Hill 0805	219,894	207,100	211,400	2.08%
03 Mt Laurel 0810	195,366	241,700	246,500	1.99%
05 Morrestown 0815	15,005			0.00%
07 Toms River 0820	128,936	134,300	136,500	1.64%
08 Trenton 0823	9,784	14,300	14,300	0.00%
09 Wall Twp 0825	154,071	163,500	168,100	2.81%
11 Edison 0830	250,246	248,500	254,300	2.33%
13 Clinton 0835	136,010	230,900	236,800	2.56%
15 Cranford 0840	134,535	160,000	160,500	0.31%
17 Rockaway 0845	63,850	280,800	290,300	3.38%
19 W. New York 0850	95,852	105,300	107,100	1.71%
20 Jersey City 0852	135,548	181,900	147,400	-18.97%
21 Livingston 0855	184,979	199,900	200,400	0.25%
25 Hasbrouk Hgts 0865	209,143	222,200	227,100	2.21%
27 Wayne 0870	118,841	126,300	128,500	1.74%
28 Stanhope 0873	110,910	48,300		-100.00%
29 Higher Ed 0875	8,196	13,000	13,000	0.00%
TOTAL	23,709,530	26,452,700	27,111,200	2.49%
ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT:				
Organizational Dev Office 0900	2,629,478	2,612,900	2,742,000	4.94%
Organizational Dev Field 0904	5,841	24,000	24,000	0.00%
Organizational Dev Program 0905	402,603	378,000	358,000	-5.29%
Active Supportive 0910	357,381	421,000	421,000	0.00%
FAST Program 0915	19,733	50,000	50,000	0.00%
Conference Expenses 0920	403,172	488,400	510,000	4.42%
ESP & Inclusive Org 0930	62,139	106,200	106,200	0.00%
Summer Leadership Conf 0955	1,051,840	1,403,800	1,403,800	0.00%
Leadership Operations 0965	28,352	64,800	70,000	8.02%
Membership Recruitment 0977	4,845	20,000	20,000	0.00%
Membership Promotion 0980	1,931			0.00%
Members of Color Initiative 0985	298,432	350,500	240,500	-31.38%
TOTAL	5,265,747	5,919,600	5,945,500	0.44%

	2024 Actual	2025 Budget	2026 Prop Budget	Budget Variance
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT				
Prof Develop Office 1000	2,985,630	3,145,100	3,435,900	9.25%
PD Learning 1005	143,275	298,000	368,000	23.49%
PD Capacity Bldg 1010	173,458	440,000		-100.00%
Training Consultants 1075	378,050	332,500	332,500	0.00%
ACCESS Program 1080	506,132	423,000	423,000	0.00%
Teacher Leader Academy 1085	172,087	167,500	167,500	0.00%
Prof Development Conf 1097	199,761	245,000	245,000	0.00%
TOTAL	4,558,391	5,051,100	4,971,900	-1.57%
RESEARCH & ECONOMIC SERVICES				
Research Office 1100	5,574,459	5,728,300	5,571,400	-2.74%
Research Services 1105	188,474	229,500	229,500	0.00%
Member Benefits 1110	324,229	456,000	456,000	0.00%
Research Conference 1115	133,886	160,000	160,000	0.00%
Research Library 1120	22,687	25,500	25,500	0.00%
TOTAL	6,243,735	6,599,300	6,442,400	-2.38%
UNISERV FIELD				
Uniserv Field Directors 1200	3,471,929	3,731,800	3,896,900	4.42%
Uniserv - South 1201	13,686	14,700	14,700	0.00%
Uniserv - Central 1202	8,200	14,800	14,800	0.00%
Uniserv - Northwest 1203	5,820	15,900	15,900	0.00%
Uniserv - Northeast 1204	14,369	18,800	18,800	0.00%
Uniserv Field Program 1205	530,021	554,100	524,100	-5.41%
Field Consultants 1240	2,561,750	2,300,000	2,374,200	3.23%
Strengthening Locals 1250	646,756	1,030,000	1,030,000	0.00%
Higher Education 1260	72,686	114,600	105,800	-7.68%
Leadership Operations 1265	1,089,922	820,000	820,000	0.00%
TOTAL	8,415,139	8,614,700	8,815,200	2.33%
CONVENTIONS				
NJEA 1095	2,379,444	2,545,100	2,475,100	-2.75%
NEA 0475	1,218,241	1,232,000	1,319,000	7.06%
TOTAL	3,597,685	3,777,100	3,794,100	0.45%
MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZING				
Membership Organizing 0532	108,064	240,000	240,000	0.00%
Aspiring Educators 0535	47,304	100,500	103,000	2.49%
Future Educators 0537			90,500	0.00%
TOTAL	155,367	340,500	433,500	27.31%
ADMINISTRATIVE & GENERAL				
Executive Office 0435	4,505,031	5,093,900	5,677,500	11.46%
Administration 0460	1,499,174	1,671,000	1,816,000	8.68%
Personnel 0480	131,625	207,000	217,000	4.83%
TOTAL	6,135,830	6,971,900	7,710,500	10.59%
BUSINESS & FINANCE				
Business Office 0500	8,985,593	9,885,800	10,042,700	1.59%
Accounting 0510	7,303	8,000	8,000	0.00%
Contract Obligations 0515	1,059,753	1,000,000	1,000,000	0.00%
Computer Center 0520	3,940,755	4,712,000	4,809,700	2.07%
Membership Processing 0530	311,350	275,500	275,500	0.00%
Headquarters Operation 0540	2,269,271	2,268,700	2,516,100	10.90%
Mail Room & Production 0550	53,899	180,000	192,900	7.17%
Financial Admin Fees 0580	264,760	240,000	325,000	35.42%
Insurances 0585	409,303	522,900	560,600	7.21%
TOTAL	17,301,986	19,092,900	19,730,500	3.34%

NJEA Delegate Assembly

The NJEA Delegate Assembly met at the Hyatt Regency, New Brunswick, 2 Albany Street, New Brunswick, N.J. on May 20, 2023, at 9:30 a.m.

The meeting was called to order by President Sean M. Spiller.

The roll call and the seating of delegates was taken by Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson. There were 116 members present and a quorum was met. Alternates were seated as follows: A. Policastro for Murphy, (Bergen); Hewitt for Chiavuzzo (Burlington); Johnson for Hinton (Essex);

Healey for Kosar (Gloucester); Simonitis for Del Popolo (Middlesex); Mitchell-Hall for Perez Gani (Union); and Helff for Farhat (Higher Ed).

Absent without alternates were the following: Houk (Atlantic); Myers (Camden); Curry (Hudson); King (Monmouth); Bakker (Sussex); and Ferlise (Higher Ed).

Lori Lalama from Passaic County, gave the Inspirational Message and along with President Spiller, led the delegation in the Flag Salute.

President's report

Spiller thanked everyone for reaching out to him with condolences on the passing of his father.

- Spiller highlighted the following:
- Government Relations updates
- NJEA PAC status
- Budget work
- Election updates
- SBOE Meeting updates
- News from around the state

Spiller asked NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty to introduce the 2023-24 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year, Christine Girtain, who teaches high school science at Toms River High School North and Toms River High School South in Toms River, N.J. Beatty welcomed her, and she was presented with flowers and the N.J. State Teacher of the Year ring.

Vice president's report

Vice President Steve Beatty highlighted the following:

- NJEA Preservice and educator identification, recruitment, mentoring and retention
- Center for Future Educators
- Educator Shortage and Task Force
- Organizing for Education (O4Ed)
- Retiree Membership drive
- ESP Outreach
- O4Ed Summer Program Recruitment
- Higher education
- Dept. of Ed., and State Bd. of Ed.
- Affiliated Special Interest Groups
- SEL4NJ
- ACES

Secretary-treasurer's report

Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson delivered the NJEA fiscal report.

Robertson highlighted the following:

- Good News
- President's Meeting Design Team
- Budget Committee
- HCR, Equity, and Governance Listening Sessions
- Bergen/Passaic County Overnight

- Education Law Center
- Legislative/Human & Civil Rights Advocacy
- Member Engagement
- Awards and Honors

Executive Director's report

- Executive Director Kevin Kelleher highlighted the following: Recognized staff for their years of service.
- Affirmative Action Report, and
- Updates on the CA Casualty exit from NJ.

Nondelegate speakers

Joseph Landolfi, Middlesex County, spoke passionately in support of LGBTQIA+ students. He urged NJEA to publicly oppose discriminatory policies being enacted by some school boards, such as those requiring educators to disclose students' gender identity or sexual orientation to parents. Landolfi emphasized that such policies jeopardize student safety and violate the inclusive environment educators strive to create. He called on NJEA to take a strong, vocal stance to protect vulnerable students and uphold the values of equity and inclusion in New Jersey schools.

John Coniglio, from Morris County and president of the Dover Education Association, reflected on his journey with NJEA. He shared that his first experience speaking at the Delegate Assembly was nearly seven years ago, encouraged by Kathy Paterek, who later became a prominent member of the DA. Coniglio expressed deep appreciation for the NJEA community, describing it as his second family. He announced that this meeting would be his last as a nondelegate speaker, as he had been elected to serve as a Delegate Assembly member starting in September. He thanked NJEA leadership and staff for always responding to his comments and concerns and gave heartfelt recognition to Kathy Paterek for her mentorship and friendship.

Joe Toma, Middlesex County, president of the Piscataway Township Education Association and a board member in Rahway, spoke out against Title IX violations and discriminatory rhetoric targeting LGBTQ+ students. He described a disturbing experience at a recent State Board of Education hearing, where a group called "Protect Your Children" made harmful and false claims about LGBTQ+ identities. Toma shared his personal experiences as a gay Puerto Rican educator and emphasized the need for NJEA to stand firmly against such attacks and continue advocating for inclusive and protective policies for vulnerable student communities.

Reports of committees without recommendations

None

Reports of committees with recommendations

Delegate Assembly Rules Committee

Kathy Paterek, Morris County presented the D.A. Rules Committee's two proposed amendments to the rules of procedure, both intended to streamline operations and enhance member input. The first recommendation aimed to move the deadline for submitting New Business Items to two days before the meeting, allowing more time for research and budget analysis. The second recommendation proposed limiting nondelegate members from participating in floor debates, reserving their input for a designated time. Both proposals sparked significant debate among delegates, with concerns raised about limiting member voices and democratic participation. Ultimately, both recommendations were voted down by the assembly.

Budget Committee

Petal Robertson, Essex County, secretary-treasurer, presented the report of the Budget Committee with the following recommendations:

1. Recommendation No. 1: Adopt the NJEA operating budget for the 2023–24 fiscal year in the amount of \$140,936,900.
2. Recommendation No. 2: Adopt the NJEA Pride public relations budget for the 2023–24 fiscal year in the amount of \$12,961,900.
3. Recommendation No. 3: Adopt the NJEA Capital Fund budget for the 2023–24 fiscal year in the amount of \$6,729,100.
4. Recommendation No. 4: Ensure that no cost center is overspent without review by the Budget Committee and action by the Delegate Assembly or Executive Committee.
5. Recommendation No. 5: Require the Secretary/Treasurer to notify the Budget Committee of any over-budget lines in the audit prior to its presentation at the December meeting.

A motion to move 1-5 of the budget recommendations in block was made. All were in favor of recommendations 1-5, and the motion carried.

6. Recommendation No. 6: Transfer \$30,000 from Organizational Activities to Delegate Assembly to cover increased meeting costs.
7. Recommendation No. 7: Transfer \$225,000 from Organizational Activities to NJEA Review to cover increased printing and labor costs.
8. Recommendation No. 8: Transfer \$40,000 from Organizational Activities to Communications Conference to support the Women in Education Conference.

A motion to move 6-8 of the budget transfer recommendations in block was made. All were in favor of the budget transfer recommendations 6-8, and the motion carried.

Certification, Evaluation, and Tenure Committee

Dayna Orlak, Bergen County, chair of the Certification, Evaluation, and Tenure Committee presented the report and moved the recommendation of the committee.

RECOMMENDATION:

NJEA believes that high-quality mentoring programs benefit all stakeholders by promoting educator retention and reinforcing high-quality instruction.

The following list of best practices should be incorporated into every district's mentoring plan:

- Mentors and mentees should work in the same building and teach similar subjects.
- Mentors and mentees should be given time to meet during the contractual school day.
- Mentors must be granted additional release time to conduct informal, non-evaluative observations of the mentee's instructional practice.
- Districts should be responsible for paying fees to mentors. Mentees should not pay for state-mandated mentoring.
- Ongoing professional development should be provided to mentors on topics that will make them better able to support novice teachers. Mentors should play an active role in assessing what experiences best address their professional learning needs.
- Those who plan to retire midyear or take a leave of absence

should not serve as mentors that year. In the event of an unexpected or unplanned leave or retirement, the district must ensure the continuity of the novice teacher's mentoring program.

- After the conclusion of the state-mandated novice mentoring program, districts should continue offering tiered mentoring to second- and third-year teachers.

All were in favor of the recommendation, and the recommendation was adopted. New Business

New Business

New Business Item #1

Dan Epstein, Somerset County, moved that at future Delegate Assembly meetings, the DA should receive the most recent quarterly financial reports for any funds overseen by NJEA or its entities that are primarily supported by donations. These funds include, but are not limited to, the Paul Dimitriadis Member Rights Fund, the NJEA Hardship Relief Program, the NJEA PAC Fund, and the Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education.

The motion was seconded and passed.

New Business Item #2

Steve Koumoulois, Monmouth County, moved that the NJEA issue a statement that supports the New Jersey attorney general's actions:

- Opposing discriminatory actions against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, asexual, and intersex (LGBTQAI+) students;
- Opposing a school district policy requiring school staff to notify parents of their children's gender identity and sexual orientation;
- Reaffirming support for inclusive curriculum mandates and the N.J. Department of Education's Guidance on Transgender Students in Schools.

The statement further should:

- Recognize that discriminatory policies against LGBTQAI+ individuals negatively affect students, families, and all educational professionals;
- Be shared with the media and members through Association internal and external communication media.

A friendly amendment was suggested that the motion read "that NJEA continues to issue statements."

All were in favor and the motion carried.

For the Good of the Order

Sue McBride, Bergen County, recognized Sue Avallone for her dedicated leadership, service, and advocacy. Her contributions were warmly acknowledged and appreciated by her colleagues.

Chris Cannella, Essex County, thanked everyone for the success of last weekend's SOGI conference, and thanked everyone for passing the NBI.

Warren, Bergen County, asked about the potential members, and asked for a breakdown on the categories they belong to.

James Frazier, Union County, thanked everyone for getting the word out for the PERS Board and stated that the ballots would go out on June 2, and stated that it is an important election.

A motion to adjourn was made, and the motion was duly seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 1:27 p.m.

NJEA PDII Virtual Series

for fall and winter 2025

Join us as we delve into these topics



September 2025

- 8 – **Irrigating Book Deserts** presented by NJEA & BookSmiles
- 9 – **AI in Action: Enhancing Student Learning Through Artificial Intelligence** presented by NJEA PDII Consultants
- 25 – **Certification 101: A Panel for Novice Educators** presented by the NJEA PDII Policy Team
- 29 – **Teaching English Literacy Skills to SLIFE Students** presented by NJEA & NJTESOL/NJBE

October 2025

- 4 – **Black Boys: A Journey into Identity, Opportunity & Hope** presented by NJEA PDII Consultants
- 9 – **Thriving, Not Just Surviving: Strategies for Educators During Challenging Times** presented by PDII Community of Practice (CoP)
- 9 – **Leaning into AI** presented by PDII Community of Practice (CoP)
- 14 – **Turning Empathy into Social Action** presented by NJEA & TEEEM (The Empathy Equality Entrepreneurship Mission)
- 14 – **The Anxious Generation Book Club** presented by PDII Community of Practice (CoP)
- 14 – **Lead & Learn: A Community for Educator Leaders** presented by PDII Community of Practice (CoP)
- 16 – **Educator Evaluation in 2025 & Beyond** presented by NJEA PDII Policy Team
- 17 – **Laying the Foundation for Transformational Teaching – A series** presented by NJEA ACCESS Model & Konscious Youth Development and Services (KYDS)
- 28 – **Broadening Horizons: Highlighting the Diversity of Scientific Discovery** presented by NJEA & TEPUP (The E Pluribus Unum Project)

November 2025

- 10 – **Who We Are & What We Bring: A Journey into Bias & Belonging** presented by NJEA PDII Consultants
- 11 – **Lead & Learn: A Community for Educator Leaders** presented by PDII Community of Practice (CoP)
- 17 – **Reflective Listening: The key to productive conversation** presented by NJEA PDII Division
- 18 – **An Introduction to AI** presented by NJEA PDII Consultants

- 21 – **The Power of Mindfulness & Emotional Intelligence in Teaching** presented by The NJEA ACCESS Model & Konscious Youth Development and Services (KYDS)

- 24 – **Road to Wellness** presented by NJEA & Rutgers Behavioral Health

December 2025

- 2 – **Fostering a Sense of Belonging in Your Students** presented by NJEA & SEL4NJ
- 4 – **Using the Learning Forward Standards in the Classroom and Beyond** presented by PDII Policy Team
- 8 – **From Silence to Solidarity Confronting Microaggressions with Intention** presented by NJEA PDII Consultants
- 9 – **Lead & Learn: A Community for Educator Leaders** presented by PDII Community of Practice (CoP)
- 9 – **The Anxious Generation Book Club** presented by PDII Community of Practice (CoP)
- 11 – **Thriving, Not Just Surviving: Strategies for Educators During Challenging Times** presented by PDII Community of Practice (CoP)
- 11 – **Leaning into AI** presented by PDII Community of Practice (CoP)
- 15 – **Meeting People Where They Are: Building Bridges Across Differences** presented by NJEA & Answer
- 19 – **Managing Stress & Enhancing Emotional Well-Being** presented by the NJEA ACCESS Model and Konscious Youth Development and Services (KYDS)



SEPTEMBER & beyond

Visit njea.org/events for a full schedule NJEA meetings, conferences, and workshops.

 <p>FRIDAY SEP 05 Executive Committee meeting</p>	 <p>SATURDAY OCT 04 FAST Showcase Health and Safety Showcase</p>	 <p>WEDNESDAY NOV 05 Executive Committee meeting</p>
 <p>SATURDAY SEP 06 Delegate Assembly</p>	 <p>WEDNESDAY OCT 15 Executive Committee meeting</p>	 <p>WED & THURS NOV 05-06 NJREA Convention</p>
 <p>THURSDAY SEP 25 NJREA Fall Luncheon</p>	 <p>FRI & SAT OCT 24-25 Jim George Collective Summit</p>	 <p>THURS & FRI NOV 06-07 NJEA Convention</p>

For more information go to NJEA.org

The NJEA MOC Experience

(formerly MOC Network)



invites you to register for our

2025 FALL EMPOWERMENT CONFERENCE

10.18.25 | Mercer County Community College
West Windsor, N.J.



***NEW* workshops include:**

- **Passport to Power:** Unpacking Baggage and Unmasking Your Superpower
- **So You Think You Want to Run:** Lessons from a Sistah Who's Been there and Done That
- **From Presence to Power:** Transformational Leadership from Members of Color in NJEA
- **Reclaiming Joy:** An Act of Resistance
- **Think Healthy, Teach Healthy:** Empowering Educators through Wellness, Balance and Self-Care
- **But You're So Good With Them:** Educator Representation and Inequitable Workloads With High Needs Students

The MOC Experience ...

- ✓ *Activates* union members of marginalized communities
- ✓ *Educates* members of their rights and responsibilities
- ✓ *Challenges* educators to show up, step up, and "get out of the trunk"

Join us this October for an incredible day of fellowship and community!



REGISTRATION OPENS
SEPT. 1, 2025
<https://cvent.me/ZMDlz3>

POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Public education is shaped by political decisions—whether we think about politics or not. In this edition of the *Review*, you'll find a growing list of candidates endorsed by the NJEA Political Action Committee (NJEA PAC) for election to the New Jersey Legislature this fall. Many members wonder why NJEA would—or whether NJEA even should—endorse candidates. After all, it's likely that most teachers, educational support professionals and other public school employees did not enter the profession thinking about the role politics would play in their careers.

But there's no way around the enormous impact politics play in public education. Public schools are overseen by elected boards of education. School board members are accountable to the New Jersey Department of Education, which is led by a commissioner of education who is nominated by the governor and approved by the state Senate. The commissioner and the department are accountable to the State Board of Education, which is composed of members nominated by the governor and approved by the state Senate. The governor, legislators and school board members are all accountable to the voters.



If we are to have a seat at the table where the decisions affecting public schools are made, we must work to ensure that the politicians elected to sit at that same table support us and the students we serve.

All New Jersey public schools are funded through a combination of local property taxes and state and federal aid. Elected leaders at every level of government make decisions about the level of funding public schools receive—which means that your salary, health benefits and pension are in the hands of the people elected to serve at every level of government. Funding available for every program your school offers, from curriculum to school lunches to the services of nurses, librarians, secretaries, custodians and every other staffer it takes to run a school district, is decided by elected leaders.

We've seen the impact that the outcome of the 2024 presidential election has had on public school funding in New Jersey and across the nation. Through nearly all of July, billions of dollars in congressionally approved federal education grants to the states were withheld while the current administration made sure the funds weren't used for a "radical left-wing agenda."

And you don't have to be in New Jersey long to know that property taxes, a key source of school funding in this state, are a perennial political issue.

Achieving gains for NJEA members and their students

But politics isn't just about blocking the bad things that can happen. Politics is also about achieving the good things schools and the people who learn and work in them need. Page 18 of this edition of the *Review*, points to several legislative wins this year.

For the fifth consecutive year, Gov. Phil Murphy—whom NJEA endorsed and strongly supported—proposed, and the state Legislature approved, a full state pension contribution continuing to set the pension systems onto a path to long-term stability. The budget also restored \$20 million for community colleges, expansion of pre-k and student teacher stipends. All this adds up to over \$21.4 billion appropriated for public education in a \$58.8 billion budget.

NJEA member's political engagement played an essential role pausing the onerous data collection of student growth objectives (SGOs) for tenured teachers for another year while NJEA members remain part of the stakeholder team charged with overhauling New Jersey's teacher evaluation system. That ESPs have due process rights and protections against the subcontracting of their livelihoods are because of NJEA member's sustained engagement with politics.

This is why NJEA has an endorsement process to help elect pro-public education candidates. If we are to have a seat at the table where the decisions affecting public schools are made, we must work to ensure that the politicians elected to sit at that same table support us and the students we serve. 🇺🇸

School Meals Bring Balance to their Day!



Learning starts when hunger stops.

By supporting alternative meal solutions such as *Breakfast After the Bell*, you ensure all students are focused and ready to learn.

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NJEA Convention

Nov. 6-7, 2025



Book your hotel room for a discount rate

Want to reserve a room in Atlantic City for the NJEA Convention at a great rate? These eight hotels are offering member-only rates to help you save money while you enjoy the convenience of being close to everything the NJEA Convention and Atlantic City have to offer.

- Borgata (limited availability)
- Caesars
- Golden Nugget
- Hard Rock
- Harrah's
- Resorts
- Sheraton
- Tropicana

Shuttle service will be available from the hotels listed here.

Go to njeaconvention.org/hotels to check out the discount rates and to make your reservations.

You'll need to log in as a member to continue. Use your member PIN (found on your membership card) or the email address you've previously given NJEA and your password (the last four digits of your Social Security number, unless you've changed your password). Guaranteed shuttle service will be available to these hotels only.