

NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

REVIEW

APRIL
2026
njea.org



an education and advocacy resource



- 22** THE JERSEY SHORE IS THEIR CLASSROOM
- 26** FROM THE MILITARY TO MILLBRIDGE ELEMENTARY
- 30** THE POWER OF PAUSING
- 36** EVERY STUDENT DESERVES A WORLD LANGUAGE

*The Jersey Shore
is their classroom*

Laser Guided Navigation Sinus Procedure

One of NJ's first centers to own and utilize Brainlab's infrared optical tracking device for pinpoint sinus surgery accuracy.

Are Your **SINUSES SUFFERING** from:

1. More than two sinus infections per year?
2. Frequent trips to urgent care for endless antibiotics?
3. Chronic facial pressure and headaches?
4. Post nasal drip?
5. Runny nose?
6. Stuffy obstructed nose?
7. Chronic fatigue?
8. Snoring and or Sleep Apnea?
9. Allergy treatments not working?
10. Had balloon sinuplasty and it did not help?

If you answered yes to any of these questions we may be able to help with one of our many state-of-the-art surgical and non-surgical treatment solutions.



Frank J. Scaccia, MD FACS

- Top Nasal Surgeon NJ Monthly Magazine 2026
- American Board of Otolaryngology (ENT)
- American Board of Facial Plastic Surgery
- Top NYC Metro Doctor 2006-2025
- In-office NJ state licensed accredited Ambulatory Surgery Center
- Jack Anderson Prize award for highest score on the Facial Plastic Surgery board certifying exam



RIVERSIDE

NASAL & SINUS CENTER

70 E. Front St., 3rd Floor

Red Bank, NJ

732-747-5300

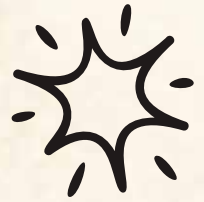
www.riversideface.com

**Accepts most out of network insurance plans including
Horizon Blue Cross, Cigna, Aetna, UnitedHealthcare and others.**

Please call our office for details. We are here to help make your health insurance work for you.



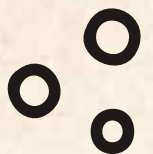
East Orange Maintenance Association (EOMA) President and 2025 NJEA Educational Support Professional of the Year Mark Richards reads to East Orange students at Wahlstrom Elementary School for Read Across NJ and America Day.



NJEA members celebrated at the NJEA ESP and Health & Safety conference.



2025-26 NJ State Teacher of the Year Gillian Ober took in a New Jersey Devils hockey game with the county teachers of the year and county educational support professionals of the year.



FEATURES

22 THE JERSEY SHORE IS THEIR CLASSROOM

Students at the Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Sciences learn marine science through fieldwork, research and conservation projects, exploring Jersey Shore ecosystems alongside expert educators.

By Kathryn Coulibaly



22

26 FROM THE MILITARY TO MILLBRIDGE ELEMENTARY

Thanks to Operation Socrates, a military veteran was able to explore teaching, gaining hands-on classroom experience in Delran before she transitioned out of military service.

By Kathryn Coulibaly



26

30 THE POWER OF PAUSING

With the power of a breath, we can unlock diffuse thinking, leading to improved classroom learning, well-being, focus, joy and student engagement.

By Glen Coleman



30

32 EVERY STUDENT DESERVES A WORLD LANGUAGE

Expanding early, equitable world language education strengthens brains, boosts opportunities, supports diverse communities and ensures all New Jersey students graduate globally ready.

By Javier A. Hernandez

32



COLUMNS

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 7
Finding our stride

THE ADVOCATE 8
Resources for your local association

BULLETIN BOARD 10
Cool stuff to check out

A+ EFFORT 12
How pageantry and education intersect

EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS 13
ESPs members' stories

LAW AND YOU 15
Legal issues affecting NJEA members

THE NJEA REPORT 16
Education in the news

HEALTH AND SAFETY 42
Union power works for members

RETIRED MEMBERS 44
News and events

ASPIRING EDUCATORS 46
News and events

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT 47
The Transform conference

SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY 48
Workshops and conferences

GOVERNANCE 50
Delegate Assembly minutes

COLLABORATION CORNER 53
Labor Management Collaborative

MEMBER BENEFITS 55
Get your money's worth

COMING UP 57
What's next at NJEA

FINAL EXAM 58
Education requires truth

The number 250

The number of NJEA members who previously served in the Armed Forces and who are now members of the NJEA Patriots Alliance. Learn more about the alliance at njea.org/patriots.

Source: NJEA Patriots Alliance.



Did you know?

✦ The NJEA Income Protection Program protects members during an illness or accident. View the latest information on disability insurance plans, watch videos and explore practical tools and wellness resources, designed just for NJEA members at Prudential.com/NJEA. Have questions? Call an NJEA account executive at 800-727-3414 and choose Option 3.



Students at the Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science seine in Barnegat Bay.

PHOTO BY
Kathryn Coulibaly

REVIEW



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

President: Steve Beatty | Vice President: Petal Robertson | Secretary-Treasurer: Tina Dare
Executive Director: Kevin Kelleher | Deputy Executive Director: Denise Graff Policastro

VOLUME 99
NUMBER 09

Editorial Director Steven Baker
Art Director Gregg Poserina
Graphic Designer Jennifer Larson
Advertising Sara B. Ream

EDITORIAL & PUBLISHING OFFICES

The *New Jersey Education Association Review* (ISSN-0027-6758) is an official publication of the New Jersey Education Association, published monthly 10 times a year, September through June, plus one special *New Jersey Education Association Review* Convention issue, which will be published in September. Send correspondence relating to editorial material, manuscripts, membership or subscriptions to: 180 W. State St., P.O. Box 1211, Trenton, NJ 08607-1211. Periodicals postage paid at Trenton, NJ 08650 and at additional mailing offices. Email: NJEAReview@NJEA.org

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Chairperson: Steve Tetreault, Holmdel; Amanda Best, West Orange; Hussain Haqq, Trenton; Antonio Hernandez, NJAEA; Enrique Manlapid, Chatham; Linda Miller, Jersey City; Claudette Peterkin, Englewood; Salvatore Randazzo, Deptford; Miriam Reichenbach, retired; Sonya Squitieri, Passaic; Rebecca Zarabi, Summit.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Atlantic: Melissa Tomlinson; Bergen: Susan McBride, John Sassi; Burlington: Tamara Beatty; Camden: Laurie T. Gibson-Parker; Cape May: Tammi Lee; Cumberland: Lou Russo; Essex: Sharon Ortiz; Gloucester: Ryan Griffin; Hudson: Diane MacKay; Hunterdon: Susan Vala; Mercer: Christine Sampson-Clark; Middlesex: Jennifer Herrick, Melissa Vega; Monmouth: Steven Koumoulis; Morris: Kerri Lee Farrell; Ocean: Lisa Simone; Passaic: Marco Martinez; Salem: Colleen Gilmartin; Somerset: Amy Salinger; Sussex: Carla Mancuso; Union: Ann-Margaret Shannon; Warren: Laurie O'Brien; Higher Education: Tobyn DeMarco; Retired: Kitty Sausa; Non-classroom Teacher: Marie Battist-Rock; NJAEA: Madison Baca. ESP at-large: Keith Coston Jr.; Immediate past president: Sean M. Spiller
NEA State Directors: Brenda Brathwaite, Theresa Fuller, Laurie Gibson-Parker, Lauren Greenfield, Christine Hewitt, Temika Langston-Myers, Mark Richards, Barbara Rheault, Stacy Yanko. ESP-at-Large: Charles E. Wilson III.

ADVERTISING

Advertising is printed as a service to readers but does not imply endorsement.

Submitted content reflects the opinions of the contributors.

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to:

New Jersey Education Association Review
Attn: Membership Processing
180 W. State St., P. O. Box 1211
Trenton, NJ 08607-1211

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 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



Finding our stride

A renewed energy fills the air. I am sure you can feel it just like I do. The flowers bloom around us, and the natural world awakens after a colder-than-normal winter. With this sense of rejuvenation, I am taking time to reflect on my work as an educator, advocate and union member. And I encourage you, as an NJEA member, to do the same. As our classrooms thaw from a long, cold winter, it's time for us to find the energy within us to be the change we wish to see within our school communities and advocate for the issues that matter to us.

Spring is a season for growth, for ourselves and for our profession. Together, we can accomplish anything we set our minds and our might to. It is incumbent upon each of us to work to achieve our goals. Building authentic and sustained labor power is not easy. That's why we offer events and training to include all members. This month, we will be hosting four conferences: the NJEA Celebration of Women, NJEA Equity Alliance, the NJEA Aspiring Educators Conference, and the NJEA Transform Conference.

The best part? NJEA members have played an integral role in the planning of these conferences to ensure the courses offered are relevant and worthwhile.

Hundreds of NJEA members are registered for these conferences, a testament to their unwavering commitment. We are always ready to learn and to grow. Another opportunity is coming up this summer at the 2026 NJEA Jack Bertolino Summer Leadership Conference, the premier advocacy event for our union. You can learn more about the workshops offered this year in this issue of the *Review*.

As educators, we tend to reinvent ourselves each year. We, like the world around us, bloom into new versions of ourselves, and, in this issue, you'll find inspiration and ideas to help you on your journey.

In solidarity,



officers online

STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

SteveBeattyNJEA: Devils win!!! And not because they beat the Florida Panthers but because they hosted and honored our county and state teachers and ESPs of the year at the Rock last night! Great atmosphere for our beloved members as they were treated to a pre-game reception, followed by face time on the Jumbotron for all to see! And then - a fun game!

Thank you, New Jersey Devils, and congrats again to all of our honorees and our members from all around the state who came to support! #SolidarityForever

On March 4, NJEA President Steve Beatty shared photos from Educator Appreciation Night with the New Jersey Devils. During the March 3 Devils vs. Panthers game at the Prudential Center, New Jersey State Teacher of the Year Gillian Ober, NJEA ESP of the Year Angela Feliciano and all of the County Teachers and ESPs of the Year were honored on the Jumbotron. Educators in attendance were invited onto the ice for a postgame photo and received a tote bag.

PETAL ROBERTSON

Facebook

@PetalforNJEA: What better way to kick off Read Across America than with Giants football star Andrew Thomas and NJEA star Mark Richards. Richards was named the NY Giants Educator of the Year! What a great way to start a great week!

On March 3, NJEA Vice President Petal Robertson shared photos highlighting this year's NJEA-New York Giants Educator of the Year recipient Mark Richards, who accepted a \$2,500 donation from the team to the East Orange School District. It was presented by the Giant's offensive tackle Andre Thomas at Wahlstrom Elementary School in East Orange on March 2. While there, Thomas also read a book to the students in honor of Read Across New Jersey and America Day.

TINA DARE

Facebook

@TinaDareforNJEA: So proud to be in Arizona at the NEA Retired Conference. Our NJREA leaders showed up strong — advocating, organizing, and sharing the incredible work happening back home. They even presented on innovative ways to grow retiree membership and deepen engagement, proving that union power doesn't retire — it evolves. Special thanks to Kitty and Marybeth for your leadership, passion, and commitment to keeping our retirees connected and active.

On March 3, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Tina Dare shared photos from the 2026 NEA-Retired Conference held March 1-3, at the Gila River Resorts and Casinos in Chandler, Arizona. The event brings together retired educators to discuss, network, and advocate on topics related to public education and retirement security.

The ADVOCATE

RESOURCES FOR YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATION

NJEA seeks distinguished service award nominations

Do you know an individual or group that has made a significant contribution to public education in New Jersey? Nominations are now being sought for the 2026 NJEA Ruthann Sheer Award for Distinguished Service to Education. The award is named in memory of an educator from Hackensack who was its 1994 recipient. The award was first presented in 1934.

The award is designed to call attention to those who greatly serve New Jersey public schools and children. Such service to education may take any form that, in the opinion of the Distinguished Service Award Committee, most merits the recognition this award involves.

Any New Jersey resident or organization, including educators, may be nominated. Excluded are NJEA officers during their terms in office. The NJEA Executive Committee selects award recipients based on recommendations from the Distinguished Service Award Committee.

The deadline is June 30.

Nominations are preferred at njea.org/serviceaward.

You also may submit nominations by mail to: Lynne Nelson, NJEA Distinguished Service Award; PO Box 1211; Trenton, NJ 08607-1211. Please include the nominee's name, address, phone number and email address, along with a narrative explaining why the nominee should win the award.

May Day save the date

NJEA will be joining with other labor unions to hold May Day activities on May 1, a significant day throughout the labor movement in the United States and globally. Together, New Jersey union members continue to advocate for labor solidarity and the ongoing shared commitment to improved working conditions, fair pay and workers' rights. Learn more at njea.org/laborstrong.

Watch the N.J. State Board of Education in action



The New Jersey State Board of Education simulcasts its meetings on YouTube. Watch online: youtube.com/@newjerseydepartmentofeduca6565/streams.

Apply for a passport

The SAVE America Act is a federal bill that would require new identification requirements for voters. While the bill is currently not moving, if a similar bill passed, it could cause increased challenges to New Jersey voters. New Jersey has one of the lowest REAL ID compliance rates in the nation. Conversely, New Jersey leads the nation in the percentage of residents who hold valid U.S. passports with 79%. A passport is a vital document that can be used as federal proof of citizenship. If you do not already have a passport, it is a good time to consider applying. Learn more at njea.org/uspassport.

Register to vote!

The voter registration deadline for the primary election is May 12. The primary election will be held on June 2. Learn more at nj.gov/state/elections.

NJEA Center for Honesty in Education

When politicians set bad policies or promote misinformation, or organizations seek to undermine our union, NJEA's center for Honesty in Education aims to provide you with the information you need to understand your rights and protect public education. Whether it's an issue that will affect you, your students or your communities, the center will have the latest resources, facts and ways to take action.

Here are some of the topics that the center covers:

- Freedom to teach
- LGBTQIA+ rights
- Immigration
- USED elimination
- Women's rights
- Racial justice
- Protecting union membership
- School choice
- School board organizing.

Text HONESTY to 80877 to be notified when new resources are available. Visit njea.org/edhonesty for more information.

Interested in presenting at the 2026 NJEA Convention?

Presenting at convention

The Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division (PDII) of NJEA is accepting presenter proposals for the 2026 NJEA Convention to be held Nov. 5-6, 2026. All proposals to present at the NJEA Convention must be submitted electronically. The deadline for submission is April 25.

Here are a few things to keep in mind

Each room is equipped with standard equipment, which includes two handheld microphones, a projector and a screen. Presenters are responsible for providing their own laptop or other presentation device; NJEA does not provide computers.

NJEA does not reproduce any program materials and will not reimburse you for reproductions costs.

If you are a member, please have your PIN and password ready.

Submit your proposal

NJEA has implemented a new proposal submission system. Information about the system, including deadlines, how to access the new system and submission instructions, is available at njea.org/conventionproposal. For questions or additional information, email convention@njea.org.



NJEXCEL

New Jersey EXpedited Certification for Educational Leadership

Register for an
Info Session at
www.njexcel.org

Teacher Leader Certification is also
available through NJEXCEL.

(609) 860-1200
www.njexcel.org



Get Started. Get Skilled. Get Certified.

Do you aspire to be a supervisor, principal, or superintendent but lack the necessary certification?

Is your master's degree in a field other than educational administration?

Do you really want to take the time and pay the cost for a second master's degree through a college or university?

Here's the good news: You don't have to!

In as little as 12-18 months, you can earn your certification through NJEXCEL, the Foundation for Educational Administration's school leadership certification program.

COOL STUFF



LEARNING BLOOMS WITH THE NJ HALL OF FAME

Fresh perspectives and insightful growth opportunities await students and educators alike at the New Jersey Hall of Fame (NJHOF) at American Dream this spring!

New exhibits

Following Charlie Puth's Whitney Houston-inspired performance at Super Bowl LX, it's clear that this New Jersey Hall of Famer's influence has transcended generations. Share the legacy with your students by singing alongside Houston on a karaoke stage and view one of her iconic costumes on display. It's an unforgettable way to connect music, history and inspiration.

Professional development

Subscribe to the NJHOF newsletter to be the first to receive details on upcoming opportunities for teachers, counselors and administrators at bit.ly/NJHOFEducator.

If you can't attend a scheduled event, we offer educators free admission with a valid ID during regular hours of operation.

Curriculum-compliant field trips

Your students deserve to see what's possible! School groups can bundle a visit to the NJHOF with other interactive American Dream attractions for a full day of fun and learning. Learn more at NJHallofFame.org/Learn.

For more information about educational programming opportunities, please email learning@njhalloffame.org.



HEIFER INTERNATIONAL HELPS READERS FIGHT HUNGER AND POVERTY

Heifer International works to end hunger and poverty in partnership with communities around the world. Their Read to Feed programs allow readers to unlock donations that help families in need.

Read to Feed app for Grades K-6

On the Read to Feed app, the more you read, the more you feed. In the Read to Feed app, students can unlock donations that help families in need by reading books and participating in "eggstra credit." To make an even bigger impact, students also have the ability to collect pledges based on the number of books read or the time they spent reading. Reading content is also available within the app.

Read to Feed through Beanstack for Grades 6-12 and adults

Using the Beanstack app, readers can log in and record their reading by scanning their book ISBN and track by minutes, pages or even the number of books read. It's a great motivator for readers of all ages, where they earn digital badges for reading.

Learn more about the Read to Feed programs at heifer.org/take-action/get-involved/schools/read-to-feed.



FIGHT HUNGER AND FOOD INSECURITY

The Explore Act Tell Program and Student Challenge is a free project-based learning program that teaches students in grades 6-12 to understand and combat food insecurity in their community.

Register for free

Register to participate in the program to have immediate access to resources and personalized support.

Facilitate the lessons

Four flexible, student-driven leadership lessons equip students with the skills needed to become good citizens and advocates for their community.

Submit a project

Tell your story to enter the annual challenge for a chance to win a grant to fund projects in your community.

To learn more, go to exploreacttell.org.



NJ STATE BAR FOUNDATION RESOURCES FOR EDUCATORS

The Legal Eagle newspaper for elementary, middle and high school students

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation's 2026 spring issue of *The Legal Eagle* contains articles on judicial independence, banning critics on social media and pre-registration for 17-year-olds to vote in New Jersey primaries. A PDF of the latest issue of *The Legal Eagle* can be downloaded. Copies can be ordered for classroom use. Individual articles can be downloaded from the *Legal Eagle Lowdown*, the companion blog for the foundation's newspaper. Educators can subscribe to receive future issues at publications.njsbf.org.

Free resource for teaching about the jury system

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation's Educational Guide for Trial Jurors is a 16-page guide that has been distributed to potential New Jersey jurors for decades. The New Jersey State Bar Foundation will send educators free copies for every student. The guide is suitable for grades 7 and up. Order copies at orderpublications.njsbf.org.

Restorative justice conference for administrators

The New Jersey State Bar Foundation recognizes that school and district leaders are important drivers of school climate. Superintendents, district Leaders, K-12 principals, assistant/vice principals and supervisors are invited to a conference April 28 at the New Jersey Law Center. Participants will share mindsets, practices and tools that educational leaders can use to improve their school and district climate while earning four professional development credits. Register at njsbf.org/events.



JANE GOODALL'S ROOTS & SHOOTS USA

Through Jane Goodall's Roots & Shoots program, educators can access resources to help develop students' critical thinking, problem-solving and collaboration skills. The program offers professional development, lesson plans and resources and access to its guest speaker program. Learn more at rootsandshoots.org/for-educators.



2026 New Jersey K-12 Educator Virtual Job Fairs

All Current and Aspiring New Jersey
Educators are Welcome.

April 16, 2026 • 4:30 - 7PM ET

May 21, 2026 • 4:30 - 7PM ET



Register Today @
virtualcareerfairs.njschooljobs.com

Presented by

NJSCHOOL JOBS
STAFFING NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS



A+ EFFORT

Leading a lifetime of life skills: How pageantry and education intersect

By Hope Kiehl

When I step into my classroom each morning, I am reminded of why I first fell in love with Family and Consumer Science (FCS). It is about equipping students with the real-world skills that build confident, capable adults. As a fifth-year FCS educator, I teach lessons on everything from financial literacy to communication, nutrition and child development.

Beyond the curriculum, my goal is to empower students to lead with purpose, a mission that extends far beyond the walls of my classroom.

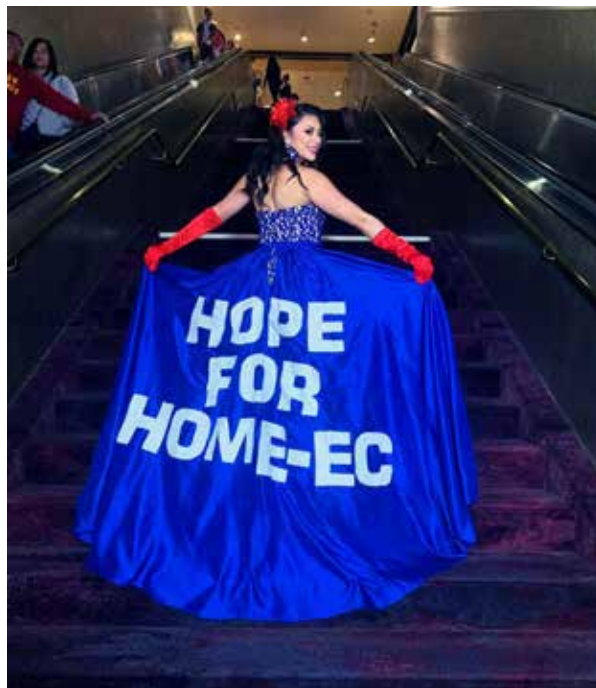
That same mission inspired me to compete in scholarship pageants. I have been fortunate to serve as the United States of America's Miss New Jersey 2023, Miss New Jersey Volunteer 2024 and now as Miss Central Jersey Coastline 2026 in the Miss America Organization. Each of these roles has allowed me to connect my love of education with a broader platform for community service, leadership and advocacy.

Through the Miss Volunteer America Organization, I represented New Jersey at the national competition in Tennessee, earned the Academic Achievement Award, and completed hundreds of hours of community service while teaching full time and completing my master's degree in curriculum and instruction from Western Governors University.

My community service initiative, Leading a Lifetime of Life Skills, reflects my passion for helping others develop the tools needed to thrive in life, work and relationships. Through workshops, blog posts and volunteer partnerships, I have been able to bring life skills education beyond the classroom and into communities across the state.

One of my proudest collaborations has been with Best Buddies New Jersey, where I helped create accessible financial literacy and communication lessons for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Seeing the joy and confidence these lessons brought to participants reminded me why I became a teacher in the first place.

Hope Kiehl is a Family and Consumer Science teacher at North Hunterdon Regional High School. She can be reached at kiehl.hope@gmail.com.



North Hunterdon Regional High School Family and Consumer Science teacher Hope Kiehl uses her pageant experience to teach her students about leadership, advocacy and the importance of education.

Pageantry often gets misunderstood as being solely about gowns and crowns. For me, it has been a platform for leadership, advocacy and education. I have earned multiple academic scholarships through my involvement, which have supported my continued education and professional growth as a teacher.

Balancing my classroom and my service roles has been an exercise in time management, empathy and resilience, which are the very skills I teach my students daily. Whether I am standing in front of my class or on a stage speaking to an audience, my message is the same: Education and empowerment go hand in hand.

Through both teaching and pageantry, I have learned that leadership is not about a title. It is about service. As educators, we have the privilege and responsibility of helping others discover their own potential. That, to me, is the true definition of leading a lifetime of life skills.



Caring for children is a calling

Meet Hudson County ESP of the Year Kimberly Corley

By Kathryn Coulibaly



For nearly two decades, Kimberly Corley has been a steady, trusted presence in Jersey City Public Schools. She is a paraprofessional whose work is rooted in compassion, community and a lifelong fascination with how children learn and grow. Now honored as the 2025-26 Hudson County ESP of the Year, Corley's professional journey has been

shaped by family legacy, personal experience and a deep commitment to the students she serves.

Corley grew up watching her grandmother, longtime Jersey City educator Johnnie Mae Corley, command a classroom with grace and authority. When Corley forgot her house key as a child, she would sit in her grandmother's high school classroom until dismissal, observing how her grandmother interacted with colleagues and students, some of whom were Corley's own friends.

"I saw how she moved, communicated and connected," she recalls. "I saw her in action." Those early memories planted the seeds of a career spent supporting children with disabilities and helping them navigate a world that doesn't always understand them.

Her professional path began in daycare, where she worked for eight years while raising her own children. When their school schedules became difficult to balance, she opened a home daycare business. But the restrictions of the job left her feeling confined. In 2006, she joined Jersey City Public Schools, where she found the meaningful, community-centered work she had been searching for.

Kathryn Coulibaly writes the monthly ESP column. She is an associate director in the Communications Division.


Today, Corley is a teacher aide of the handicapped, working primarily with students with disabilities. She also holds a master's degree in special education, a reflection of her desire to understand children's behavior on a deeper level. Her interest is personal as well as professional: when her brother struggled as a child, it was her grandmother who insisted on neurological testing, helping the family understand how to support him. "From then on, we knew how to work with him differently," she says. That experience shaped her belief that every child's behavior has a story and that adults must take the time to understand it.

Corley's work is grounded in relationships. A lifelong Jersey City resident, she often knows her students' families long before they enter her classroom. Parents trust her, confide in her and sometimes even ask her to discipline their children. These are requests she gently declines. "I love building relationships with the children and their parents," she says. "I want to be part of the foundation that helps them become happy, productive citizens."

Her leadership extends beyond the classroom. As second vice president of the Jersey City Paraprofessional Association, she advocates fiercely for her colleagues. "Sometimes we're at the bottom of the totem pole, and that's not fair," she says. "Parents are drawn to us. They talk to us. We're organizers." She spends countless hours signing up new members and explaining why union representation matters.

When she learned she had been named Hudson County ESP of the Year, she was stunned. "I never knew people were watching me," she says. "It's amazing."

For Corley, caring for children has always been a calling. She once cared for the infants of teen mothers who couldn't afford daycare because she knew they needed to stay in school. One day, she hopes to open her own preschool center, a dream rooted in the same purpose that has guided her entire career: giving every child the chance to thrive.



Building Language Skills While Supporting Student Cultures

ADDRESSING THE CRITICAL SHORTAGE OF ESL/BILINGUAL TEACHERS IN OUR SCHOOLS

Throughout New Jersey, culturally and linguistically diverse students need expert support in our classrooms at every level. FDU's **English as a Second Language (ESL) and Bilingual Certification Programs** – offered 100% online – offer you the training and experience needed to create a collaborative, inclusive and supportive classroom.

ONLINE GRADUATE STUDY AREAS

- BILINGUAL EDUCATION
- ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE
- EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP
- LEADERSHIP (EdD)
- LEARNING DISABILITIES
- LITERACY/READING
- PRESCHOOL, ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

IN-PERSON GRADUATE STUDIES

(On Campus, Select School Districts and Statewide Locations)

- DYSLEXIA STUDIES - ORTON GILLINGHAM

ALL-ONLINE ESL & BILINGUAL CERTIFICATION PROGRAMS

FDU's ESL Certification Program for certified teachers is a 15-credit concentration. The Bilingual Certification Program is a 12-credit concentration.

- Credits in either program be applied toward FDU's 36-credit M.A. in Education for Certified Teachers.
- To obtain both the ESL and Bilingual certificates, teachers only need to complete a total of 18 credits.

APPLY NOW FOR FALL 2026 • NO APPLICATION FEE

For Details Contact Graduate Admissions

EMAIL: grad@fdu.edu • CALL: 201-692-2554



Personal. Global. Transformational.

fdu.edu/soe



New Jersey Family Leave rights expanded

By Kaitlyn Dunphy

In one of his last acts in office, on Jan. 17, then-Gov. Phil Murphy signed an expansion of family leave rights (A3451/S2950) into law. The changes become effective on July 17, just in time for the 2026-27 school year.

New Jersey's Family Leave Act (FLA) provides for 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave within a 24-month period for employees who need the leave to bond with their new child, whether biological, adopted or foster, or for taking care of a family member with a serious health condition. FLA leave is also available for certain health and caretaking reasons during public health emergencies. The new law greatly expands who can take an FLA leave.

The amendments significantly reduce the time an employee must have worked for their employer to qualify for FLA leave. Beginning July 17, an employee who has worked for an employer for three months is eligible for FLA leave, reduced from the previous requirement of one year. Additionally, the individual only needs to have worked 250 base hours in the 12 months preceding their leave, instead of the previous 1,000 hours. For private

employers, the law will soon apply to smaller businesses. FLA applies to public employers regardless of size.

These changes make family leave available to more of our members. The amendments will be especially beneficial for newer hires, those who have recently moved districts and part-time workers. It could also benefit members who need to take leave within a short time frame after returning from a previous leave, since they now do not need as many hours worked to qualify for FLA.

Additionally, the new law states the employees taking FLI benefits are to be returned to the same or an equivalent position when they return from leave. Family Leave Insurance benefits are a partial wage replacement benefit program run by the New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development for workers taking leave for eligible reasons. Although job reinstatement is already provided for in FLA, this provides additional protections for those receiving FLI benefits.

Local leaders should keep an eye out for changes to board policies implementing the new law prior to the July 17 effective date. Members with questions regarding an upcoming leave should reach out to their local association leadership, as there are many local-specific contract terms and practices that impact their leave.

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

NJEA REPORT

ESP Career Achievement and Friend of ESP awards conferred



The Educational Support Professionals Committee poses with the NJEA officers and leadership.

NJEA honored award-winning educational support professionals (ESPs) and their advocates at the ESP and Health and Safety Conference on Feb. 7. The conference was held Feb. 6-8, 2026. NJEA ESP of the Year Angela Feliciano was honored and addressed the audience. The NJEA Career Achievement award was conferred upon Lois Yukna, the president of the Middlesex County Education Association and the 2017 NJEA ESP of the Year. The Friend of ESP award was presented to Bob Antonelli, who recently retired from his position as the NJEA Field Representative for ESPs.

Feliciano honored as NJEA ESP of the Year

Angela Feliciano, also known as Ms. Angie, is an instructional assistant at the Riletta Twyne Cream Early Childhood Center in Camden. She was featured in the February issue of the *NJEA Review*. Feliciano spoke at

the conference and received her ESP of the Year ring and award, along with a proclamation from the New Jersey Legislature honoring her service.

Lois Yukna receives NJEA Career Achievement Award

Lois Yukna has been a member of the Woodbridge Township Education Association for nearly four decades. For many years, Yukna served as an attendance officer in Woodbridge Public Schools. For the past 14 years, she has served as the president of the Middlesex County Education Association.

As an advocate, Yukna has worn many hats over the course of her long career. She has served as an officer, grievance chair, negotiations chair and association representative in her local association. At the county level, she has held nearly every office as well as served on numerous county committees. At the state level, Yukna



Members take time for a selfie at the ESP and Health and Safety Conference.

has served on several committees, as well as the Delegate Assembly and Executive Committee. At the national level, she has lobbied Capitol Hill and served as NEA New Jersey State Director, NEA ESP at Large Director and president of the National Council for Education Support Professionals.

Throughout her career, Yukna has been an extraordinary advocate for ESP members.

Bob Antonelli recognized as NJEA Friend of ESP

Bob Antonelli worked for more than 20 years advocating for ESP members' rights. He began his career in education as a history teacher and vice president of the Vineland Education Association before serving as a member of the executive board for the Cumberland County Council of Education Associations. After joining NJEA staff as a lobbyist in the Government Relations Division, Antonelli built relationships with legislators to secure better laws for public education and helped educate NJEA members about pending legislation and how to take action to protect themselves and their students.

After transferring to the Organizational Development Division, he focused entirely on advocating for ESP members, spending countless hours fighting against privatization across the state. He helped save hundreds, if not thousands, of jobs by organizing ESP members to stand up for themselves and helping them fight subcontracting.



2025-26 NJEA Educational Support Professional of the Year Angela Feliciano is camera-ready.



Longtime ESP advocate Lois Yukna was honored with the ESP Career Achievement award.



Recently retired NJEA staff member Bob Antonelli received the Friend of ESP award for his years of advocacy on behalf of educational support professionals.



See more of the conference

In addition to the photos printed here, more can be found at [flickr.com/njea/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/njea/).

The Teddy Bear Clinic

Using community to transform fear into familiarity

By Duncan Felch, Francesca Piccolo and Samantha Shane

To a four-year-old, an emergency scene is a sensory overload of unfamiliar smells, piercing sirens and “monsters” in heavy gear. According to data from the U.S. Fire Marshal’s Office, approximately 13% of residential fire deaths involve children under the age of nine. Fire officials acknowledge a tragic phenomenon: during a crisis, some children view the bulky suits as monsters and hide in closets or under beds to escape them. Even one such death represents a preventable tragedy.

Every year, more than nine million children receive emergency care. In those high-stakes moments, the emotional needs of the child can be overshadowed by the urgency of physical care. The Teddy Bear Clinic addresses this medical and emergency anxiety before it becomes a crisis. It is a preventative, scalable solution that transforms potential trauma into a memory of empowerment. Organized by the members of the Morris County Vocational School District, the inaugural Teddy Bear Clinic was a great success.

A triple-threat curriculum

By leveraging NJEA Pride in Public Education (PEP) funds, the Teddy Bear Clinic transformed a fun weekend afternoon into a master class in community relations and authentic learning. The clinic is divided into three core sections designed to align with state learning standards for health and safety:

- 1. Fire safety and prevention:** Children interact with real fire equipment. By holding a low-pressure hose to knock down a simulated house fire, the “frightening firefighter” is replaced with a memory of accomplishment.
- 2. Medical and hospital care:** Student volunteers from our Health Occupations and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs lead mock check-ups. When a child learns why a doctor uses a thermometer or a needle on their bear, the tools transform from sources of fear into objects of understanding.
- 3. Police and community safety:** Participants humanize law enforcement through games like “Red Light, Green Light” and solving simple “mystery” crime scenes, reinforcing the idea that officers are approachable helpers.

Samantha Shane is the Academy for Education & Learning teacher at Morris County Vocational School District. Duncan Felch and Francesca Piccolo are two juniors in the Academy for Education & Learning. Shane can be reached at shanesamantha22@gmail.com.



To help reduce children’s anxiety with first responders, Morris County Vocational Technical Education Association members worked with students to develop the Teddy Bear Clinic.

A scalable model for success

The Teddy Bear Clinic is a sustainable social venture. In our inaugural countywide clinic, we served more than 250 children and partnered with local organizations like Saint Clare’s, the Morris County Sheriff’s Office and local businesses. We aren’t just alleviating anxieties; we are showing our neighbors that we care about their children and the future of our town.

Member tip

Use this event to bridge the gap between local associations and the public. When parents see educators and students volunteering on a Saturday to help their toddlers feel safe, it builds a reservoir of goodwill that lasts far longer than a single afternoon.

Five tips for a successful clinic

- **The “spare” bin:** Run a stuffed animal drive beforehand so you have “patients” available for children who forget theirs.
- **Member visibility:** Ensure every volunteer wears a branded T-shirt so attendees know exactly who to go to for help.
- **Clear communication:** Set firm expectations with volunteers, partners and administrators early in the planning process.
- **Plan with purpose:** Design your clinic to be meaningful, not just “Instagram-worthy.” Ensure activities connect back to learning standards.
- **Raffles:** Partner with local businesses for donated raffle items to keep families engaged until the end of the event!



NJDOE issues guidance on mandatory cursive handwriting instruction for grades 3-5

On Feb. 11, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) issued a broadcast providing technical implementation details for the recently enacted cursive handwriting mandate. Following Governor Phil Murphy's signing of P.L. 2025, c. 284 on Jan. 19, 2026, all public school districts are required to incorporate cursive instruction into their curricula starting in the 2026-27 school year.

The new law aims to ensure that by the end of fifth grade, every student is proficient in both reading and legibly writing in cursive. To support our members in navigating this transition, the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues (PDII) Division highlights the following key components of the NJDOE guidance:

Instructional requirements and timeline

- **Target grades:** Instruction must occur specifically in grades three through five.
- **Goal:** Students should be able to read cursive text and write legibly by the end of the fifth grade.
- **Implementation date:** Districts must have these updates integrated into their curriculum by the start of the 2026-27 school year.

Curriculum considerations for educators

The NJDOE recommends that cursive instruction build upon the foundational manuscript skills established in the 2023 NJSL-ELA. Educators should focus on:

- **Explicit and systematic instruction:** Creating developmentally sequenced lessons with ample guided practice before expecting independent application.
- **Consistency:** Establishing a uniform cursive style and instructional approach across all grade levels within the district.

- **Integration:** Once mastery is demonstrated, cursive can be integrated into other content areas, such as recording science observations or writing brief reflections.
- **Reading proficiency:** Providing opportunities to examine authentic cursive texts, including literature and primary source documents like the U.S. Constitution.

Supporting diverse learners

The NJDOE emphasizes that teachers must adjust instruction and materials to support students with varying needs. This includes providing necessary accommodations and modifications to ensure all students can participate meaningfully in handwriting instruction.

As we celebrate the upcoming 250th anniversary of our country, this mandate provides a vital link for our students to engage with historical documents and master essential life skills.

Resources



NJDOE
broadcast
on cursive
handwriting



Cursive
handwriting
instructional
video

Buyer's Edge donates \$1,000 to fund NJEA Hipp grants

NJEA Member Benefits partner Buyer's Edge Inc. has made another \$1,000 donation to the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp foundation for Excellence in Education. NJEA Hipp grants fund innovative educational projects for educators across New Jersey.

Buyer's Edge provides a \$250 donation each time an NJEA member used RISE Solar for solar installations. In addition, each NJEA member who uses RISE Solar earns a \$500 rebate upon installation.

Since 2017, Buyer's Edge has donated \$23,250 to the Hipp Foundation.

Learn more about Buyer's Edge at memberbenefits.njea.org. Learn more about NJEA Hipp grants at njea.org/hipp.



Dan Walker, president and CEO of Buyer's Edge, presents a check to the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education at the 2025 NJEA Convention. He is joined by NJEA staff and Hipp grant recipients.

NJEA, New York Giants celebrate Read Across NJ and America Day

NJEA and the New York Giants celebrated Read Across NJ and America Day at Wahlstrom Elementary School in East Orange.

Thanks to the NJEA-New York Giants partnership, this year's NJEA-NY Giants Educator of the Year Award recipient Mark Richards accepted a \$2,500 donation from the team earmarked for improvements to the classroom in his district.

While there, Giant's offensive tackle Andrew Thomas, Richards and members of the high school football team had a chance to read to the children in honor of Read Across NJ and America Day.



Thomas presents a \$2,500 donation from the Giants to East Orange for classroom improvements.



New York Giant's offensive tackle Andrew Thomas joined East Orange Maintenance Association President Mark Richards and NJEA President Steve Beatty at a Read Across NJ and American Day event.

New Jersey school librarians appear on NBC's the "Today" show



NJEA members Gabrielle Casieri and Iveth Molideno Yelegen joined actors Daniel Radcliffe and Jamie Lee Curtis on the "Today" show couch during a segment honoring school librarians.

On March 2, the "Today" show aired an episode honoring school library media specialists, including NJEA members Gabrielle Casieri and Iveth Molideno Yelegen. Casieri is the school library media specialist at Lawrence Intermediate School in Lawrence Township. She is the president of the New Jersey Association of School Librarians (NJASL). Molideno Yelegen is the school library media specialist at School #3 in Cliffside Park. She is the president-elect of NJASL.

Casieri and Molideno Yelegen were joined by other school librarians from New York and Connecticut.

"We were happy to be part of the group of school librarians being recognized for our dedication to students,

our work in our districts and our passion for reading," Casieri said. "Scholastic surprised us with a donation of books for our libraries!"

The donation and recognition are especially timely since April is national School Library Month.

The librarians also had the opportunity to meet actors Daniel Radcliffe and Jamie Lee Curtis. Learn more about NJASL at njasl.org.



Scan the QR code to watch their segment.

THE JERSEY SHORE is their classroom

By Kathryn Coulibaly

On a beautiful but blustery day during the 2025 hurricane season, about 25 students huddled together for protection against the wind on an otherwise empty beach on Long Beach Island, listening to Dave Werner explain saltation as Hurricane Humberto raged offshore.

Werner teaches oceanography and environmental science at the Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science (MATES), one of the career academies administered by the Ocean County Vocational Technical School District (OCVTS).

MATES is located in Manahawkin, the primary mainland town before crossing Manahawkin Bay and entering Long Beach Island, an 18-mile barrier island known for its diverse ecosystems. Long Beach Island is a critical habitat for shorebirds and marine life. The southern tip of the island includes a portion of the Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge, an important stopover on the Atlantic Flyway for migratory birds. The island is famous for its

beaches, but its dunes and marshes are also home to countless species.

Werner and the students have bused over from MATES to observe the impact of Humberto on the environment. They discuss the impact of the storm on the waves, the sand and the wildlife.

Back on the bus, the class moves to the bay, which is markedly calmer, where students in waders grab the seine net to collect species for the class. After several passes, they have buckets teeming with silver sides, baby blue crabs, comb jelly, northern pipe fish and shore shrimp.

“Nothing is more powerful than bringing students out of the classroom and into the field to practice what they are learning,” Werner says.

That’s the philosophy at MATES. With a focus on marine and environmental science and an enviable location on the Jersey shore, students here are able to put into practice what they learn in the classroom.



Oceanography and environmental science teacher Dave Werner instructs Marine Academy of Technology and Environmental Science (MATES) students as Hurricane Humberto raged off the coast.

Research is the focus

Students are encouraged to engage in extensive fieldwork, independent research, work-based learning experiences and STEAM-based partnerships that enable them to explore a variety of career fields while developing practical skills and a deep understanding of how the work of the classroom is related to the world outside its doors. Every freshman is required to complete a research project. Upper-level students help mentor them, and many students continue that research throughout their time at MATES.

Adam Sprague, a teacher of biology, biotechnology and environmental science, grew up in the Florida Keys, working on shrimp and clam farms. He believes the district attracts the kind of teachers who are not only knowledgeable and passionate about their areas of expertise, but who are also actively engaged in living the material.

"The teachers here are top-notch," Sprague says. "They bring a lot of unique experiences outside the classroom back to the students. I enjoy hiking in the Pine Barrens and that informs the work I do with the students on soil science and dendrochronology. We really benefit from our location."

The value of fieldwork

Dr. Amy Williams teaches biology, research methods and aquatic ecology at MATES. Because MATES is a magnet school that students must apply for, she sees a difference in their desire to learn. But she also sees the field work component of their education as vital to motivating them.

"We have a field bus each week where we take students out to collect samples," Williams says. "When we're back in the classroom looking at samples, the students know that they're the ones who went out into the bay to collect them."

The fieldwork also keeps staff invested in the work they're doing.

"In other schools, people might get burned out by doing the same things, the same ways, year after year," Williams says. "It's so important for educators to get out into the field and explore. Every time we go out there, we see something new swim or fly by."

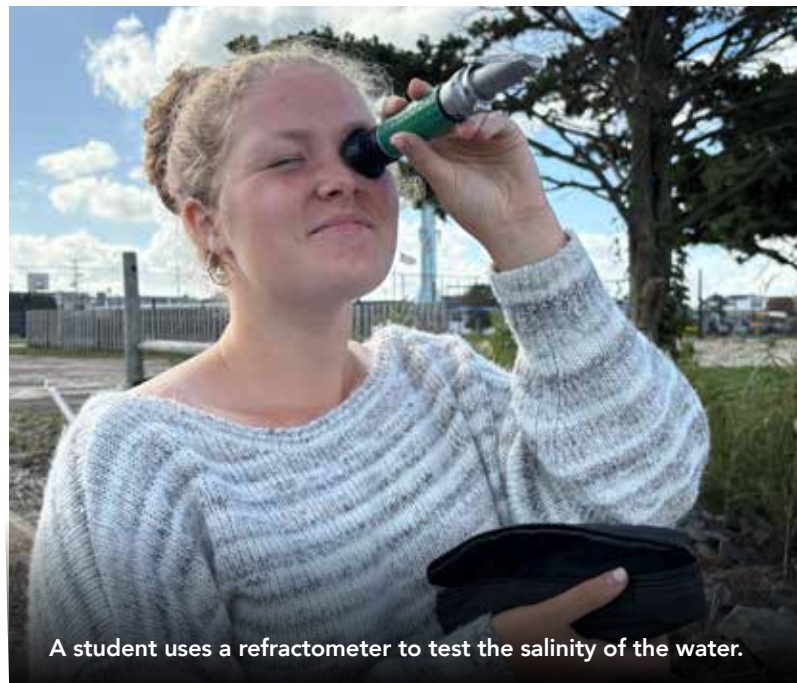
The students' enthusiasm also feeds into educators' satisfaction with the work they are doing.

"We roll with their excitement because it might be the first time some of these students have gotten out to explore the environment around them," Williams says. "We also find that by initiating these experiences for them, they start building connections between what they're doing on the weekend and what we're doing with the classroom."

Kathryn Coulibaly is an associate director in the Communications Division. She can be reached at kcoulibaly@njea.org.



Students were asked to observe and document long period wave energy from the hurricane.



A student uses a refractometer to test the salinity of the water.



Students use a seine net to capture marine species in the Barnegat Bay.



Field experiences are a vital part of the curriculum at MATES. Students and staff enjoy the opportunity to build connections between the classroom and the environment.

Experts and activists in their fields

The staff is proud of the work they do with their students, but many are also engaged at high levels with environmental and activist organizations outside the classroom. There are no sports at MATES, only academic clubs and activities. Williams is the president of the New Jersey Marine Education Association and is on the board of Alliance for Living Ocean and Save Barnegat Bay.

Werner and Sprague have been the advisers for MATES's Envirothon Club since 2004. The New Jersey Envirothon is a hands-on natural resources problem-solving competition. Students compete in various areas, including aquatics, forestry, soils, wildlife, team presentation and a current environmental issue.

"The Envirothon is an incredible competition that engages students in learning firsthand about the

environment," Werner says. "And it's so much fun. We have won the state Envirothon competition 12 times and represented New Jersey in the National Conservation Foundation (NCF) National Envirothon in the United States and Canada."

Project Terrapin

One of the best examples of the intersection of educator expertise and the unique qualities of New Jersey's environment is the work of John Wnek.

Wnek is one of the trailblazers who created MATES. He began developing a marine and environmental science curriculum in the 1990s, and recruited many of the current staff, yet is probably best known for his work protecting the diamondback terrapin. The diamondback terrapin is a species of turtle found in brackish coastal waters. They are vital to maintaining the health of salt marsh ecosystems,

“

Every time we go out there, we see something new swim or fly by.

yet they face numerous threats. Wnek founded Project Terrapin to better understand and protect the species.

Wnek and his student volunteers conduct extensive fieldwork, monitor nesting sites, collect data on nesting behaviors and study environmental factors that influence reproductive success. By identifying critical nesting areas and threats, the project has informed conservation strategies that have improved outcomes for terrapin populations in New Jersey.

The future of environmentalism

MATES graduates go on to pursue a number of career paths. In 2025, 100% of its graduates were accepted to top colleges and universities. Students go on to work in fields that include marine and environmental science, engineering, computer science, math, medicine and much more.

“MATES provides students with incredible opportunities to advance their interest in the science fields and beyond,” Werner says. “The students leave MATES with more hands-on experience and higher-level critical thinking skills.” 🌱

Learn More

Project Terrapin

Project Terrapin supports habitat enhancement throughout the Barnegat Bay watershed.
projectterrapin.org

Alliance for a Living Ocean

The Alliance for a Living Ocean is a nonprofit founded to safeguard the waters of Long Beach Island and Barnegat Bay.
alolbi.org

Save Barnegat Bay

Save Barnegat Bay works with community members, environmental groups, government agencies and others to protect Barnegat Bay. It offers professional development for educators.
savebarnegatbay.org

Envirothon

Envirothon is a hands-on natural resources problem-solving competition for high school students.
njenvirothon.org



Watch MATES students in action
Visit njea.org/MATES.

Video by Danielle Earle,
NJEA Communications.



From the

MILITARY

To Millbridge Elementary

By Kathryn Coulibaly

Alexis “Lexi” Macanas was ready for a change. Originally from North Carolina, she had joined the military out of high school for financial security and to see the world. She initially served as a police officer, later retraining in religious affairs to help service members and their families who were struggling mentally and spiritually. Eventually, she was tapped to work as a deployment instructor and worked to teach people how to mentally and physically prepare for deployment.

Macanas saw the world during her time in service, serving in Germany, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, North Dakota and New Mexico before being stationed in New Jersey. Shortly thereafter, Macanas had her daughter and decided that maybe it was time to stay closer to home.

“It was hard to be far away from my family,” Macanas says. “I looked at my daughter and realized that I didn’t want to deploy anymore. But who was I outside of uniform?”

Macanas took several career aptitude tests. They pointed her towards counseling, event planning and teaching.

“I was somewhat interested in being a teacher, but I remembered how the other students acted when I was in high school,” Macanas says. “I wasn’t sure I had the patience to be a teacher.”

Operation Socrates

Macanas learned about the U.S. Department of Defense’s SkillBridge program, which helps service members transition to careers outside the military. One program, Operation Socrates, is a pathway for military veterans, active-duty service members and their spouses

to transition into careers in K-12 education. It provides guidance, connects people with educational opportunities and focuses on increasing diversity in the teaching profession.

Macanas was connected with Delran Education Association (DEA) President Jason Pope who worked with Delran Superintendent Dr. Lisa Della Vecchia to facilitate Macanas’s classroom experience.

“It was a lengthy process to get all the approvals necessary to bring Alexis into the classroom,” Pope says. “She lived in Delran and was interested in working at the elementary level. We worked with Tracey McGonigle, the vice president of the DEA, and other members to arrange for Alexis to come in on a daily basis before she left the military.”

Macanas was due to leave active duty in early May and move back to North Carolina. Pope took the time to talk to Macanas about the realities of working in education in other states, which can be very different from New Jersey.

Millbridge Elementary

In February 2025, Macanas found herself at Millbridge Elementary School working with several different teachers to get firsthand experience in education. McGonigle was one of the educators with whom Macanas was teamed.

“The first day Lexi arrived in our second-grade classroom, she dove right in,” McGonigle says. “She has superior organization and communications skills, so she immediately adapted to the classroom environment. She quickly built relationships with the students and other staff at Millbridge. Flexible thinking, adaptability, communication skills and the ability to build relationships are key to success in any school and people with military training often have those skills.”

McGonigle loved seeing her students engage with Macanas and learn about life in the military.

Kathryn Coulibaly is an associate director in the Communications Division. She can be reached at kcoulibaly@njea.org.

“Lexi always responded to questions from the students in a way they could understand. We are about 50 minutes away from Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, and we have some military families in our community. It was nice to see our students whose parents serve share their experiences about what life is like for military families.”

McGonigle has a special connection to Macanas and other service members. She is the parent of a 10-year active-duty soldier currently serving as an Army staff sergeant.

“I’m grateful that this support is available to service members,” McGonigle says.

Macanas worked with the team in Delran from February through the beginning of May. In addition to working with McGonigle, she also learned from Julia Trost and Madison Otto, who work with special needs students in the district.

“This was a completely different experience from the general education classroom,” Macanas says. “I learned that some days will be more challenging, and I really

appreciated the patience and compassion they showed students.”

In Rachel Affrunti’s classroom, Macanas learned about the joys and challenges of working with multilingual learners.

“It was really good for me to see multiple classrooms and different teaching styles,” Macanas says. “All of these teachers had so much love and compassion for the students. I was with the right mentors.”

Macanas is now living near family in North Carolina. She recently had another daughter in December. “At the beginning of the 2025 school year, I was subbing at different schools and different grades. I now have my second daughter and am focused on building daily rhythms with my family and will return to subbing in the later part of this school year to continue exploring what schools and what grades I work with best. I still think second grade is my favorite group of students and I am so grateful for the experience working in Delran.

Alexis “Lexi” Macanis holds a falcon while deployed in Saudi Arabia.





Macanis shadowed a number of educators, including veteran teacher Rachel Affrunti.

Learn from the best

"This was an amazing opportunity," Macanas says. "I got to see the fantastic things New Jersey public schools are doing. I've always heard that New Jersey is in the top three best public school systems in the nation, and that's another reason I wanted to do this internship in New Jersey. I'm glad I got to be with the best and learn from the best."

Pope and others in the district are hopeful that there will be more opportunities to partner with military service members and hopefully welcome more future educators through the Operation Socrates program.

"This was a great opportunity for our association to work with the board of education and the joint base," Pope says. "We'd love to do more outreach to the military to partner with them."

"The only thing that surprised me about this program is that we have not had more Operation Socrates service people in our classrooms," McGonigle says. "But I am hopeful that this program will grow!"

“

Any doubts that I had about working in education melted away when I met the kids.

Advocating for service members

The experience with Macanas has also reaffirmed Pope's interest in advocating for service members who are now working in education. He has worked to ensure that veterans in education are correctly compensated on the salary guide and to advocate for other service members, including educational support professionals and National Guard members who currently do not benefit from military service credit legislation.

Pope, a social studies teacher at Delran High School, strongly believes in the importance of advocating for military veterans.

"I think people who volunteer to defend our constitutional rights and put their lives on the line deserve our advocacy on their behalf," Pope says. "We need to do all we can to provide them with the resources to have a viable career in education."

As a member of the Burlington County Education Association (BCEA) Government Relations team, Pope is working with Marine veteran and educational support professional (ESP) Sandi Wilcox, Christine Hewitt, BCEA President Chris Bowman and Assemblywoman Andrea Katz to support Katz's bill (A2746/S2962) that would provide the same four years of credited service to military veteran ESPs that military veteran certificated staff now enjoy by statute.

Ultimately, Operation Socrates was a resounding success for the members of the Delran Education Association and for Macanas.

"Any doubts that I had about working in education melted away when I met the kids," Macanas says. "They're all so wonderful. Even on rough days when you're exhausted and tired. I felt like this is something I can definitely do." 🏠



Macanis and her husband, Zack, are the parents of two daughters. They are now living in North Carolina and Macanis is pursuing a career in education.



Macanis proudly poses with her Delran identification badge.

NJEA Patriots Alliance

In 2017, NJEA created the Patriots Alliance, a coalition of NJEA members who served in the Armed Forces and are now working in public education. The Patriots Alliance currently numbers more than 250 members. It helps to inform veterans of their rights and benefits under the law and advocate for their interests. In addition, members of the Patriots Alliance are available to speak at schools and provide valuable insight into careers in the military. Learn more at njea.org/patriots.

NJEA advocates for veterans

Over the years, NJEA's political engagement has benefited military veterans. Thanks to NJEA's vigorous advocacy, certificated New Jersey public school employees who have served in the military receive four years of service credit. This helps boost their pensions and seniority. While this credit currently only exists for certificated staff, NJEA continues to advocate for educational support professionals to receive the same benefits. In December, NJEA members testified before the Legislature. While the bills did not move in the lame duck session, the work continues with the new legislative cycle.



The power of PAUSING

By Glen Coleman

Sometimes the best thing to do in class is “nothing.” Everything in my life was saying the opposite: Go! Go! Go! But I failed to appreciate what the science was saying: provide moments to mindlessly pause. It’s a powerful tool in our toolkit.

Before delving into the science of pausing or stopping, it would be wise to consider that both teachers and students are experiencing a mental health crisis. Consider that in 2024, twice as many teachers reported experiencing burnout, and roughly three times as many teachers reported difficulty coping with job-related stress.

In 2023, four in 10 students had persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness; two in 10 students seriously considered attempting suicide, and nearly one in 10 students had attempted suicide.

The point is, we need to appreciate that many of us are struggling for reasons we might not ever know. But with a pause, a breath or a brain break, we are a breath away from mindfulness. Right now, stop and pause.

Let’s reframe Lao Tzu’s famous saying this way: “The journey to a peaceful classroom begins with our first breath, for everyone.”

Learning how to learn

This is not “hippie-dippy” logic. This is based on the learning research of Barbara Oakley, a globally recognized expert. I recommend taking her free course “Learning How to Learn” by Deep Teaching Solutions on Coursera.

Oakley explains that there are two mental modes for learning: the focus mode and the diffuse mode. We typically associate the focus mode with learning in the classroom. Imagine students concentrating nonstop, practicing a problem, taking a test or writing an essay throughout the class period.

Glen Coleman is a retired educator and a member of the Bergen County Retired Educators Association and NJREA. He is the author of Teaching in The New Crazy: On Thriving in an Overwhelming, Politicized, and Complicated World. He can be reached at glen@glencoleman.net.

But the focus mode engages limited parts of the brain, only those areas immediately associated with a task. But there’s a bottleneck. This metaphor may clarify what we confront with the focus mode. Imagine working out to get huge biceps with no break for 54 minutes. What would happen? You would get injured. Muscles need rest as well as activity. If injured, what would happen to your fitness? You wouldn’t go to the gym. You would associate working out with injury. Furthermore, what would happen if you worked on that same bicep in the same way for 180 days straight? Burnout. Depression. Anxiety.

Engaging the diffuse mode

But here’s where the diffuse mode comes to the rescue. It appears when we stop, take a breath, get up from our chair and look out the window, perhaps for a minute or so. The diffuse mode is defined as specific moments of inattention. No phone. No substitution of one attention to another. What happens when we let the mind wander is the brain subconsciously rewires or “updates.” Oakley describes it this way: “Diffuse-mode thinking is also essential for learning ... It is what allows us to suddenly gain a new insight into a problem we’ve been struggling with and is associated with ‘big picture’ perspectives. Diffuse-mode thinking is what happens when you relax your attention and just let your mind wander. This relaxation can allow different areas of the brain to hook up and return valuable insights.”

Here are some examples of the diffuse mode at work:

- Did you ever have an argument with someone and five minutes later come up with the perfect response?
- Did you ever struggle with a test? Then, when you walk out of the classroom, the answer comes to you?
- Did you ever write something and then leave it for a day to “rest?” When you came back to it, did you have more clarity about what you were writing?
- Did you ever have a stroke of insight while taking a shower?

Those epiphanies appear during moments of inattention when the diffuse mode is engaged. Thomas Edison used the technique frequently when he was stuck on a problem. He



stopped what he was doing and put ball bearings in his hand. Then he leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. As he was about to fall asleep, he unconsciously let go of the ball bearings, which woke him up. Then he got back to work. Edison credited taking those brain breaks with helping awaken the epiphanies that led to his inventions. Salvador Dali, Jane Austen, Charles Dickens and other luminaries credit their productivity with that practice of taking breaks.

Oakley describes one such technique as the Pomodoro Technique: 25 minutes of intense focus, which is followed by a five-minute break. No phones. Just let the mind wander. Take a walk. Converse with classmates.

In my classroom, I made adjustments to the Pomodoro Technique. Instead of regular 25-minute breaks, I would observe when students looked petered out. Seeing it signaled to me, "Let's take a two-minute break: Get up from our chairs. No phone. Talk with classmates. Walk around." After two minutes, we got back to work. We might take another two-minute break later in the class period, if needed. Our motto was, "When we're on, we're on. When we're off, we are off."

I also found that it was worthwhile to take a break at the beginning of class. We might exercise, play a game, sing a song, take a walk outside or do a brief dance. We liked "Just Dance" videos on YouTube. This is something learning scientists also recommend: Move before learning.

Give the eyes a break from the screen. Take a moment to reset before intense focus begins.

Joy enhances learning

I've found that joy actually enhances learning. I've never had a worse class after we took a walk, nor with any of the above protocols. Class was always better.

Last year, I surveyed 64 students on the benefits of beginning class with movement. 98.4% said it was worthwhile. Here are some of the students' comments:

- "It brings students together and builds a community of people who work together well."
- "Exercising before class really helps me wake up before class. Usually, I'm struggling to even keep my eyes open and after we do some exercising, I feel a lot more alive and awake."
- "It's a great way to start our day and in a way helps me focus in class. Typically, classes are really stressful, and from the minute you walk in, it is information, learning and notes. However, in our class, starting off with a game really helps alleviate some of that pressure."

What a difference a mindful breath can make. Consider movement or just a pause before deep learning begins. Engage the diffuse mode. It will help you and your students. 🧘



Every student deserves a

WORLD LANGUAGE

By Javier A. Hernandez

A global imperative

New Jersey takes pride in preparing students for college, careers and active citizenship. However, one crucial aspect of that preparation still lacks the urgency it warrants: world language education. Every student in New Jersey should have the opportunity to learn another language and, through it, gain a different perspective on the world. When we deny equitable access to language learning, we block our students from a key to the global future that awaits them.

The equity imperative

Learning a world language is not a luxury or an option just for the privileged. It is about fairness and opportunity. Studies have consistently shown that being bilingual improves cognitive flexibility, enhances problem-solving skills and even boosts standardized test scores. However, many districts put off teaching world languages until middle school, underfund these programs or cut them during budget cuts.

Uneven access to world languages creates a two-tiered system. Students in well-resourced districts gain a global edge. They have stronger college applications and more career options while others fall behind. Some students qualify for a Seal of Biliteracy, a credential for high school graduates demonstrating proficiency in English and at

least one other language. If New Jersey is committed to educational equity, world languages instruction needs to start early, be continuous and be shielded from budget cuts with the same intensity we give to math and science.

Building strong minds through language

Language learning is like brain training. Studies in cognitive science show that learning a second language improves executive function, memory and creativity. Bilingual people perform better than monolingual peers on tasks that involve multitasking and divergent thinking.

For students, this goes beyond just higher test scores. It means stronger critical-thinking skills, greater mental flexibility and a proven cognitive reserve that can serve them well throughout life. Investing in world language education means investing in the intellectual growth of every child, not just their ability to communicate in a new language.

Economic and workforce benefits

New Jersey's economy is global. From pharmaceuticals to shipping, agriculture to finance, our state relies on international trade and multilingual communication. Employers across various sectors, from health care to technology, consistently prioritize language proficiency as a highly valuable skill.

Graduates who can negotiate in Spanish, present in Mandarin or collaborate in Portuguese offer a competitive advantage in the workforce. According to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), the demand for bilingual employees in the United States has more than doubled over the past decade. Students deserve the chance to meet that demand at home and overseas.

Javier A. Hernandez is a Spanish teacher at Hunterdon Central Regional High School. He holds certifications in ESL and Social Studies, is a recognized polyglot and is the author of Inspiring Spanish Mastery: A Resource Book of Teaching Strategies for K-12 Spanish and SSL Teachers.



Hernandez poses with world language students at North Hunterdon Central Regional High School. Hernandez believes that learning a world language is not a luxury. It is a critical skill that helps give students a global edge.

Civic engagement and empathy

Beyond economics, world language education fosters empathy and civic engagement. Learning another language introduces students to new cultures, histories and perspectives, nurturing curiosity and respect for diversity. It promotes the ability to understand neighbors, coworkers and communities with different experiences and prepares students to contribute thoughtfully in an interconnected world.

Just as important are heritage language programs, which acknowledge and support the languages spoken at home and in students' communities. These programs help heritage speakers, who are students raised speaking languages like Spanish, Mandarin, Arabic, Hindi or Portuguese, build advanced literacy and academic skills in their family language while staying connected to their cultural heritage. By fostering heritage language development, we affirm students' identities, validate their families' histories and transform a home language into a valuable academic and professional tool.

In a diverse state like New Jersey, where more than 30% of residents speak a language other than English at home, this intercultural competence and heritage language support are essential. They are crucial for creating inclusive communities, strengthening family and community ties and maintaining a healthy democracy where all voices and cultures are respected.

Early start, lifelong impact

Research shows that earlier is better. Children who start language study in elementary school achieve higher proficiency levels, remember the language longer and develop more native-like pronunciation. Early programs also make multilingualism normal, helping students see language learning as a natural part of education instead of an extra burden.

Many New Jersey school districts wait until middle school to start comprehensive world language instruction, missing critical years of language learning. A statewide effort to begin language education in elementary school could significantly improve outcomes and give every student a fair chance at proficiency.

The Seal of Biliteracy

One step in the right direction is the New Jersey Seal of Biliteracy, which recognizes students who show exceptional proficiency in both English and another language. This recognition enables colleges and employers to realize that a graduate possesses genuine bilingual skills.

However, the seal's accessibility depends on the programs that back it. In districts with limited world language options, or where students must choose between language study and other graduation requirements, they might never get the chance to earn it. To make the seal a genuine statewide standard, we need to ensure ongoing K-12 language pathways for everyone.

NJEA Convention, Nov. 5 – 6, 2026

PROMOTE YOUR WRITING IN

Author's Alley

At the NJEA Convention, Author's Alley provides NJEA, NJREA and NJAEA members a chance to showcase their published materials that serve as useful educational resources for educators and parents.

Members interested in exhibiting in Author's Alley also offer members advice on how to go about publishing their own works. Member-authors will be responsible to exhibit on both days of the convention—during all show hours.

Space is limited and submissions must meet NJEA criteria. To be considered, complete the online application and then send copies of your published materials, and all other items you intend to include, to the address below. It is not necessary to resubmit items approved in previous years, however, the titles must be listed with the application.

Complete the online application at njeaconvention.org/authorsalley.

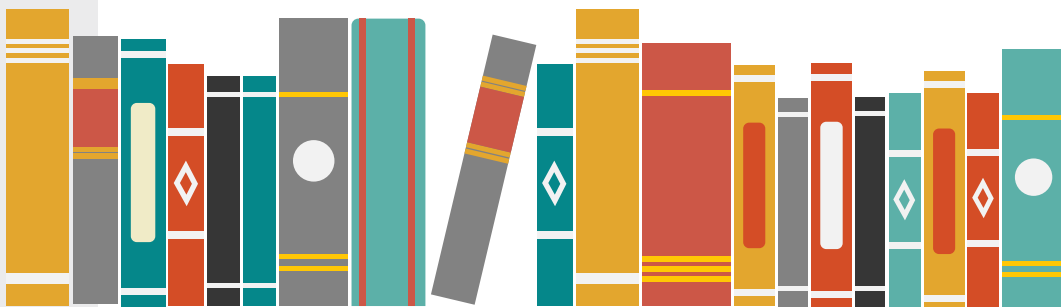
Submit materials to:

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

Questions? Call Felicia Davis at 609-310-4260.

The application and materials must be received by April 30, 2026.

*All authors who submit complete registration materials will, once approved, be entered into a lottery to determine who will be featured in Author's Alley. Incomplete submissions or those not meeting the criteria will not be eligible for entry into the lottery.





Hernandez, a Spanish teacher, calls for early, equitable and ongoing investment in world language instruction.

Strategies for strong world language programs

Expanding access requires more than policy statements. Districts can act now:

- **Invest in teacher recruitment and retention:** Support future world language educators with tuition incentives, student-teaching stipends and mentorship programs.
- **Integrate language with content:** Dual-language immersion and content-based instruction allow students to learn science, math and social studies in two languages.
- **Leverage technology:** Online exchanges, virtual classrooms, artificial intelligence and language-learning platforms expand practice beyond the school day.
- **Engage the community:** Collaborations and partnerships with local cultural organizations, businesses and heritage speakers enhance programs and foster genuine learning experiences. These partnerships allow students to experience and use the language in a real-world setting.

These strategies are effective. Schools that dedicate themselves to early, consistent and well-supported world language instruction observe higher student proficiency, increased college acceptance rates and measurable improvements in global awareness.

A call to action for educators and policymakers

As educators, we see every day how language opens minds, expands perspectives and bridges gaps. But we cannot do it alone. Policymakers must fund and recognize world language programs as essential, not optional. School boards must schedule languages as core courses, not electives. Parents and communities need to advocate for early and ongoing language instruction as a fundamental right.

The cost of inaction is high. Without strong world language education, New Jersey risks graduating students unprepared for global careers and disconnected from the diverse linguistic fabric of their own communities.

Making the promise real

World language education is about fairness, opportunity and preparing students for the realities of the 21st century. Every New Jersey student deserves access to another language, whether it be Spanish, Mandarin, Arabic, French, Italian or American Sign Language.

By investing in early, equitable, and ongoing world languages instruction, we acknowledge a fundamental truth: language holds power. It opens doors to careers, encourages empathy and understanding and bolsters the very foundation of our democracy. It is time to fulfill our promise and make sure every New Jersey student graduates not only literate in English, but also biliterate and globally prepared. 🌐



njea
SLC **2026**
NJEA JACK BERTOLINO
SUMMER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

HARRAH'S RESORT • 777 HARRAH'S BLVD • ATLANTIC CITY, NJ 08401

SESSION I | Aug. 1-3, 2026 (Saturday – Monday)

SESSION II | Aug. 3-5, 2026 (Monday – Wednesday)

The 2026 NJEA Jack Bertolino Summer Leadership Conference will offer a broad menu of workshops that equip members to become stronger association advocates. Most workshops offer 7.5 hours of training. A longer workshop providing additional hours of training is available for newer presidents.

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

There are two sets of three-day programs:

- Workshop I – Aug. 1-3 (Saturday to Monday)
- Workshop II – Aug. 3-5 (Monday to Wednesday)

Not all of the workshops are offered in each workshop period. The workshop descriptions on the following pages indicate when each program is scheduled. To accommodate educational support professional members (ESP) who may wish to limit use of vacation or personal time, Workshop Number 25 runs from Friday evening to Sunday afternoon.

For all other workshops, registration begins on Day One at 1 p.m. The opening session commences at 3 p.m. Day Three ends with a brunch, which is served at 10:30 a.m. following the final workshop session.

This year's summer leadership conference will take place at Harrah's Hotel and Casino in Atlantic City. Since the conference is dedicated to developing association advocate representatives, no professional development credit is given for attendance in any seminar.

How do I register?

If you are an NJEA member, you are eligible and encouraged to attend the conference. To register, you should talk to your local and/or county association president.

Local and county association presidents will receive registration brochures with detailed information on the 2026 NJEA Jack Bertolino Summer Leadership Conference. You should contact your local president and consult the brochure to learn more about lodging, daily schedules, accommodations for members with special needs and registration.

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

Special needs

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

Scholarships

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

Pricing and payment

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

The pricing for all workshops, except Workshop #1 is as follows:

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

Since an additional training occurs in October for Workshop Number 1, Now That I'm President, What Do I Do?, the costs are higher for it. Pricing for Workshop #1 is Commuter: \$425; Double Occupancy: \$475; Single Occupancy: \$600.

Checks must be made payable to "NJEA/SLC" and returned with registration material to:

NJEA Summer Leadership Conference
c/o WSFS Bank
PO Box 13661
Philadelphia, PA 19101-3661

Please note that registrations and payments are first mailed to the bank where checks are deposited. Afterward, registration materials are sent to NJEA for processing. Therefore, deposited checks should not be viewed as confirmation that a registration has been accepted and processed. It is recommended that checks be mailed no later than three days after registering online. All registrations are pending until the conference registrar has been notified that the check has cleared. If the conference is sold out, a refund will be issued.

Which workshop(s) should I take?

Whether you are currently serving in a leadership position or you aspire to become involved in some capacity within your local association, there are trainings that can help develop and hone your skills. To guide you, positions within the association are listed on the next page, followed by workshops that would be beneficial to you.

Being an officer is not the only position within your association, and there are opportunities to get involved in other ways. Additionally, we have included a track for those exploring future leadership. Please note not all advocacy workshops are offered at the Summer Leadership Conference. Some may be available at other conferences throughout the year. These courses are not listed in any particular order and are not mandatory to serve in any position.



PRESIDENT

Now That I'm President,
What Do I Do?1

Vital Skills for Local Leaders2

Leadership Development 101 – A Beginner's Guide for Association Leaders3

Basic Collective Bargaining 13

Advanced Collective Bargaining 14

Basic Salary Guides 15

Advanced Salary Guides 16

Legal Issues Affecting School
Employees9

PERC Law 10

Grievance Processing I –
Grieve, Don't Gripe 6

Grievance Processing II7

Grievance Processing III8

When Life Throws You Curveballs 11

Governance Fundamentals:
Building Blocks for Success 20

Engaging All Members *

How to Be a Powerful
Public Speaker 30

Thriving in High-Pressure
Environments 19

VICE PRESIDENT

Basic Collective Bargaining 13

Grievance Processing I –
Grieve, Don't Gripe 6

Legal Issues Affecting
School Employees 9

PERC Law 10

Managing Conflict Effectively 18

Leadership Development 101 – A Beginner's Guide for Association Leaders 3

Governance Fundamentals:
Building Blocks for Success 20

Thriving in High-Pressure
Environments 19

When Life Throws You Curveballs 11

Vital Skills Local Leaders 2

TREASURER

Basic Treasurer's Training 4

Advanced Treasurer's Training 5

Membership Chair Training 23

***Workshops not offered at 2026 SLC. Please check future NJEA conferences.**

ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE(AR)

AR – Key to a Strong Organization 12

Managing Conflict Effectively 18

Grievance Processing I –
Grieve, Don't Gripe 6

Legal Issues Affecting School
Employees9

Basic Collective Bargaining 13

Moneywise Members *

Thriving in High-Pressure
Environments 19

Leadership Development 101 – A Beginner's Guide for Association Leaders3

Governance Fundamentals:
Building Blocks for Success 20

MEMBERSHIP CHAIR

Membership Chair Training 23

Advanced Membership
Chair Training 24

Moneywise Members *

Managing Conflict Effectively 31

NEGOTIATIONS TEAM

Basic Collective Bargaining 13

Advanced Collective Bargaining 14

Basic Salary Guides 15

Advanced Salary Guides 16

Health Benefits and Pensions
for Your Local 17

Your Job, Your Benefits, Your Future ... *

GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE

Grievance Processing I –
Grieve, Don't Gripe 6

Grievance Processing II7

Grievance Processing III 8

Legal Issues Affecting School
Employees9

PERC Law 10

Managing Conflict Effectively 18

ESP

ESP: You Are Essential,
You Matter! 25

Basic Collective Bargaining 13

Grievance Processing I – Grieve, Don't
Gripe 6

Protection, Prevention, and Power: Organizing to Address Workplace Violence and Advocate for Safer Schools 32

AR - Key to a Strong Organization 12

Leadership Development 101 – A Beginner's Guide for Association Leaders3

Legal Issues Affecting School
Employees9

Governance Fundamentals:
Building Blocks for Success 20

How to Be a Powerful Public
Speaker 30

EXPLORING LEADERSHIP

Managing Conflict Effectively 18

Governance Fundamentals:
Building Blocks for Success 20

Bridging the Member Involvement
Gap *

Leadership Development 101 – A Beginner's Guide for Association Leaders3

How to Be a Powerful Public
Speaker 30

Thriving in High-Pressure
Environments 19

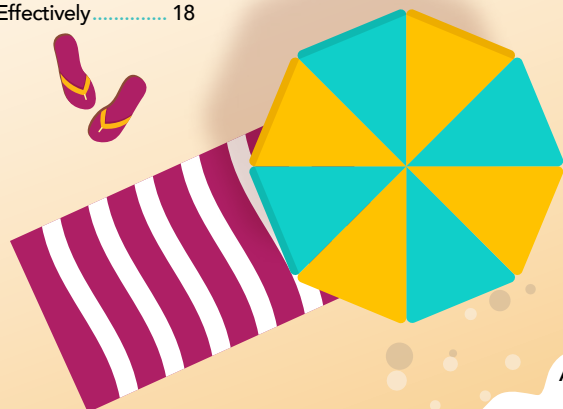
LEGISLATIVE ACTION TEAM (LAT)

On the Offense: Educators as Protectors of the Common Good *

The 50-Year Conspiracy Against Your Paycheck 22

Power, Policy, and Storytelling 26

How to Be a Powerful Public
Speaker 30



WORKSHOPS

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

PART 2 – 10/2-3 – 1½ Day Workshop

For: Newly elected presidents

The job of an effective local president is the most challenging you'll ever face in your association. This workshop is designed to help newly elected presidents identify those challenges, develop strategies to deal with them, and build a strong, effective association. We will discuss advocacy topics so you leave empowered and with all the information you need to lead your association. *This workshop is the first training in an optional yearlong New Presidents Academy – more information will be shared at SLC.*

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

Since an additional overnight occurs in October, an extra fee of \$150 will be applied at registration.

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

For: Local association presidents and leaders

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

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

For: All members

In this workshop, we will explore principles of effective leadership and team building, effective communication and listening skills, time and stress management, facilitation skills for leaders, the importance of change management, and leadership scenarios for association leaders.

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

For: Local treasurers

In this workshop, you will learn the ABCs of being a local treasurer, including the fiduciary responsibilities of this important association role. We will cover building a budget and fiscal issues, implementing time management tools, taking the fear out of treasury audits and payroll, and laying the foundation for a computerized

treasury. Lastly, we will go over the benefits of the Local Association Financial Assistance Program (LAFAP) form and learn how to complete a LAFAP through our online system.

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

For: Prerequisite: Treasurers who have completed Basic Treasurer's Training

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

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

6. Grievance Processing I – Grieve, Don't Gripe (offered Sessions I & II)

For: Any member who is new to grievance processing (offered Sessions I & II)

This workshop will introduce participants to the basic vocabulary, essential tools, complete process, and changing laws of grievance work from the local association level through court appeals. Problem-solving ideas and strategies will be reviewed through case studies illustrating specific solutions to real problems. Members will be asked to determine whether gripes are grievable or should be handled in other ways.

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

7. Grievance Processing II (offered Session I only)

Prerequisite: Grievance Processing I workshop and/or knowledge in processing grievances

Participants will learn the following grievance processing concepts: past practice, clear versus ambiguous contract language, just-cause standards, management rights, maintenance of benefits, and duty of fair representation. Participants also will be trained on the differences between grievance, an unfair labor practice, a PERC hearing, or a commissioner's case.

8. Grievance Processing III (offered Session II only)

Prerequisite: Grievance Processing II workshop and/or experience in processing grievances

Learn the skills needed for the local association to present grievances effectively at the board of education level, and learn why such presentations are necessary. Case studies and role playing will be utilized in group activities in order for participants to present a grievance to a board of education. Participants will write and present multiple grievances before simulated boards and make decisions on whether to settle or go

to arbitration. This workshop is intended for members currently serving or training to be on a grievance committee.

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

For: All members

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

10. PERC Law (offered Sessions I & II)

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

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

11. When Life Throws You Curveballs (offered Sessions I & II)

For: All members

This workshop is designed to educate you on what happens when unexpected things happen in life. Whether it is birth, death, accident, trauma, etc., members will learn what they need to know for themselves and their family members through the Division of Pension & Benefits, NEA/NJEA Member Benefits Division, and collective bargaining. Previously titled "Navigating Leaves of Absence"

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

For: Association representatives; open to all members

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

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

For: New and inexperienced negotiators

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

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

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

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

15. Basic Salary Guides (offered Session I only)

For: New local negotiators preparing for successful salary negotiations

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

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

16. Advanced Salary Guides (offered Session II only)

Prerequisite: Basic Salary Guides

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

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

17. Health Benefits and Pensions for Your Local (offered Session II only)

For: All members

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

18. Managing Conflict Effectively (offered Session II only)

For: All members

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

19. Thriving in High-Pressure Environments (offered Sessions I & II)

For: All members

Gain practical tools for managing workplace stress, advocating for your rights, and building resilience in challenging environments. Learn strategies to strengthen solidarity, maintain well-being, and navigate high-pressure situations while ensuring your voice is heard. Together, we'll build the strength and skills to thrive, no matter the challenges we face.

20. Governance Fundamentals: Building Blocks for Success (offered Session I only)

For: All members

Understanding the organizational structure of local, state, and national affiliates empowers both new and seasoned union members. This training will help participants grasp key fundamentals of association governance, including constitutions, bylaws, parliamentary procedures, and equity-centered policies.

21. The Illusion of Inclusion: Diversity Celebrated, Equity Ignored (offered Session I only)

NEW!

For: All members

This workshop examines the illusion of inclusion in education, where diversity is often celebrated, yet inequities persist beneath the guise of representation. Participants will unpack performative practices, explore systemic barriers, and engage with an Inclusion Audit Tool to assess their own institutions. Participants will share experiences and gain practical strategies to move from symbolic inclusion toward authentic, transformative

equity that centers shared power, voice, and liberation. The goal of this workshop is to help participants turn inclusion from a buzzword into bold, systemic change.

22. The 50-Year Conspiracy Against Your Paycheck (offered Session I only)

NEW!

For: All members

This workshop combines history and politics to identify and reveal the anti-union forces working to take money out of your paycheck and benefits from your family. You'll learn about the birth and golden age of unions, the origins of the anti-union reaction, and the present-day web of think tanks that exist to undermine your contract. We'll discuss how public employees and our unions are on the front lines of a larger battle over control of the American economy, and the ways in which race and identity have been used to divide unions to prevent us from advocating for our economic interests.

23. Membership Chair Training (offered Session I only)

For: All membership chairs

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

24. Advanced Membership Chair Training (offered Session II only)

NEW!

For: Experienced membership chairs or those who have completed Membership Chair Training

Along with expanding their skills in the day-to-day operations of membership responsibilities, attendees will practice the one-to-one approach and learn how to respond when confronted with difficult membership conversations. Attendees will create contract fact sheets, member welcome letters, and pamphlets to assist in these conversations. Participants will also plan year-round new staff/new member orientations. Finally, attendees will expand on building mapping exercises learned in previous sessions to create a layered approach to their membership team.

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

NEW CONTENT!

For: ESP members

Join fellow ESP members and experts on ESP issues in this lively workshop where you'll gain the tools necessary to build your career and safeguard your interests. Just as you play an

essential role in your school, your contribution to this workshop will ensure its success. Don't miss out!

***This workshop has a special schedule. Registration is at 6:30 p.m. on Friday, July 31 and the workshop concludes with lunch on Sunday, August 2**

26. Power, Policy, and Storytelling **NEW!** (offered Session II only)

For: All members

In this workshop, members will learn the ins and outs of governmental power structures that shape educational policy. We will explore how to use the art of storytelling and collective action as tools for advocacy in these arenas.

27. Teacher Leadership: Organizing and Advocating for Instructional Practice (offered Session II only)

For: All members

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

28. Restoring the Heartbeat of Education: Healing-Centered Schools Through the ACCESS Model (offered Session II only) **NEW!**

For: All members

In today's high-stress educational landscape, educators are experiencing burnout at alarming rates. This workshop introduces the ACCESS Model (A Community Collective for Equitable Sustainable Schools), a transformative approach that centers healing, teacher leadership, and trauma-informed community support. Explore ways to create restorative school cultures where both teachers and students feel seen, heard, and valued. Join us in reimagining schools as spaces of collective care and empowerment.

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

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

During this session, attendees will learn how to create and manage their association's website. Learn how to use the customizer, create pages, posts, events, galleries, forms and more. Also covered will be how to send mass emails with Sendy Creator and other digital communications tools.

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

30. How to Be a Powerful Public Speaker (offered Session II only)

For: All members

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

Enrollment limited to 18 participants (one per local).

31. Local and County Social Media Managers 101 (offered Session I only)

For: Local association social media editors

Learn how to create and optimize a social media presence for your local or county association. Once established, social media can support your ability to activate your membership, engage your community, and maximize your organizing efforts.

Enrollment limited to 18 participants (one per local).

32. Protection, Prevention, and Power: Organizing to Address Workplace Violence and Advocate for Safer Schools (offered Session II only) **NEW!**

For: All members

This workshop offers an overview of school health and safety with a focus on preventing workplace violence. Participants will learn to build and strengthen health and safety committees, identify hazards, and conduct effective walkthroughs that lead to action. The session covers strategies for engaging members, advocating for prevention measures, ensuring clear reporting, and building accountability. Learn how health and safety issues can be turned into collective power to create lasting improvements at the worksite.

33. School Nurses: Strengthening our Network through Connecting, Advocating, and Organizing for Impact (offered Session I only) **NEW!**

For: School nurses

This workshop offers school nurses an opportunity to connect, collaborate, and become more engaged in their unions. Because many nurses are the only healthcare professionals in their building, building meaningful relationships and professional support networks can be challenging. Participants will learn effective organizing strategies to build lasting networks, strengthen contract knowledge, and increase involvement within their local.

NEED HELP?

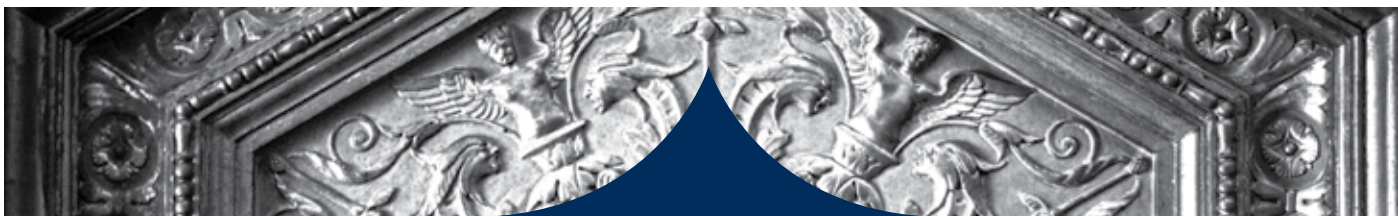
Why handle tough times alone?

Free and confidential
help with personal,
family and school-
related demands.

AID NJEA is your
24-hour, confidential
helpline. Staffed by
NJEA members and
professionals from
Rutgers University
Behavioral Health
Care, the helpline
offers practical advice,
direction, ideas and
resources from those
who have walked in
your shoes.

866 (1-866-243-6532)
AID-NJEA
24/7 Member Support Focused on YOU!
CONFIDENCE • TRUST • CONFIDENTIALITY








Your next degree. More affordable. More online.

Whether you're recently certified or a veteran educator, we have a graduate program or endorsement for you!

Counseling






- School Counseling
- Director of School Counseling
- Student Affairs & College Counseling
- Student Assistance Coordinator (SAC)

Curriculum & Instruction

- Early Childhood P-3 Education 
- English as a Second Language 
 - Bilingual, Bicultural, TESOL
- Initial Teaching Certification (MAT)
- Literacy
- Master of Education (MEd) 

Speech-Language Pathology

Special Education

- Applied Behavior Analysis 
- Autism 
- Autism + Applied Behavior Analysis 
- Learning Disabilities Teacher-Consultant
- Special Education with Supervisor Endorsement 
- Teacher of Students with Disabilities 

Leadership

- Principal, School Administrator 
- Supervisor 
- Educational Leadership (EdD)



Explore Our Programs!



MONMOUTH
UNIVERSITY



GETTING HEALTH AND SAFETY INFORMATION IS EASIER WITH UNION POWER

By Dorothy Wigmore



Health and safety committees need information to function. Information itself is not power, it's easier to get, and use, with union power.

Some information comes from employers' records of health and safety activities, statistics, plans or programs, maintenance and accreditations. Some comes from research such as talking to members, walk-throughs, measurements or internet searches. Sometimes it comes from outside specialists, like the New Jersey Work Environment Council (WEC), or a district-hired contractor.

Knowing whom to ask, which questions to ask and how to ask them, matters. So do deadlines for getting responses. WEC health and safety consultant Deena Holland-Moore has an example that provides lessons about how to cover these bases.

The union gets answers

A school health and safety committee faced "a very, very strong, obnoxious odor that no one could quite figure out," Holland-Moore said.

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.

The committee tried to identify the source during a walk-through and by talking with members. They checked for recent building repairs and talked to the principal and facility staff person. When they got nowhere, WEC was called in after the local association called NJEA's health and safety coordinator.

"I did a walk-through and the odors were quite offensive," Holland-Moore said. Since it was in the air, she went looking for records related to the state's Indoor Air Quality Standard.

"The first part was checking the indoor air quality report. Was anyone from the maintenance staff recording or checking the CO2 readings?" They were, but they had no documentation about it. "When we saw the ones they had in place, some weren't working and others looked to have an elevated CO2."

Carbon dioxide (CO2) monitors are used to indicate fresh air levels. They should be below 600 or 800 ppm, depending on the outside levels and criteria used.

"We recommended the union get their own monitors," Holland-Moore said. "This is something that should be monitored every day because you need to know if a building's safe. This was education for the members unfamiliar with the technical jargon or the action steps they can take."

The WEC consultant also asked about mold, the new HVAC system and roof, and followed up on water intrusion that might have been the result of snow- and ice-laden solar panels puncturing the roof.

Air testing wasn't producing answers. After three weeks of tracking readings using their CO2 monitors, the committee and local association asked for an emergency meeting with the superintendent on the Friday before Memorial Day. They wanted action before staff returned Tuesday.

"My selling argument, which I always give to the administration, is you can wait until you have somebody come in and do some more testing," Holland-Moore said. "But that could lead to a parent or an anonymous person contacting authorities such as the health department, the state and, more importantly, the press. Would you rather that the press get hold of this: that you're delaying even identifying the problem?"

A teaching moment

“The number one step was to get an engineer in to figure out what the problem is,” she added. “The union put it in writing and that worked.”

Over the weekend, the administration brought in specialists to check the HVAC system.

“They discovered what was likely dead vermin blocking the duct leading to the cafeteria. Some grease could have been mixed with whatever decomposed. The company cleared the blockage and, miraculously, the odor is gone. They changed the system filters, too.”

This made sense.

“When we went to talk to the principal in early May, we chuckled as we saw a little critter run down the hallway, right into the principal’s office,” she explained. That led to a request for Integrated Pest Management (IPM) records. “It was a teaching moment.”

The IPM manual was just a template, not filled in with specifics for each school, and outside applicators’ credentials were not up to date. A request for work orders under the IPM program first got only payment receipts. There was nothing to show what work was actually done.

Lessons learned

1. “Think outside the box when you hit a roadblock and don’t know what caused a problem,” Holland-Moore said. “It’s not about trying to be the expert but asking the administration to bring in someone who can identify and help fix the problem. WEC can help too.”
2. The SOBANE method (see sidebar) provides an approach. Start with members’ knowledge, adding others’ input as needed. Trained committees and members can do a lot, although knowing the problem and solution(s) still require arguments for action.
3. Learn which records and documents that employers must keep, and the deadlines for updates or filing. For example, the 2025 hazardous substance surveys are due July 15, 2026. Someone with spreadsheet skills can do this easily, once the list of documents is collected.
4. Request those records and documents after submission deadlines or as needed. Even without an official requirement, ask for records or documents you need, such as work orders. Cite PEOHS standards for health hazards or the Open Public Records Act (OPRA) when necessary.
5. Confirm that you received all that you asked for and that it answers your question(s). If not, ask again, with more specifics.

6. Determine what training committee members need to understand the information, and the limits for that understanding. How can the NJEA Health and Safety Manual and other union publications help? When is it best to ask for help from the union or WEC, or to push the administration to hire consultants?
7. Be persistent and clear about what you want the administration to do. Prepare your arguments, including outside publicity.
8. Backed by the union’s power, including local leadership, NJEA staff, health and safety staff and your contract, use information to prevent and deal with hazards.

For more resources and information, go to njwec.org/2026/03/njea-review.

Local committees have the right to records or documents, such as:

- Health and safety legislation
- Site-specific written programs (e.g., the occupational health and safety program, asbestos management, emergency response, hazard communication, indoor air, integrated pest management/IPM)
- The 300 logs and their summaries (the 300A form) about reported injuries and illnesses
- Worker exposure measurements/monitoring results
- Drinking water test results legislative cycle.

The four levels of the SOBANE strategy

	Level 1 Screening	Level 2 Observation	Level 3 Analysis	Level 4 Expertise
When?	All cases	If a problem	In difficult cases	In complex cases
How?	Simple observations	Qualitative observations	Qualitative observations	Specialized measurements
Time cost?	Very low (10 minutes per factor)	Low (2 hours)	Average (2 days)	High (2 weeks)
By whom?	Health and safety committee Workers affected Supervisor(s)	Health and safety committee Workers affected Supervisor(s)	Company personnel Occupational health and safety practitioners	Company personnel OH practitioners Experts
Knowledge of actual work situation	Very high	High	Average	Low
Health and safety knowledge	Low	Average	High	Specialized



PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

Working in retirement

Know the rules to protect your pension

It is important to keep in mind that anyone who returns to work in the public sector must have a bona fide severance of employment and make no prearrangement to return to work until the required period of separation has been met. The mandatory separation period is as described below.

Violating the working after retirement rules will subject you to severe penalties, including the repayment of all pension benefits collected and reimbursement to the state for the cost of post-retirement medical benefits paid on your behalf.

Returning to employer from which you retired

Ten-month employees who retire in July or August must wait 180 calendar days after Sept. 1 of the new school year. For example, if you retired July 1, 2025, and you want to work in any capacity in your former district, the earliest you can inquire about returning is March of 2026. If you retire in July or August, neither of those months count toward the 180-day separation. Please note that you cannot even inquire about returning to employment with your former district until after the 180 days.

Twelve-month employees and 10-month employees who retire in any month other than July or August must wait 180 calendar days after the retirement date. For example, if you retired May 1, 2025, and you want to work in any capacity in your former district, the earliest you can inquire about returning is November of 2025. If you are a 10-month employee and you do not retire in July or August, the months of July and August count toward the 180-day separation.

If seeking employment at any other public entity in New Jersey:

- Ten-month employees who retire in July or August must wait 30 calendar days after Sept. 1 of the new school year before they can inquire about other New Jersey public sector employment.
- Twelve-month employees and 10-month employees who retire any month other than July or August must wait 30 calendar days after their first pension check is due and payable—typically 30 days after your retirement date, so long as you didn't make any last-minute changes to your retirement selection. Only after that time can you inquire about other New Jersey public sector employment.

- For retirees working for a subcontractor in a public school, such as Educational Support Services (formerly Source for Teachers), such work is considered public employment because you are working in a public school. Also, working for a company that the school district subcontracts with for things such as transportation, food services or security is also considered public employment, even though you are paid by a private company.

Working as a “dual member”

Anyone who is a dual member, for example, someone who has a full-time teaching position at the K-12 level and teaches part time at a community college, can retire from the teaching position and continue to work part time at the community college so long as you halt contributions to the defined contribution retirement plan at the college (ABP or DCRP) and do not withdraw any monies from your defined contribution account.

More information available

Please make sure that you are not putting your hard-earned pension in jeopardy. More detailed information on working after retirement can be found on the Division of Pensions' Fact Sheet 86 titled Employment After Retirement Restrictions. You can download it at bit.ly/njdbp-fact-86.

Around the counties

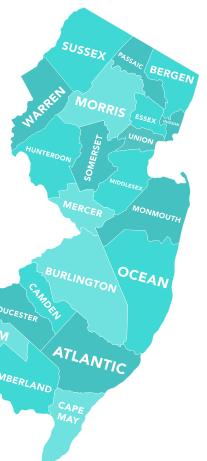
For questions and/or concerns, or if your county is not listed, please check your county newsletter, or reach out to your county REA for more information. For trip details, check your county newsletter.

Bergen County REA

May 12: Luncheon meeting at Seasons Catering in Twp. of Washington. Reservation deadline is May 1. To attend, contact Marie Papaleo at 201-407-2543.

Cumberland County REA

May 6: Spring luncheon meeting at Millville Motorsports Park in Millville. To attend, contact Pam Garwood at 856-392-6909.



Essex County REA

May 20: Annual spring business luncheon meeting at the Hanover Manor in East Hanover. The guest speakers will be the NJEA officers. Reservation deadline is May 14, and the cost is \$40. To attend, contact Kathie McKoy Osborne at 973-715-6591.

Gloucester County REA

May 6: Spring business meeting and luncheon at Ott's on the Green Bar and Grill in Sewell. There will be a member benefits fair. Reservation deadline is TBA, and the cost is \$30. To attend, contact Margery Walsh at 856-381-1123.

Hudson County REA

May 6: General membership meeting, member benefits fair and luncheon at LaReggia Restaurant in Secaucus. Reservation deadline is April 24, and the cost is \$40. To attend, contact Donna Middlebrooks at 973-610-7129.

June 3: Spring luncheon meeting at San Carlo Restaurant in Lyndhurst. Reservation deadline is May 20. The cost is \$60. To attend, contact Donna Middlebrooks at 973-610-7129.

Hunterdon County REA

April 16: Spring luncheon meeting at Mountain View Chalet in Asbury. Reservation deadline is April 8. The cost is \$35. To attend, contact Maryann Sajor at 908-625-8911.

Mercer County REA

May 20: Spring luncheon meeting at the Mercer Oaks Golf Course in Princeton Junction. The entertainment is TBA. Reservation deadline is May 10, and the cost is \$37. To attend, contact Lisa Rizziello at 609-577-6158.

Middlesex County REA

June 11: Scholarship luncheon meeting at the Grand Marquis in Old Bridge. There will be up to six New Jersey public high school senior scholarship recipients. Reservation deadline is June 1. The cost is \$46. To attend, contact Susan Jaysnovitch at 732-925-1606.

Monmouth County REA

April 14: Spring luncheon meeting at Falcone's at Renaissance in Ocean. The new slate of officers will be elected. Reservation deadline is April 6, and the cost is \$45. To attend, contact Debbie Adamchak at 848-459-2672.

June 9: Summer luncheon meeting at the Battleground Country Club in Manalapan. The new officers will be installed. The philanthropic awards will be awarded. Reservation deadline is June 1. The cost is \$45. To attend, contact Debbie Adamchak at 848-459-2672.

Morris County REA

May 12: General luncheon meeting at the Birchwood Manor in Whippany. Entertainment will be provided by Bob and Friends, with three comedians. Reservation deadline is May 1. The cost is \$35 for members and \$55 for guests. To attend, contact John Williams at 609-504-9681.

June 10: Scholarship awards luncheon meeting at the Birchwood Manor in Whippany. Reservation deadline is June 1. The cost is \$35 for members and \$55 for guests. To attend, contact John Williams at 609-504-9681.

Ocean County REA

May 7: Luncheon meeting at the Captain's Inn in Forked River. Speaker to be announced. Reservation deadline is April 25, and the cost is \$32. To attend, contact Pam Raynor at 862-268-5210.

Salem County REA

May 18: Spring luncheon meeting at Woodstown Diner. There will be a presentation of the Good Kid Award – Pennsville Student. Reservation deadline is May 11, and the cost is \$20. To attend, contact Rosemma Ward at 856-467-4795.

Somerset County REA

May 5: Luncheon meeting at the Somerville Elks Club. The speaker will be Joel Farkas and his topic will be the Declaration of Independence. Reservation deadline is TBA, and the cost is \$30. To attend, contact Kathy Kapp at 908-722-7715.

Sussex County REA

April 13: Spring luncheon meeting at Farmstead Golf and Country Club in Lafayette. Reservation deadline is March 30, and the cost is \$35. To attend, contact Betty Monaghan at 908-303-6436.

June 8: Luncheon meeting at Farmstead Golf and Country Club in Lafayette. Reservation deadline is TBA. The cost is TBA. Contact information will be shared soon.

Union County REA

May 19: Spring luncheon meeting at Casa del Rey in Roselle Park. There will be a presentation from NJEA Government Relations and Horizon Aetna. Reservation deadline is May 10, and the cost is \$40. To attend, contact Luanne Lohman-DiCicco at 908-403-4093.

Warren County REA

June 3: Luncheon meeting at the Hawk Pointe Golf Club in Washington. The entertainment is TBA. Reservation deadline is May 26, and the cost is \$33. To attend, contact Deb Polhemus at 908-328-8817 or register at warrencountyrea.org/meetings.



ENCOURAGING FUTURE TEACHERS STRENGTHENS THE PROFESSION

By Madison Baca

I want to take you back to a day that started off full of excitement but ended with a moment that stayed with me. It was my first time working as a substitute teacher at my hometown middle school. I had always imagined myself as an elementary teacher, so stepping into a middle school classroom felt both intimidating and necessary. I wanted to be sure I was choosing the right age group before moving forward with my teaching certificate.

Halfway through the day, I found myself genuinely enjoying the sixth-grade social studies class I was covering. When lunch came around, I ran into my eighth-grade English language arts teacher, someone I had always admired for her kindness and the way she made her students feel seen. I walked up to her excited to say hello and share my plans. When she asked what I wanted to do in the future, I proudly told her I wanted to become a teacher.

Instead of the encouragement I expected, I was met with, "Why would you want to do that? It's not a good job." Hearing that from someone I had looked up to was heartbreaking. I thought she would be excited for me, or at least supportive.

That moment taught me something important. In this profession, aspiring educators are often met with discouragement from the very people who inspired them in the first place. But it doesn't have to be that way. We should be uplifting future teachers, not warning them away. Most of us chose this path because of how a teacher once made us feel valued, capable and inspired. We want the next generation of educators to feel that same spark.

Future teachers deserve to hear about the joy in this work, the small moments when a student thanks you, the breakthroughs, the laughter, the relationships that last long after the school year ends. Yes, teaching has its challenges, but it also has countless moments that remind you why you chose this path in the first place.

If we want passionate, dedicated educators in the future, we need to be the ones who encourage them today.

Madison Baca is the president of NJAEA and a student at Rutgers University.



NJREA President Harriet "Kitty" Sausa and NJAEA President Madison Baca volunteer together at BookSmiles in Pennsauken.

Does your school host student teachers, practicum students or other future educators?

Students preparing to become teachers are the future of our profession and NJEA leadership. That's why it's vital to encourage aspiring educators in your school to join the New Jersey Aspiring Educators Association (NJAEA).

Any student attending a college or university in New Jersey who's interested in education can join NJAEA, especially those involved in clinicals, student teaching, internships or substitute teaching.

As part of NJEA, NJAEA offers valuable professional development opportunities. It hosts a statewide student conference each spring, and NJAEA members attend the NJEA Convention alongside current NJEA members.

To help your favorite aspiring educators sign up for membership, visit njea.org/njaea.



Professional learning: The remix

By Elisabeth Yucis

In many ways, the 2026 NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues (PDII) Transform Conference is a microcosm of NJEA's values: a single day, intentionally crafted to honor professional learning and diversity, uplifting member voice in solidarity while paving the way for the next generation of educators. The conference, being held on April 25 in Princeton, will be one of the many ways NJEA is leading the way to help our members meet the moment. We believe that the way to transform society for the better is to help build a solid public education system that meets the needs of every learner and know that professional learning for educators is crucial to this effort. We hope you can join us!

While researching our keynote speaker, award-winning author Jason Reynolds, I learned he refers to his adaptation of Ibram X. Kendi's book *Stamped* as a "remix." This framing inspired me to theme our conference around the concept of the remix: the idea that a new, fresh and relevant creation can emerge through reshaping and rearranging existing ideas and concepts. Transform will include 14 incredible breakout sessions, each representing a new vision and perspective to inspire and energize.

This year at Transform, we're fully integrating New Jersey Aspiring Educators Association (NJAEA) members into the day. Whereas in prior years NJAEA members participated in workshops with their peers, this year the NJAEA members will be in the mix throughout. Providing aspiring educators the chance to learn alongside veteran educators will allow for cross-pollination of great ideas and, perhaps, present networking opportunities for those currently searching for their first job.

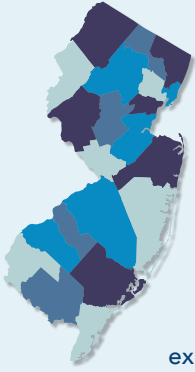
In planning Transform, we've been intentional about ensuring it reflects the purpose, mission and vision of NJEA as set forth in the organization's newly adopted strategic plan, including its foundations of advocacy.

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

- **Membership:** This conference is built around fostering community among our members and fully integrating aspiring educators, who are the next generation of NJEA members, into the event. To embed members' voices meaningfully, we implemented a new process to gather feedback from our NJEA Equity Alliance partners, then utilized that data to inform our workshop selections.
- **Labor rights:** We consciously emphasize educator mental health by including wellness elements throughout the day, and our partnership with BookSmiles to distribute free books affirms our commitment to academic freedom. In uplifting member presenters and amplifying their voices, rather than hiring outside organizations to provide content, we show a commitment to the concept that there is "a leader in every seat" in New Jersey's public schools.
- **Solidarity and justice:** The conference strengthens communities by fostering diversity, equity and inclusion as well as accessibility and intersectionality. We built this value into every aspect of the conference, intentionally selecting an assortment of workshops that would appeal to a variety of members, including ESPs and aspiring educators, representing a broad range of themes. We're also proud to integrate representatives of our PDII programs, including ACCESS, the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy and the NJEA Consortium, as well as the NJEA Justice and Equity Fellowship, into our slate of presenters. There is truly something for everyone.

As always, the PDII division remains committed to upholding the values of our organization and continually realigning our work to meet the needs of our members in every corner of the state. We hope you'll join us at Transform in April and again for the Impact Conference in July where we will welcome our keynote speaker Temple Grandin.

For more information on the conference, please visit njea.org/transform.



SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

Workshops and conferences

SHOWCASE

Showcase experiences have been endorsed by NJEA's Professional Development Institute and are also posted on njea.org. Those seeking endorsement of a professional development experience that they will provide should email Dawn Howlen (dhowlen@njea.org) and Tamanyka Booker (tbooker@njea.org) in NJEA's Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division.

NJ ASSOCIATION FOR GIFTED CHILDREN ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The NJAGC will hold its 2026 annual conference on April 17 at the Palace at Somerset Park. The theme of the conference is Pursuing Excellence: The Art & Science of Gifted Teaching.

Participants will attend a keynote session and one breakout session in the morning, lunch (compliments of NJAGC) and three breakout sessions in the afternoon. Each participant will receive six professional development hours, if applicable.

Regular member: \$239

Regular nonmember: \$299

Regular nonmember + membership: \$289

The Palace at Somerset Park
333 Davidson Ave.
Somerset, NJ 08873

Learn more and register at njagc.org.

2026 NJTESOL/NJBE SPRING CONFERENCE

UNLOCK YOUR POTENTIAL: BE MULTILINGUAL

Intersectionality: Shaping Experiences and Creating Opportunities

The 2026 conference of the New Jersey Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages/New Jersey Bilingual Educators (NJTESOL/NJBE) will have two components: an in-person conference and a video library conference.

The in-person conference will take place at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in New Brunswick on May 19-21. You can register for one, two or all three days. The conference will feature three keynote speakers: Dr. Elsa Cárdenas-Hagan, Dr. Sharroky Hollie and Dr. Margarita Machado-Casas.

The Video Library Conference is a select collection of library presentations you will have access to view starting on May 27 using our conference platform.

There is no set schedule, and you will be able to view the workshops from May 27 to Aug. 20. By using your unique login, your hours will be tracked so that you can earn professional development hours. Please note that the select collection of presentations will not include the keynotes or special invited guest speakers.

Registration and more information

Registration includes one free year of membership.

Visit njtesol-njbe.org/spring-conference for more information and to register.

For other conference questions email Caia Schlessinger, conference coordinator, at conference-coordinator@njtesol-njbe.org.

MORE TO LEARN

SELECTIVE MUTISM IN THE SCHOOL

Virtual Conference

April 10

9 a.m.–5 p.m.

The Selective Mutism, Anxiety, and Related Disorders Treatment Center, or SMart Center, is hosting this virtual conference. The conference will be led by world-renowned selective mutism expert, Dr. Elisa Shipon Blum. Dr. Shipon-Blum's has helped thousands of children, teens and young adults overcome selective mutism, social anxiety, extreme shyness and related challenges. In addition to Dr. Shipon-Blum, the conference will feature other selective mutism experts, including Jenna Blum, Psy.D., and Jennifer Brittingham, LPC.

6.5 hours of professional development credit is available. Make sure to discuss its applicability with your administrator.

The cost of the conference is \$250 (\$225 before April 3). The rate for students in doctoral, graduate, or undergraduate programs is \$100.



For more information and to register:

[smart-center.ce-go.com/
selective-mutism-in-the-
school-virtual-conference](http://smart-center.ce-go.com/selective-mutism-in-the-school-virtual-conference)

EDUCATORS THRIVING WORKSHOPS

April 25, May 16

The New Jersey Labor Management Collaborative has partnered with Educators Thriving, an organization founded on the belief that every educator can and should experience well-being to reach their full professional potential. They work with schools, districts, unions and regional agencies to empower individuals and transform systems. Educators interested in a culture shift within their school district can register for upcoming Educators Thriving workshops.



NEW JERSEY AMISTAD COMMISSION

July 28-30

The New Jersey Amistad Commission invites all New Jersey educators to the 2026 Amistad Summer Institute taking place July 28-30 at Kean University in Union. It's an exciting professional development opportunity for educators to learn to implement high quality curricula that accurately reflects the history, experiences and profound contributions of Africans and African Americans to the United States. This work remains central to ensuring that every student receives a comprehensive and truthful understanding of our nation's story. Space is limited. Register by May 15.



THE AMERICAN LABOR MUSEUM/BOTTO HOUSE NATIONAL LANDMARK

April 4-May 23

The American Labor Museum/Botto House National Landmark located in Haledon is offering free labor arts classes on Saturdays from 1:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. for students in Grades 3-5. Pre-registration is recommended. Email labormuseum@gmail.com or visit american-labor-museum.org.

April 4: Community Workers and the Environment

April 11: The Clothing Workers' Strike

April 18: A. Philip Randolph, Labor Leader

April 25: Emma Goldman, Activist

May 2: Girls Who Build by Marisa L. Richards

May 9: My Family Tree

May 16: Voices from the Fields: Children of Migrant Farmworkers

May 23: The Way We Lived and Worked

JOIN THE NGSS SUMMER INSTITUTE FOR GRADES K-12

July 27-31

The Raritan Valley Community College Science Education Institute is offering its NGSS Summer Institute in person starting Monday, July 27. The weeklong Summer Institute provides K-12 teachers and administrators with practical ideas and tools to implement the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Every year, the organizers update the Summer Institute to incorporate what they are learning about classroom implementation through their work with thousands of teachers in New Jersey and across the nation.

During the Institute participants will learn how to:

- Select appropriate and relevant phenomena and connect them to NGSS Core Ideas.
- Turn NGSS Practices and Crosscutting Concepts into 3D performance tasks that direct students as they engage in investigations of phenomena.
- Support students in using Core Ideas during 3D investigations of phenomena.
- Support students in defining engineering problems and designing solutions for them.
- Engage students' prior ideas throughout 3D investigations and build on them to further develop students' conceptual understanding.
- Make Crosscutting Concepts explicit in questions to support instruction and assessment.
- Use explanation, argument, and CER to assess student learning.
- Plan their own 3D investigations that include formative and summative assessments.
- Make more effective use of their instructional materials including OpenSciEd.
- Use a unique Planning Guide to support effective science instruction and assessment and access a data base of over 800 3D investigations in science and engineering.

The Institute will be led by Dr. Wil van der Veen, author and a nationally recognized expert on the NGSS and science education. Participants will work in small groups that are facilitated by experienced classroom teachers from the NGSS Teacher Leader Program.

The weeklong Institute will be held July 27-31 at Raritan Valley Community College in Branchburg, N.J. Each day begins at 9 a.m. and ends at 3 p.m.

Light breakfast and lunch will be provided.

The fee is \$400.

To register, go to tinyurl.com/RVCC-REGSUM26. For more information, contact Donna Frasca-Brady at donna.frasca-brady@raritanval.edu or 908-526-1200, ext. 8942.

NJEA Delegate Assembly

A note about the minutes

On pages 50-52, you will find the minutes for the March 29, 2025, meeting of the NJEA Delegate Assembly (D.A.) You may have noticed recently that some rather dated minutes have been published.

The D.A. formulates NJEA policy. It includes more than 120 representatives proportionally elected from each county and unit (e.g., Higher Education, NJREA, NJAEA, non-classroom teacher). You can find your county or unit's representatives by logging on to njea.org and clicking on "Committees" from the website dashboard.

The *NJEA Review* is constitutionally required to print D.A. minutes when they become available for publication. Due to a backlog in publication, the D.A. passed a New Business Item (NBI) establishing a timeline for publication of minutes.

In last month's edition, the minutes for the September and October 2025 meeting were published.

Going forward the *NJEA Review* will publish the most recent minutes, when available, followed by older minutes, until all previous minutes have been published.

Saturday, March 29, 2025

The NJEA Delegate Assembly met at the Hyatt Regency, Princeton, 102 Carnegie Center, Princeton, N.J. on March 29, 2025 at 9:35 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 115 members present and a quorum was met. Alternates were seated as follows: Fuller for Pope (Burlington); and Young for Blue (Hudson).

Absent without alternates were the following: Houck (Atlantic); Rizzo (Burlington); Kilpatrick (Camden); Tedesco (Essex); Whitehead (Gloucester); Herrington (Mercer); Kebrdle (Passaic); and Oraby (Passaic).

Melba Moore-Suggs, Gloucester County, gave the Inspirational Message and along with President Spiller, led the delegation in the Flag Salute.

President's report

Spiller recognized 2025 NJEA ESP of the Year Mark Richards.

Spiller gave an update on behalf of the DA Rules Committee regarding the status of the pending DA Motion – New Jersey Pride in Public Education license plate. After some research, the idea of creating a New Jersey Pride and Public Education license plate, it was found that it would cost \$50,000 upfront, require a guarantee of 500 people willing to buy a \$50 plate, and would need legislative approval. Because of the high cost and commitment, they recommend revisiting the idea only if there's strong interest in the future.

Beatty highlighted the following:

- State Board of Education
- GR Update
- Other Legislation in Process
- Fighting Back Against the Trump Agenda
- Spiller for Governor Member Organizing
- News from around the State

Vice president's report

Vice President Steve Beatty highlighted the following:

- Educator Identification, Recruitment, Mentorship and Retention
- New Jersey Aspiring Educators Association
- NJACTE
- Organizing for Education
- Higher Education
- Educator Evaluation Task Force
- Dept. of Ed., and State Bd. of Ed.
- Affiliated Special Interest Groups (ASIG)
- Labor Management Collaborative
- NEA NLT/WLT – Atlanta
- Strategic Planning, Goals, Mission, and Vision articulation
- Out and About in New Jersey and Beyond

Secretary-treasurer's report

Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson delivered the NJEA fiscal report.

Robertson highlighted the following:

- Good News
- Celebration of Women
- Senate Bill 2078
- Rutgers – New Brunswick Center for Women and Work
- Literacy Day
- Hunterdon County Overnight
- NJREA

Executive Director's report

Executive Director Kevin Kelleher highlighted the following:

- PAC by the numbers
- Membership
- Elections matter
- Membership Processing
- Communications
- Human and Civil Rights, Equity and Governance
- Online convention registration
- Labor Management Collaborative
- Research
- Organizational Development
- UniServ
- NEA
- Around NJ

Executive director's report

Executive Director Kevin Kelleher highlighted the following:

- PAC by the Numbers
- Elections Matter
- Trump Administration
- ELC
- Membership
- Human and Civil Rights, Equity and Governance
- Communications
- Labor Management
- Legal Services
- Research
- Professional Development and Instructional Issues
- UniServ
- Education Law Center
- New Jersey Policy Perspective

Nondelegate speakers

Rose Casey, Camden County, urged NJEA to address the ESPs' dues structure, saying many ESPs struggle to afford dues and locals risk losing membership percentages.

Lori Lalama, Passaic County, advocated strongly for Sean Spiller, highlighting his support for public schools, workers' rights, and opposition to vouchers and charter expansion.

Kelley Morris, Gloucester County, criticized NJEA for not mobilizing enough against federal attacks on education.

Diane Mackay, Hudson County, urged stronger organizing, describing a walk-in she led to raise awareness about national threats to education.

Reports of committees without recommendations

Editorial Committee report

The Editorial Committee report was presented by Alfonso Harrell, Atlantic County, the committee chair.

Elections Committee report

The Elections Committee report was presented by Committee Chair Joe Toma, Middlesex County, who reported that a glitch in the nomination system caused DA alternate winners to be left out of the previously approved 2024 election results report. The glitch occurred because uncontested alternates were removed from early ballot proofs and then did not appear in the uncontested nominations portal.

Reports of committees with recommendations

Budget Committee report

The Budget Committee report presented by Committee Chair, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson, who made three budget transfer recommendations.

RECOMMENDATION 1: that the sum of \$430,000 be transferred into cost center 0520 Computer Center from the following cost centers to cover additional software licensing costs:

Cost Center	Transfer From	Transfer To
0540 HQ Operations	200,000	
0470 Special Activities	230,000	
0520 Computer Center		430,000
	430,000	430,000

RECOMMENDATION NO. 2: that the sum of \$70,000 be transferred from cost center 1005 PD Learning into cost center 1095 NJEA Convention to cover additional expenses of the 2024 NJEA Convention.

RECOMMENDATION NO. 3: that the unspent balance of the prior fiscal year 2023-24 budget transfer of \$9,750,000 be transferred into the current fiscal year 2024-25 budget from Net Assets into Cost Center 0471 Organizational Projects to cover independent expenditures related to the election campaign.

Christine Candarella, Essex County, moved the three recommendations of the Budget Committee in block.

All three recommendations were adopted unanimously.

Instruction and Youth Services committees joint report

The Instruction and Youth Services committees joint report was presented by Instruction Committee Chair June Camizzi, Cape May County, with the following recommendations:

RULE RECOMMENDATION NO. 1: NJEA believes that school-based mental health programs are highly beneficial to students and families. The Association acknowledges that student mental health services should be offered in school buildings and that a regional network will allow even more students across the state to receive preventative support. Therefore, NJEA supports the New

Jersey Student Statewide Support Service Network of the New Jersey Department of Children and Families.

NJEA also believes that along with students and parents, school counselors, school psychologists and school social workers should be on the advisory groups of each regionalized hub. These advisory groups will offer resources, information and evaluate the effectiveness of each hub.

The Association further believes the school staff build relationships with the students and their families daily. Therefore, the staff from the regional hubs should work in collaboration with the school staff and never in place of them.

As a D.A. member, June Camizzi moved the committee's recommendation. The Delegate Assembly adopted the recommendation unanimously.

NEA Activities Committee report

The NEA Activities Committee Chair, Tamara Beatty, Burlington County, presented the report and recommendations related to the upcoming NEA Representative Assembly. The recommendations were:

RULE RECOMMENDATION NO. 1: that the state delegate stipend for the 2025 NEA Representative Assembly be set at \$2,000 to cover travel, meals, and incidentals, as indicated in Appendix A, with \$644 deducted for the cost of direct billing the hotel room for six nights based on double occupancy per delegate. Members of the NJEA Executive Committee, Delegate Assembly Members, and NEA Activities Committee who have been elected as delegates at the state or local level will also receive this stipend. Of the adjusted state delegate stipend, \$800 will be paid at the June caucus and the remaining \$556 balance will be paid at the conclusion of the Representative Assembly with the reading of the proposed titles of constitutional amendments for the following year.

RULE RECOMMENDATION NO. 2: that the local delegate stipend for the 2025 NEA Representative Assembly be set at \$1,096 to cover a portion of travel, meals, and incidentals, as indicated in Appendix B, with \$644 deducted for the cost of direct billing the hotel room for six nights based on double occupancy per delegate. The adjusted local delegate stipend of \$452 will be paid at the conclusion of the Representative Assembly with the reading of the proposed titles of constitutional amendments for the following year.

RULE RECOMMENDATION NO. 3: that all local and state New Jersey delegates to the 2025 NEA Representative Assembly who are eligible for NJEA funding, based on the amount determined by the Delegate Assembly, shall be required to lodge at an NJEA delegation hotel, Hilton Portland Downtown, 921 SW Sixth Avenue, Portland, OR 97204. Failure to comply with this DA policy without an approved waiver, shall result in a reduction of one-half the amount paid in the final NEA R.A. check.

RULE RECOMMENDATION NO. 4: that all delegates shall be required to attend all business sessions of the NEA Representative 83 NEA Activities Committee Report to the Delegate Assembly March 29, 2025 Assembly in which NEA officers are nominated, issues are debated, and policies are formed. Failure of any delegate to fully comply may result in the reduction and/or withholding of the final convention check as recommended by the NEA Activities Committee to the NJEA president. Delegates and/or their affiliate locals who are found to have circumvented the requirements may face prospective penalties which could result in a loss of financial support, sanctions, or other penalties that may be recommended by the NEA Activities Committee to the NJEA president.

Mariann Kronyak, Bergen County, moved to adopt recommendations one through four in block with an amendment to add \$300.00 for the local delegates. The recommendations were adopted as amended.

Executive Committee

NEA Board of Director Nominations/Alternate Director Elections report

Spiller moved onto the NEA Board of Director nominations/elections and reported that there were three positions for NEA State Director effective Sept. 1, 2025, and one partial two year term for an NEA State Director vacancy effective Sept. 1, 2025.

The Executive Committee submitted a list of nominations for the three open NEA Board of Director positions to be filled for three-year terms effective Sept. 1, 2025. There was no need to fill alternate positions at this time as in 2023, this body elected eight alternates for three-year terms, six of which are still serving. The nominees were:

Lauren Greenfield, Essex County
Christine Hewitt, Burlington County
Diane Mackay, Hudson County
Temika Langston-Meyers, Cumberland County
Mark Richards, Essex County
Stacy Yanko, Sussex County

John Zurka, chair of the D.A. Rules Committee, reviewed the process for the NEA Board of Director nominations and elections. The nominations were closed.

The nominees were each allotted two minutes for speeches. Mark Richards, Union County; Stacy Yanko, Sussex County; and Lauren Greenfield, Essex County were elected. Spiller moved on to the second election to fill the partial two year term for an NEA State Director vacancy effective Sept. 1, 2025. The nominees were: Temika Langston-Myers, Cumberland County
Diane Mackay, Hudson County

The nominees were each allotted two minutes for speeches. Temika Langston-Myers, Cumberland County, was elected to fill the partial two-year term for an NEA State Director vacancy effective Sept. 1, 2025.

**New Business
New Business Item #1**

Michael Wildermuth, Middlesex County, moved a New Business Item requesting that the appropriate committee of NJEA develops a set of talking points that accurately explains the use of dues dollars in support of political candidates, specifically transfers of dues dollars to outside organizations such as Super PACs.

The talking points be distributed to all county presidents, local presidents, LAT chairs, and UniServ representatives.

The motion was seconded and after discussion, the motion was put to a vote and passed.

New Business Item #2

Tiffanie ThrBak, Cumberland County, moved a New Business Item requesting that NJEA restore and continue the 2-Day Equity Alliance Conference hosted by the Minority Leadership & Recruitment Committee. Additionally, we request a dedicated section in NJEA's historical records about the evolution of the MIC (Minority Involvement Committee) known today as the MLR Committee.

The motion was seconded by April Stevenson Kinder, Cumberland County and after discussion, the motion was put to a vote and failed.

New Business Item #3

Sarah Reichenbecher, Monmouth County, moved a New Business Item requesting that NJEA will send out an email to NJEA members to encourage participation in actions and events between Earth Day and May Day (International Workers Day) in their communities to commemorate the struggles and achievements of the labor movement, advocating for workers' rights, fair wages, and better working conditions, celebrating the contributions of workers worldwide and highlighting the growing danger to our global climate.

The motion was seconded and carried, and after discussion, the motion was put to a vote and passed.

For the Good of the Order

Janelle Mungro, Camden County, requested a committee study to change on-leave membership so that members who are suspended or terminated—but still in arbitration or ULP proceedings—to have dues paused until reinstatement.

Sue Gentchos, Passaic County, reported that Passaic, Union, Bergen, and Essex counties held a Quad-County overnight fundraiser and presented a \$3,250 donation to the Hardship Relief Fund.

Ann-Margaret Shannon, Union County, thanked NJEA staff for helping Hardship Relief Fund applicants in her district dealing with mold related issues.

Ashanti Rankin, Cumberland County, asked for a moment of silence for Virginia O'Donnell, a former executive assistant in the Executive Office. He also suggested reinstating a memorial slide honoring members who have passed away.

Stacy Yanko, Sussex County, expressed gratitude on behalf of herself and the other elected NEA directors: Mark Richards, Lauren Greenfield and Temika Langston-Myers.

Steve Beatty, NJEA vice president, highlighted NJEA's ongoing work responding to federal threats, including ACLU partnerships, legal guidance and the Center for Honesty resource hub.

Petal Robertson, NJEA secretary-treasurer, announced an upcoming immigration attorney Zoom session on April 16 and encouraged members to watch for updates in the Advocate's Update newsletter.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:05 p.m.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO IF YOUR PAYCHECK SUDDENLY STOPPED?

Help protect your income with the NJEA-endorsed Income Protection+ Program, issued by **The Prudential Insurance Company of America.**

- ✓ Disability Insurance
- ✓ Hospital Indemnity Insurance
- ✓ Critical Illness Insurance



Income Protection+ Program



Group Insurance coverages are issued by The Prudential Insurance Company of America, a Prudential Financial company, Newark, NJ. Educators Insurance Services, Inc. is not affiliated with Prudential. © 2025 Prudential Financial, Inc. and its related entities. Prudential, the Prudential logo, and the Rock symbol are service marks of Prudential Financial, Inc. and its related entities, registered in many jurisdictions worldwide.

1073398-00004-00

NJE9_AD_G119_01

Applying is quick & easy!
→ enroll.njea.org

Questions?
Call your EIS account executive at 800-727-3414, Option 3, or visit educators-insurance.com



Manchester Township EA builds LMC agendas through collective engagement

By Kimberly Crane

Building shared ownership

When districts talk about collaboration, the conversation sometimes lives in theory only. In the Manchester Township School District, it lives in practice.

For Dan Staples, president of the Manchester Township Education Association (MTEA), Labor Management Collaborative (LMC) work is grounded in intentional structure and shared ownership.

"Our LMC co-chairs send out a District Leadership Team initiative proposal through a Google Form," Staples explained. "Members submit ideas, describe their impact and outline why those issues matter on a district level." Once proposals are collected, leadership reviews them for quantity and impact. The initiatives or issues raised most frequently become the priorities to discuss.

This deliberate process ensures that agenda-setting is not top-down, but reflective of a districtwide voice and shared responsibility.

Establishing a shared commitment

The agenda-setting structure supports something larger. The LMC represents the district's shared commitment to open communication, mutual respect and collaborative problem-solving in support of students and staff. It has become a meaningful and productive way to work together and ensure decisions are made in the best interest of the entire school community.

Diane Pedroza, superintendent of schools for the Manchester Township School District, emphasized the importance of that intentional design:

"Through our Labor-Management Collaborative, we are building agendas that are intentional, transparent and responsive to the needs of our staff and district. Agenda items are developed through input from both labor and management, ensuring discussions are focused on shared

priorities, problem-solving and continuous improvement. This approach allows us to use our time effectively while strengthening trust and advancing our collective work on behalf of students."

Turning issues into action

With that foundation in place, the District Leadership Team officially launched extensive training in August. The team meets approximately every two months and is supported by subcommittees that convene as needed to move initiatives forward.

One of the most visible outcomes has been the transformation of the association's Excellence in Education Awards into a collaborative LMC initiative funded through an NJEA Pride in Public Education PEP grant. "We're working collaboratively with administration through LMC to tweak the awards," Staples said. Together, the team refined nomination criteria, developed grading rubrics and created a shared review process.

Elevating excellence

The PEP grant supports venue space, meals, plaques and press outreach. Award winners are surprised in their buildings with flowers and coordinated media coverage. "It is very important to showcase all the great things going on in our school district," Staples said. "We feel the best way to do that is through a labor management collaborative approach."

Originally designed to recognize educational support professionals who were not eligible for the state's Governor's Educational Services Professional recognition program, the Manchester's awards program has expanded to include rookie of the year and legacy awards. This year, 10 awards will be presented, with five awards deliberated through the LMC process.

Driving the district forward together

Though still in its early stages, Manchester Township's LMC is rooted in shared purpose. After a turbulent period in the district, Staples said current stakeholders understand that progress requires partnership.

"We need to work collaboratively to move the district forward," he reflected. "Everyone is really leaning into the work, and they're recognizing how much we can accomplish when we work together."

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.



Join the thousands of members who've compared and switched to the NEA® Auto & Home Insurance Program.

As an NJEA member, you have access to special savings not available to the general public on Travelers auto insurance. Drivers who switch save an average of \$611.*

See what members are saying ...

"My experience with changing from my former car insurance to Travelers was wonderful! A very friendly, knowledgeable agent helped me with the particulars needed to make the change seamless. I am so happy with my decision to switch my insurance carrier to Travelers!" – Kathleen R.

"Once I processed losing [my insurance company] after all these years, all it took was calling Travelers. What started out as a stressful situation ended up very positive. I saved over \$700 a year and would encourage others to simply call Travelers." – David D.

"We love Travelers! We are paying lower rates because we are safe drivers, as evidenced by your app that captures our driving habits. That is really appreciated!" – Major and Zora C.

See for yourself. Request your NJEA member quote today.



Call 877-857-0867 or scan the QR code for a quote.

*Average savings based on new auto policyholders countrywide who reported savings to the Travelers Call Center in 2024. Individual savings may vary. Savings are not guaranteed. NEA, NEA Member Benefits and the NEA Member Benefits logo are registered service marks of NEA Member Benefits. NEA has retained Members United Insurance Agency to manage Insurance Programs for its Members. Members United Insurance Agency is not affiliated with Travelers. Coverages, discounts, special program rates or savings, billing options, and other features are subject to availability and individual eligibility. Not all products, features or coverages available in all areas or states. Other terms, conditions or exclusions may apply. Policies of insurance offered by Travelers are underwritten by: The Travelers Indemnity Company or one of its property casualty affiliates, One Tower Square, Hartford, CT 06183. © 2025 The Travelers Indemnity Company. All rights reserved. Travelers and the Travelers Umbrella are registered trademarks of The Travelers Indemnity Company in the U.S. and other countries. PL-19886 Rev. 9-25

WE HELP NJEA MEMBERS SAVE BIG ON MAJOR PURCHASES

www.BuyersEdgeInc.com

Username: **3386** Password: **NJEA**

NJEA SPONSORED MEMBER BENEFIT

SAVINGS ON MANY MAJOR PURCHASES!

Appliances – TV'S	800-377-3700	Mortgage Financing	800-971-7721
Cars – New & Used	800-543-8381	Moving & Storage	800-356-7771
Credit Counseling	(see website)	Pet Insurance	(see website)
Furniture–Mattresses	800-631-0286	Real Estate–Buy/Sell	(see website)
Home Security Sys.	888 995-2661	Solar Electricity	800-558-1920
Jewelry–Diamonds	800-635-9136	Travel–Cruises	800-634-8538
Kitchen Cabinets	800-327-3599	...and many more!	

NEED HELP M-F, 9-5: 800-755-5008

APPLIANCES



KITCHENS



JEWELRY



CARS



HOME SALE & MORTGAGES



MOVING & STORAGE



FURNITURE



HOME SECURITY



PET INSURANCE



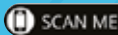
SOLAR



CRUISES & TRAVEL



LOW PRICE GUARANTEED!



BUYERSEGEINC.COM
USERNAME: 3386 PASSWORD: NJEA



MOREY'S Piers AND WATER PARKS

NJEA MEMBER DAY
SAVE THE DATE!
AUGUST 16, 2026

**3 PIERS, 2 WATERPARKS &
A CATERED PICNIC**

www.moreSPIERS.com/njea

NJEA MEMBER BENEFITS VIP PROGRAM

15% OFF

Regularly priced admissions and amenities at checkout.

SCAN HERE & USE CODE:
NJEAMB1425



  @moreSPIERS

NJSCHOOL JOBS

STAFFING NEW JERSEY SCHOOLS



Build Brighter Futures!

Find Education Jobs in New Jersey

Visit our website to:

- ✓ Search for Jobs
- ✓ Apply to Jobs with a click of a button
- ✓ Sign up for **Daily & Real-Time Job Alerts**
- ✓ Upload your resume



www.njschooljobs.com



NJCTL

Earn your P-3 Certification Online

Get certified to teach young children--
online and on your own schedule.

Learn to build engaging, play-based,
and inclusive classrooms with
NJCTL's NJDOE-approved P-3
certification program.

Enroll today!

Learn More: www.njctl.org/P-3/

Contact Us: info@njctl.org

April & beyond

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



SATURDAY

APR
11

Celebration of Women



THURSDAY

APR
23

NJREA Spring Luncheon



WEDNESDAY

MAY
02

Membership Chairs Conference



WEDNESDAY

APR
15

Executive Committee meeting



SATURDAY

APR
25

PDII Transform Conference



FRIDAY

MAY
15

Executive Committee meeting



SATURDAY

APR
18

Equity Alliance Conference



SATURDAY

APR
25

NJ Aspiring Educators Association Conference



SATURDAY

MAY
16

Delegate Assembly meeting

For more information go to NJEA.org.

SAVE THE DATE 5.1.26

Join your union brothers and sisters around the state to celebrate May Day, a significant day throughout the labor movement in our country and throughout the world. Held on May 1 each year, May Day commemorates the fight for the eight-hour workday, particularly the events surrounding the 1886 Haymarket Affair in Chicago, where workers striking for shorter hours faced violent resistance.



To learn more, visit njea.org/laborstrong



Together, let's stand for labor solidarity, advocacy, and union members' ongoing fights for improved working conditions, fair pay, and workers' rights.

PROPER? GOOD? EDUCATION REQUIRES TRUTH



James Baldwin wrote, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it's faced." In New Jersey's classrooms, understanding our collective history is essential. Upholding our values of truth, inclusion and solidarity is crucial for progress. NJEA's Center for Honesty defends these values. By doing so, it ensures progress for our students and schools.

Students and educators today face a staggering degree of challenges that would leave even the most prepared individual feeling overwhelmed, tired and defeated.

Well-funded, politically motivated organizations have gained attention with the goal of eroding the idea of who belongs in public schools. This takes many forms: U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents have increased efforts to remove undocumented people, including children, from our country. Their focus on schools and their surroundings is especially insidious. The rights of LGBTQIA+ students and educators are under attack. Many of these groups have demonized trans youth. This has pushed many trans youths to report feeling unsafe in their schools and communities.

Unfortunately, these groups are not only attempting to redefine who belongs in schools, but they are also attempting to censor what's taught in schools. This takes the form of rampant attempts to ban books and alter school curricula. Through censorship and fear-inducing rhetoric, these organizations aim to distort the teaching of history and other historically accurate facts.

With belonging in question and the truth under assault, many of these groups take aim at racial justice. This takes shape when certain groups cheer the federal government as it withholds funds from institutions that continue to support their Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs, including many colleges and universities.

Together, these efforts aim to create division and chaos in public schools and communities. The impact on students is real.

Our students hear the hurtful words. They feel the painful consequences. It's no surprise that these events overwhelm educators and students alike. But as Baldwin reminds us, "nothing can change until it's faced."

Despite the headlines and harmful policies, public schools stand strong as places of inclusion and truth. NJEA members ensure their students feel safe and included. But NJEA members aren't alone. They have support. They have the NJEA Center for Honesty.

NJEA's Center for Honesty serves as a key support system for educators in New Jersey. It provides guidance and resources to educators, community members, and students. Together with NJEA members, the center helps challenge harmful policies and defend honest teaching in our schools.

NJEA's Center for Honesty in Education promotes NJEA's mission by identifying organizations and individuals that threaten educators' ability to provide an honest and complete education to every student in New Jersey's public schools. When politicians set bad policies or promote misinformation, or shady organizations seek to undermine our union, the center aims to provide NJEA members with the resources you need to understand your rights and protect public education.

Our nation's history is complicated. There is much to celebrate and much to learn. Some public institutions have achieved extraordinary results. Others have caused unimaginable harm. To fix the system that's broken, we must identify the flaws and begin addressing them. All children, regardless of race, sexuality, gender, ZIP code, or beliefs, should feel accepted, welcomed and empowered. Only then can they reach their potential, without fear and without conditions. It all starts with truth. And it starts with courageous NJEA members.

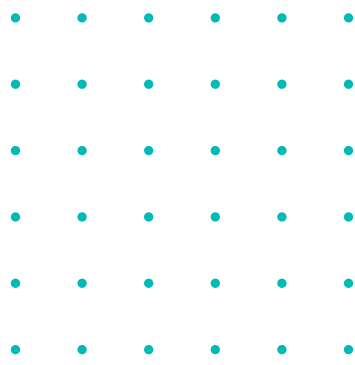
NJEA's Center for Honesty supports NJEA members who work to build a more just and equitable education system. The need for this action has never been greater. Change starts with each of us. Get involved with the NJEA Center for Honesty. Speak up in your schools and communities. Demand honest, inclusive education for all public school students.

Because without honesty, there can be no education. 🇺🇸



NJ Center for
Honesty

Your Weight. Your Way.



Ana

Lost 56 lbs with
Gastric Sleeve.

Gabrielle

Lost 78 lbs with
Revision Surgery.

Attend a **FREE** weight loss webinar

NJBariatricCenter.com

609-630-7060

Our Services:

Surgical Weight Loss

- Gastric Bypass
- Sleeve Gastrectomy
- Revision Surgery

Non-Surgical Weight Loss

- Adjustable Gastric Balloon
- Weight Loss Medications
- Nutritional Counseling



NEW JERSEY
BARIATRIC CENTER[®]
MEDICAL & SURGICAL WEIGHT LOSS | GENERAL SURGERY

Visit us at one of our **6 Locations Across New Jersey!**



Springfield



Hoboken



Somerville



East Brunswick



Hackettstown



Sparta

Telemedicine
appointments
available!



TEACHER LEADERSHIP

It's **MORE IMPORTANT** than ever!

NJEA's Teacher Leader Academy is a N.J. Department of Education approved one-year 12 credit program* for candidates seeking to earn the NJ Teacher Leader Endorsement. **A new cohort opens in July 2026.**



APPLY NOW!
Space is limited.

For more details, visit njea.org/tla

Teacher leaders create new models of professional learning, develop new systems to monitor student progress, connect with families and communities and advocate for the profession.

Apply today to join a dynamic community of educators who are finding ways to lead from the classroom as they share ideas, support their colleagues, and work with school and district leaders to create systemic change that supports high-quality teaching and learning.

WEB: njea.org/tla

EMAIL: teacherleader@njea.org



* EARN 12 GRADUATE CREDITS through Thomas Edison State College

The NJEA Teacher Leader Academy (TLA) admits candidates of any race, color, creed, national origin, ethnic origin, disability, marital status, domestic partnership status, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the NJEA TLA. It doesn't discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, ethnic origin, disability, marital status, domestic partnership status, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, or scholarship programs.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE – APRIL 15, 2026