

REVIEW

JUNE
2024
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WILDERNESS SURVIVAL


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TO COMMUNITY

28 THRIFTER UPPER TEACHES
FASHION AND SUSTAINABILITY

30 SHOPRITE @ SCHOOL

34 A DIFFERENT KIND
OF COACH

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wilderness
survival*



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Local associations from Essex County College were well-represented at the NJEA Higher Education Conference. From left: Timothy Stafford, Yasser Kabakibi, Judith Celestin, Roy Harte and Ledawn Hall. For more conference photos, visit [flickr.com/njea/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/njea/albums).



Teachers of the Year know the value of attending the NJEA Transform Conference on April 20. From left: 2023-24 New Jersey Hunterdon County Teacher of the Year Joe Nappi, 2023-24 Adhikari and 2021-22 New Jersey Teacher of the Year Theresa Maughan. For more conference photos, visit [flickr.com/njea/albums](https://www.flickr.com/photos/njea/albums).



Passaic County REA members at the NJREA Spring Luncheon. From left: Paulette Newby, Beverly Hill and Katie Milton.

FEATURES



22 | LEARNING WILDERNESS SURVIVAL

Health and physical education teacher Mark Haug launched a wilderness survival course at Central Regional High School. In the three years since the course began, the popular course has expanded into two electives: Wilderness I and II.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



28 | THRIFTER UPPER TEACHES FASHION AND SUSTAINABILITY

Like most middle schoolers, the students at Christa McAuliffe Middle School in Jackson care a lot about their clothes. Recognizing this, Bridgit Valgenti, a library media specialist at the school, applied for a grant from the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education to fund an eco-conscious fashion club.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



24 | FROM CLASSROOMS TO COMMUNITY

High school students in the Morris County Vocational School District who want to become teachers attend the Academy for Education & Learning. Working with their teacher, they planned and executed family literacy and math nights at Lincoln Park Elementary School.

STUDENTS OF SAMANTHA SHANE



30 | SHOPRITE @ SCHOOL

In Old Bridge Township, you'll find a ShopRite in the unlikeliest of places—the high school. Adjacent to the Learning Lab, and it looks exactly like a small corner store. It provides practical real-world skills for the students who work there as well as students' favorite items and convenient grocery shopping opportunities for busy school staff members.

BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



34 | A DIFFERENT KIND OF COACH

When we think of coaches, we often think of sports. Football, basketball and track coaches are traditionally some of the most celebrated coaches in New Jersey. But for more than 30 years, the decathlon has held competitions in the Garden State led by the coaching of highly talented NJEA members.

BY RODNEY LANE

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The number
3,228,578

The estimated number of K-12 teachers in the U.S. for the 2023-24 school year. In 2022-23, New Jersey had 116,698 K-12 teachers.

Source: "Rankings of the States 2023 and Estimates of School Statistics 2024," National Education Association, April 2024



GOOD NEWS

New Jersey's four-year graduation rate continues to rise

Since New Jersey implemented the federal graduation rate calculation in 2011, the rate of students graduating high school in four years continues to rise. In 2023, 91.1% of students graduated high school within four years.

Source: "New Jersey School Performance Report," 2022-23, New Jersey Department of Education, April 2024



Students at Central Regional High School learn wilderness survival skills in the Pine Barrens as part of a course taught by health and physical education instructor Mark Haug.

PHOTO BY
Kathryn Coulibaly

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REVIEW

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President: Sean M. Spiller | Vice President: Steve Beatty | Secretary-Treasurer: Petal Robertson
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Organizational Directory

NJEA headquarters, Trenton

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

UniServ regional offices

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

UniServ South

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

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

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

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

UniServ Central

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

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

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

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

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

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

UniServ Northeast

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

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

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

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

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

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

UniServ Northwest

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

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

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

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

MEMBERSHIP

Active professional: \$1,038 (full time); \$207.60 (full time *low-earner); \$519 (part time); \$519 (on leave); \$207.60 (part time *low-earner). Active supportive: \$505 (full time); \$101 (full time *low-earner); \$252.50 (part time); \$101 (part time *low-earner); \$252.50 (on leave). Retired professional: \$93; \$1,170 (retired life). Retired ESP: \$48; \$585 (retired ESP life); Preservice \$32. General professional (outside N.J. public education employment): \$250. Subscribing \$250. Only those in education positions in N.J. public schools and colleges are eligible for active membership. Payment of annual dues entitles a member to receive the Review for one year, from January through December. Dues include \$5 for the NJEA Review. *Low-earner threshold 2023-24 is \$22,500.





PRESIDENT'S *Message*

Celebrating our students, sharing our time and talents

As the school year winds to a close, I hope that you can take some time over the next few months to rest and recharge. Working in education is demanding and often draining, so it's important that we find ways to restore ourselves and reignite our excitement for the work that we do.

One of the things that helps us to replenish our enthusiasm is exploring those things that interest us, whether through volunteer opportunities, hobbies, travel, reading or other avenues. It's important to remember that we are more than our job titles. We are people with rich lives outside of our careers.

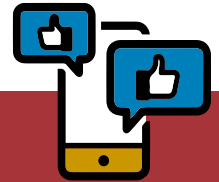
I hope that you will be inspired by the stories of a couple of our members who are highlighted in this issue. Mark Haug is a physical education and health teacher at Central Regional High School. He also volunteered his time with the Boy Scouts of America and taught the scouts survival skills for badges. He realized that his students at Central Regional would benefit from learning these skills and he wrote a curriculum that introduces them to things like bird watching, CPR and first aid, disaster preparation, knot-tying, hiking and map reading. Mark brought his passions and interests into the classroom and ended up taking his students out of the classroom and into nature.

Bridgit Valgenti saw a need and an interest among her students for an eco-conscious fashion club. A library media specialist at Christa McAuliffe Middle School in Jackson, Valgenti won an NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Grant to create Thrifter Upper and recruited current and retired staff and community members to help students learn the skills they needed to transform donated clothing. The yearlong club culminates with a fashion show where students model their designs, from clothing to bags to pillowcases and more.

A lot is asked of public school employees, and you meet those demands every day. I hope that you celebrate all that you do—and who you are in your students' lives—as the school year closes. New Jersey continues to lead the nation with the best public schools and that is thanks to the work you do every day, educating, caring and advocating for our students.

Thank you for all that you do for public education. Congratulations on another successful school year and best wishes for a happy and safe summer!

In Unity,



SEAN M. SPILLER

Facebook

@SpillerforNJEA: I had a great time last week at the Passaic County Education Association's Joseph F. Cheff Legislative Reception. When we come together to share our stories as educators, we build our collective power and, in doing so, strengthen our unions. It's through events like these that we continue to advance our profession forward. Thank you, PCEA.

On May 3, NJEA President Sean M. Spiller shared images alongside members and legislators at the Passaic County Education Association's annual Joseph T. Cheff Friends of Education award ceremony. PCREA President Barbara Hughes, Clifton BOE Commissioner Judith Bassford, Passaic BOE member L. Daniel Rodriguez, Wayne Supt. Dr. Mark Toback, and St. Luke Baptist Church in Paterson were honored.

STEVE BEATTY

Facebook

@SteveBeattyNJEA: Great day at NEA talking with my fellow VPs from around the country and NEA VP, Princess Moss! Checking in on the NEA Board meeting and talking with our delegation, working hard doing the business of our union for our members!

On May 3, NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty shared images from the NEA Board of Directors meeting at the National Education Headquarters in Washington, D.C. In one image he is pictured alongside vice presidents from state education associations across the country and NEA Vice President Princess Moss.

PETAL ROBERTSON

Facebook

@PetalforNJEA: Congratulations to all of the wonderful educators in the building last night for the NEA Salute to Excellence in Education Gala. A special congratulations to Alabama's Kimberly Johnson for winning the NEA Foundation National Award for Teaching Excellence. The work you do with your students is inspiring.

On May 4, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson shared images from the 2024 Salute to Excellence in Education Gala hosted by the NEA Foundation. Often referred to as the "Academy Awards of Education," the event honors outstanding educators and champions of public education from across the country.

OFFICERS ONLINE

The ADVOCATE

RESOURCES FOR YOUR LOCAL ASSOCIATION

Nominations open for five awards recognizing achievement in equity and justice

Nominations are now open for five awards that will be presented during the NJEA Dr. Martin Luther King Human and Civil Rights Celebration on Jan. 11, 2025.

A sixth award may have been added after the June Review went to press. That new award will be listed with the five below at njea.org/mlk-hrc-nominations. It will also be publicized in the September edition of the *NJEA Review*.

The awards open for nomination are:

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

- **Urban Educator Activist Award:** This award is conferred by the NJEA Urban Education Committee. The award honors active and retired members who have been champions for urban education and who and champion the well-being of all stakeholders in urban communities.

- **Watch this space:** Check njea.org/mlk-hrc-nominations and the September *Review* for a potential sixth award.

Nomination forms and documentation for any of these four awards are due Oct. 31, 2024.

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

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

Nominate a local association for bargaining excellence

A local association that has demonstrated excellence in negotiations will be honored at the Jim George Collective Bargaining Summit with the 2024 Jim George Collective Bargaining Award. Those nominated will also be recognized. The summit will take place on Oct. 25-26 at the Doubletree Hotel and Conference Center in Somerset.

Criteria

A local qualifies for nomination by meeting one or more of the following criteria:

- Bargained one or more new contractual provisions not already found in another affiliate's contract.
- Conducted an extraordinary community-organizing effort that resulted in a settled agreement.
- Used the bargaining process to propel new members into association involvement and leadership positions.
- Achieved a particularly good settlement, in comparison to state averages, in salary increases, benefits, professional development, and/or member protection, and follows best practices for salary guides.

Nomination

Local associations can be nominated by any NJEA member or NJEA staff member.

To nominate a local, visit njea.org/cbaward.

To be considered for the 2024 Jim George Collective Bargaining Award, settlements must be ratified by both parties between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024.

Nominations are due Sept. 6, 2024.

Recognizing ESP excellence

Nominations open for ESP of the Year, ESP Career Achievement, and Friend of ESP awards

At the NJEA Educational Support Professionals (ESP) Conference in February 2025, the association will introduce the 2025 NJEA ESP of the Year. NJEA will also confer the 2025 ESP Career Achievement Award and Friend of ESP Award.

Nominations forms for any of these awards is njea.org/esp.

NJEA ESP of the Year Award

Local deadline: Aug. 5

County deadline: Aug. 19

NJEA will present the ESP of the Year Award to an NJEA member whose activities reflect the contributions of EPSs to public education. The purpose of the award is to recognize an individual who shows outstanding accomplishments in one or more of the following areas:

- Professional practice
- Member advocacy and association involvement
- Community engagement
- Personal achievement
- Enhancement of ESP image

An individual must be an NJEA member for three consecutive years as of Jan. 15 of the award year. The individual must be nominated by their county association through the county association's adopted procedures. Each county can submit only one nominee through its ESP award system.

A county award system is one developed by a county association that gathers nominations through local affiliates and selects one countywide award recipient. Criteria for the county award are designed by the individual county and should not conflict with the state and national award's criteria and purpose.

Local associations are encouraged to select a nominee and submit their name to their county association no later

than **Aug. 5**. If you have a nominee in mind, visit njea.org/esp for a nomination form and immediately talk to your local or county association president about the nomination.

County associations must forward their single nomination form to NJEA by Aug. 19. The county's nominee is that county's ESP of the Year.

Career Achievement

Deadline: Oct. 15

The NJEA Career Achievement Award is given to a currently employed NJEA member who is an ESP association advocate. The nominee must have a minimum of 10 years employment in public education. The winner will have demonstrated a successful, long-term professional dedication and success to their employment position.

The deadline for Career Achievement Award nominations is **Oct. 15**.

Friend of ESP

Deadline: Oct. 15

The NJEA Friend of ESP Award can be bestowed upon any person or organization whose leadership, acts, dedication, commitment and support on the statewide level have proven that person or organization to be a true friend of and advocate for ESP and their contributions to public education and students.

An individual recipient need not be an NJEA member, but they should reflect the philosophy and principles of NJEA. However, if any individual nominee is eligible for active NJEA membership, such membership is a requirement.

The deadline for Friend of ESP Award nominations is **Oct. 15**.

State officer petitions available Sept. 3

Elections for NJEA state officer positions (president, vice president, and secretary-treasurer) will be held during the upcoming school year for the **2025-27 term**.

All nominations for these positions may be made only by petition on forms prescribed by the NJEA Elections Committee.

Petitions for state officers must contain at least 300 signatures of NJEA active members (including active professional and ESP, as well as life members and retired members who are eligible to vote) with at least 10 such signatures from each of 11 counties. Persons who are retired are considered to be from the county in which they last held employment prior to retirement. No more than one nomination may be proposed on any one petition.

(continued on next page)



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(continued from previous page)

Below are the anticipated deadlines and procedures for acquiring and returning petitions. Changes, if any, will be posted at njea.org/NJEAelections.

Petitions will be available on **Sept. 3, 2024**. They may be obtained from NJEA Headquarters in Trenton, or from a county or unit representative on the NJEA Elections Committee.

All signed petitions must reach NJEA Headquarters at 180 W. State St., Trenton, or an NJEA-NEA UniServ office no later than 5 p.m. on **Oct. 15, 2024**.

These procedures and the deadlines are for state officer positions only and do not affect nominations for other NJEA positions.

Balloting for contested positions will take place in the regular 2025 NJEA spring elections.

Your turn: Wise beyond her years

To the editor:

NJEA Preservice member Maggie Machado possesses greater insight and more perspicacity than some language arts supervisors I worked under during my 35-year career as a reading specialist, language arts/reading teacher and high school librarian. Ms. Machado has pinpointed one clear and viable solution to standardized test preparation that students will enjoy and that doesn't burden teachers to "teach to the test." The solution is low-stakes, choice, independent reading.

This preservice educator clearly understands that when students choose reading materials that correlate to their interests and read at their own rates—with no assessment at the book's conclusion—they read for pleasure. Students read confidently and with the knowledge that only they are responsible for internalizing content, new vocabulary used in context, grammatical writing and mechanics. These are components of standardized testing that the teacher cannot always convey to students in a classic classroom setting.

Congratulations, Ms. Machado! You, as a yet untested teacher, have offered a potential solution to a difficulty that has beleaguered teachers for years.

miriam reichenbach
NJREA



Summer Vacation Giveaway

A+ Travel, an NJEA partner in our Member Discount Program, is running a promotion to reimburse one lucky member the cost of their travel booked through A+ Travel. So, in addition to discounted car rentals and hotel stays, someone is going to get a free trip! Book your travel by Sept. 30, 2024, through the link below to be entered into this giveaway:

tinyurl.com/APlusTravel



COOL STUFF



AJ MEERWALD 2024 SETS SAILING SCHEDULE

The AJ Meerwald, New Jersey's official tall ship and a former oyster boat now used as a floating classroom, will be setting sail around New Jersey and along the East Coast in 2024. Learn more at bayshorecenter.org/our-ship.

Public sails tickets are \$50 per person. Others are priced as noted.

June 7-9

- Norfolk, Virginia for "Harborfest"
- *Tickets sold by Harborfest.

June 15-23

- Bivalve, N.J. (home port)
- Public Sails: Saturday, June 15 at 4 p.m.; Sunday, June 16 at 4 p.m.; Saturday, June 22 at 1 p.m. and 5 p.m.; Sunday, June 23 at 1 p.m.
- Birding Sail: Sunday, June 16 from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. (\$70)
- Oyster and Wine Sail: June 20 from 5-7 p.m. (\$80)

June 26

- Transit Sail from Port Norris to Cape May: 10 a.m.-2 p.m. (\$85)

June 26-July 6

- Cape May Ferry Terminal in Cape May, N.J.
- Public Sails: Wednesday- Sunday from 5-7 p.m.
- Public Sails: Saturday & Sunday 2-4 p.m.
- Family Env. Education Sails (Kids - \$25): Wednesday and Saturday 10 a.m. -12:15 p.m.

July 11-14

- Alpine Marina in Alpine, N.J.
- *Tickets sold by Tenafly Nature Center.

July 17-21

- Atlantic Highlands Municipal Harbor in Atlantic Highlands, N.J., hosted by AHYC and AHHC
- Public Sails: Wednesday from 4-6 p.m.; Thursday-Saturday at noon, 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.; Sunday at noon and 3 p.m.

July 22-28

- Liberty State Park
- Public Sails: Wednesday-Sunday at 5 p.m.
- Family Environmental Education Sails (Kids - \$25): Wednesday and Saturday at 9:30 a.m.

Aug. 2-Sept. 12

- Cape May Ferry Terminal in Cape May, N.J.
- Public Sails Wednesday - Sunday from 5 p.m.-7 p.m.
- Public Sails: Saturday and Sunday 2 p.m.-4 p.m.
- Family Environmental Education Sails (*Kids - \$25): Wednesday and Saturday 10 a.m. -12:15 p.m.

Sept. 13-22

- Bivalve, NJ (home port)

Sept. 26-29

- Artisans Faire/ The Bait Box in Greenwich, N.J.

Oct. 3-26

- Bivalve, N.J. (home port)

Nov. 1-3

- Sultana Downrigging Festival in Chestertown, Maryland
- *Tickets sold by Sultana



PRE-JUNETEENTH FREEDOM RIDE/WALK THUNDER

Sunset Lake Amphitheater,
Bridgeton
Friday, June 14, 5 p.m.

The Pre-Juneteenth Freedom Ride/Walk in Cumberland County will begin and end at Bridgeton's Sunset Lake Amphitheater, at 79 Park Ave. Songs and recognitions will follow along with food, water ice, beverages, vendors, dancers, drill teams and more. The event is open to all ages. This Pride in Public Education event is hosted by the Minority Leadership and Recruitment (MLR) Committee of the Cumberland County Council of Education Associations.

Cumberland County educators, their families, students and community will come together for an evening of togetherness biking and walking a 2.5-mile route around the Cohanzzick Zoo, which is New Jersey's first zoo. Students, teachers, parents and community members will be led by the Cumberland County Conquerors Composite (C4) Bike Club and travel in collaboration with Mayor A. Kelly with assistance from law enforcement. Come celebrate, socialize, educate, honor and recount the historical day in June 1865.

While this is a celebration of Juneteenth, it is a solemn reminder that many people of color were not made aware of their freedom until nearly two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation. Juneteenth is the nation's oldest commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. Juneteenth commemorates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement.

Register at bit.ly/FreedomWalk2024.

For more information visit cumberlandcountyyea.org or contact the CCCEA MLR Committee chairs Dr. Tiffanie ThrBak at tthrbak@njea.org or Nicole Kinsey at lindanay5@yahoo.com.

Finding her people at Newton High School

Meet 2022-23 Sussex County ESP of the Year Carla Brunelle



Carla Brunelle was floored when she found out she'd been named the 2022-23 Sussex County ESP of the Year. For the past eight years, she has worked with students with autism at Newton High School, although she began her career working with preschool students.

"I didn't know what to expect when I was assigned to work with students with autism," Brunelle recalls. "But I really connected with the teacher and although I'd never worked with students with autism before, it wasn't long before I realized that I'd found my people."

Brunelle, the mother of three students who are all in Newton Public Schools, threw herself into her work. She is the class adviser for seniors, becoming the first educational support professional (ESP) to be a class adviser at Newton High School. In addition, she is the club adviser for the Best Buddies Group, a program dedicated to ending the social, physical and economic isolation of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

**"I adapt the work to
the student."**

"I just related to the students," Brunelle says. "I enjoy making them smile. I enjoy watching their successes."

Brunelle's students are aged 18 to 21. Many of them were 14 years old when they entered the program, and now they are transitioning out of public education.

Brunelle works with seven students at the corporate headquarters of a local business, Thorlabs.

"I like to think that no one is incapable of folding a box a particular way or attending to a specific task," Brunelle says. "Additionally, I adapt the work to the student, so they are able to be successful and eventually become independent at their assigned task. I go nowhere without my tool bag of Post-it notes and a Sharpie marker. Success and independence are my number one goals for our students."

Brunelle also accompanies students out into the community so they can practice social skills.

"We go to the gym, grocery store," Brunelle says. "I like seeing them interact appropriately in public. People remember them and call out greetings. I love how welcoming our community is."

Brunelle has recently become more involved in her local association, but she was surprised when her local president contacted her to inform her that she was the 2022-23 Sussex County ESP of the Year.

"I was surprised and very honored," says Brunelle. "I enjoy being a positive member of my community and my school." 🏡

Proud Bridgeton Bulldog and union advocate

Meet 2022-23 Cumberland County ESP of the Year Jane Caine



Jane Caine has worked in public education more than 38 years. While she began her career working in the cafeteria in Hopewell Township, Cumberland County, she's spent the majority of her time in Bridgeton. Over the years, she's been a school secretary, student support secretary, library secretary and technology secretary. Through it all, she's maintained her strong belief in the importance of public education and belonging to a union.

"I started with the union when someone from my building couldn't go to a meeting and asked me to fill in," Caine says. "Through the years, my involvement has grown. I love Bridgeton and I believe that working in public education is a calling. It takes a lot of us to do the job well. But part of that is getting involved in your union and making a difference."

Caine pursued a career in education because it was a good fit for her family. While she could have made more money in the private sector, she and her husband placed a high value on the health benefits. Caine's two daughters

**"Working in public
education is a calling."**

are both teachers, one is in New Jersey and the other is in Texas.

"We are charged with getting the next generation to be the best they can be," Caine says. "It's important to me that I work in the same district where I received my education. Both my husband and I are graduates of Bridgeton Public Schools. We're both Bulldogs, Class of '72. I love that not only did I learn in my district, but I was able to give back to my district. I'm always trying to give back to help others move forward, whether it's children or adults. Everyone has something to give."

Caine's long years of union activism have made her a strong ambassador for getting involved.

"I've seen the difference that the union makes for members," Caine says. "Sometimes, it's a simple thing. There's just a misunderstanding. The union can help by getting everyone to come together to look at an issue and come up with a solution that works. Sometimes, you just need everyone to take a breath and say, we can solve this. I believe in the least amount of fanfare possible. But I also believe if you've got to get out there and walk in front of your building, you walk in front of your building."

Caine is honored to have been named the 2022-23 Cumberland County ESP of the Year, particularly considering the wonderful people with whom she works.

"I'm very humbled to be picked," Caine says. "There are so many people who work so hard and do such a great job that I'm just amazed that I was chosen." 🙏



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Upcoming changes to Title IX regulations

By Kaitlyn Dunphy, Esq.

The federal Department of Education recently announced its highly anticipated amendments to Title IX regulations, which will go into effect on Aug. 1, 2024.

Title IX, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2022, is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in educational programs and activities. It applies to any educational program that receives federal funding, whether it receives that funding directly or indirectly through students who are recipients of federal grants. Title IX governs both K-12 schools and institutions of higher education that receive federal funding, although there are some distinctions in the regulatory provisions between K-12 and post-secondary institutions.

In 2020, the Trump administration made some controversial changes to the Title IX regulations, which narrowed the scope of the types of the complaints the law could address. Many commentators argued that the Trump administration's changes made the process more difficult for those filing complaints of sex discrimination. The DOE's announcement of the amended regulations marks a significant milestone in the Biden administration's ongoing efforts to roll back those changes. The rules regarding school athletics are still under DOE review.

Expansion of who and what forms of harassment are covered

The 2024 regulations establish that Title IX protects students and education employees from all types of sex discrimination, including discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy and sexual harassment. The definition of sexual harassment was once again broadened to include quid pro quo harassment and specific offenses such as sexual assault, stalking, dating violence and domestic violence. It also includes unwelcome sex-based conduct that is subjectively and objectively offensive and is so severe or pervasive that it limits or denies a person's ability to participate in or benefit from the recipient's education program or activity.

Changes to investigatory procedure

Significant modifications were also made to the investigatory procedure. Educational institutions that are governed by Title IX are required to comply with reporting and investigation procedures.

Title IX has once again been expanded to require schools to investigate complaints of discrimination even if some

Local associations should be on the lookout, particularly on upcoming board of education agendas, for proposed modifications to Title IX policies.

of the alleged conduct took place outside of school. They are also compelled to respond promptly and effectively when receiving knowledge of conduct that may reasonably constitute sex discrimination. Under the 2020 regulations, schools only had to act when certain individuals had actual knowledge of sexual harassment and were only required not to act with deliberate indifference in the face of that knowledge.

Other provisions revised

Revisions were also made to provisions that some observers deemed unfriendly to those filing Title IX complaints. For example, schools may restore informal resolution procedures to provide an option, prior to the filing of a formal complaint, for those who do not wish to undergo the formal procedure. Further, schools once more can return to the single-investigator model, which allows the same individual to act as both investigator and decision-maker, removing the cross-examination requirement the 2020 regulations had in place for post-secondary institutions.

This represents only a few of the recent updates to the Title IX regulations. Many colleges and districts may be revising their policies to ensure compliance with the amended regulations. Local associations should be on the lookout, particularly on upcoming board of education agendas, for proposed modifications to Title IX policies. Local leaders with questions regarding any proposed changes should reach out to their UniServ field representatives, who have the support of NJEA Legal Services.

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

NJEA Report

What NJ Schools Did for SEL Day 2024...

...That You Can Plan for SEL Day 2025

By *Brittany De La Vega and Maurice J. Elias, Ph.D.*

Reflecting on the success of this past SEL Day on March 8, 2024, it's clear that social-emotional learning (SEL) continues to be a crucial component in shaping our educational landscape.

In 2024, the theme, "Empowering Today's Students, Inspiring Tomorrow's Leaders," led hundreds of New Jersey schools to provide students with valuable lessons in social justice, wellness, civic responsibility and more.

As we look ahead to SEL Day 2025, let's explore how equipping students with the ability to empathize and to understand and manage their emotions can embolden them to strive for a better tomorrow.

New Jersey schools leading our futures

New Jersey schools have been leading the way in promoting SEL, which has been spotlighted thanks to the dedicated efforts of groups like the Social-Emotional Alliance for New Jersey (SEL4NJ), a voluntary organization of educators, professional associations and advocacy groups committed to implementing evidence-based social-emotional competencies and character in schools.

SEL4NJ takes a lead role in gathering innovative SEL-related practices that our schools are implementing not just on SEL Day but throughout the academic year, and here are some prime examples.

James A. McDivitt Elementary School

During the school day, James A. McDivitt Elementary School in Middlesex County, routinely engages in promoting SEL practices. They start each day with Morning Meetings to give students some time to share similar interests and hobbies. During these meetings, students pass around a talking stick and greet each other in different languages, a creative practice of inclusivity and cultural appreciation. They also chant morning affirmations to start their day with a positive mindset. Check an affirmation out at bit.ly/morning-affirm.



Seventh grade students leading fourth-graders to brainstorm ways they can lend a helping hand.

In the second-grade classroom, students get to choose how they're greeted each day before entering and have an Affirmation Mirror to remind themselves of their worth and value, two simple but powerful practices that help boost their confidence and self-esteem. This chart provides students with options for how they want to be greeted: bit.ly/4dBQdu8.

Staff wellness is also a priority at McDivitt and, in SEL style, staff take a lead role. Vertical Teams focus on aspects of adult well-being and provide opportunities for staff to engage in activities such as restorative circles and wellness workshops.

The Communication Team hosts activities such as the "Talking Stick," where the speaker answers questions like, "How can we support each other better?" to show staff how to listen and talk to each other effectively.

The Motivation Team brings in guest speakers, including Juan Bendaña, who gave an inspiring talk about finding the power within ourselves to model positive behavior for students.

The Wellness Team focuses on organizing Zumba and meditation sessions to help reduce stress. They even have a therapy dog named Jade, who brings smiles to staff and students alike.

Brittany De La Vega and Maurice J. Elias write from the Rutgers University Social-Emotional and Character Development Lab and SEL4NJ. You can learn more at sel4nj.org.

Every day is SEL Day at James A. McDivitt Elementary School—just named as a State School of Character, where students and staff are empowered to be their best selves and help others do the same.

Berlin Community School

Berlin Community School, a K-8 school in Camden County, has been a hub of SEL initiatives.

For SEL Day 2024, middle school students took on a leadership role by creating SEL lessons to teach to the elementary students in their school. This hands-on experience solidified their own learning and empowered them to become teachers themselves.

Students also engaged in minilessons, each lasting 10-15 minutes, to deepen their understanding of SEL concepts where a scripted introduction helped set the stage for the day's activities. This is the script: bit.ly/script-intro.

To further support SEL learning, Jennifer Parks, the elementary school's designated SEL teacher, was inspired by her students to create a YouTube channel, @JFamilyWellness, where resources are available for both classroom and home use year-round.

Berlin Community School does not consider SEL an abstract concept, but rather as a lived experience that encourages students to become compassionate, confident human beings.

Butler School District

Butler Public Schools in Morris County went all-out in the week leading up to SEL Day 2024, focusing each weekday on one of the five SEL tenets. This included using Instagram (bit.ly/butler-insta). Teachers were also given a choice board (bit.ly/butler-choice) with ideas on how to bring SEL into their classrooms beyond just that week.

The high school counseling department added a mindfulness bulletin board (bit.ly/butler-insta2) with various practices for students to take. Additionally, they partnered with local restaurants (bit.ly/butler-partners) to provide discounts to families, encouraging them to spend quality time together.



McDivitt School's Therapy Dog, Jade.

In the Butler High School classrooms, teachers such as Shannon Neville-Greenwood implement SEL practices year-round. As a history teacher, Neville-Greenwood incorporates morning meditations, a March kindness competition, creative activities like writing "secret agent" narratives to check in with her students emotionally. (See bit.ly/neville-greenwood.)



Butler High students engaged in the "SEL Day Challenge," where they were asked SEL-related questions and won a prize for their answers, like journals, fidgets, stress balls and more.

Business Education Teacher Lisa Chestnutt uses unique projects like the SEL SWOT (see bit.ly/sel-swot) and the Kindness Plan (see bit.ly/kindness-plan) to engage students in SEL and marketing concepts. She also brings Butler High's therapy dog, Gucci, to school throughout the week for comfort and support.

Throughout the year, the Butler Public School District emphasizes the importance of integrating SEL into our daily routines to support student well-being.

These amazing examples of SEL practices across New Jersey schools showcase how teachers are taking creativity to the next level. At SEL4NJ, you can find more activities from some of the districts mentioned here and other schools throughout the state. New Jersey is also blessed with resources, such as the New Jersey Alliance for Social, Emotional, and Character Development (njasecd.org) and the NJDOE SEL webpage (bit.ly/doe-sel), that provide multimedia materials and support for bringing social-emotional and character development into classrooms every day.

Let's plan to make the 2024-25 academic year into SEL Year for all of our schools, to ensure all of our students are prepared for the tests of life and not just a life of tests.

GCEA celebrates women's history



From left: Moderator Joyce Farr, panelists Tamar LaSure-Owens, Marissa Cantu, Paige Wolf, Loretta Winters, Christine Hoffman, Elizabeth Volz, Maryam Sarhan, and GCEA President Chrissy Kosar.

The Gloucester County Education Association held its first-ever Women's History Month Roundtable Discussion, titled "Inspiring Inclusivity: Women Leading Change." Moderated by Joyce Farr who represents Gloucester County on NJEA's Women in Education and the Human and Civil Rights committees, the panel consisted of eight women who have distinguished themselves in advocacy, education, politics, media relations, law enforcement and The panel included:

- Marissa Cantu, the director of Community Relations for the Center for Family Services
- Joann Gattinelli, Gloucester County Commissioner, former mayor of Washington Township
- Christine Hoffman, the acting prosecutor for Gloucester County
- Tamar LaSure-Owens, Pleasantville educator, member NJEA Amistad Stakeholders Task Force, Atlantic County Representative to the NJEA Instruction Committee
- Maryam Sarhan, Pleasantville educator, Atlantic County representative to the NJEA Government Relations and Technology committees
- Elizabeth Volz, professor of mathematics at Rowan University, member of the Glassboro Board of Education, voting and women's rights advocate



The panel covered a wide range of issues.



The logo adorning a small case, the "first-time period kit," was created by design contest winner Daira Lee Borrero, Gloucester County Institute of Technology, Class of 2023.

- Loretta Winters, president of Gloucester County NAACP
- Paige Wolf, owner operator of Paige Wolf Media and Public Relations

The conversation was wide-ranging, including issues concerning the intersection of politics, education, gender, race, sexuality and religion. Often the first, or one of the first, women in their respective vocations or avocations, the panel discussed overcoming stereotypes and the roles everyone plays, regardless of gender, in building on historic gains and creating a better future.

Following the panel, panelists and attendees participated in a "Period Packing Party." They stuffed backpacks with sanitary items and other products. These will be delivered to social service agencies for distribution to women experiencing "period poverty." The backpacks will ensure women have access to these items.



Following the panel, GCEA members, panelists, and staff from GCEA and NJEA filled backpacks with products and literature needed for women experiencing period poverty.



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Friend of ESP: Victoria Hughes

For Victoria Hughes, a health and elementary education teacher in Phillipsburg Primary and Elementary schools, educational support professionals (ESPs) are not employed to merely “support” the professional staff. For Hughes, they are an essential and equal part of the school team.

This is the key reason that she received the NJEA Friend of ESP Award at the NJEA ESP Conference in February. The award can be bestowed upon any person or organization whose leadership, acts, dedication, commitment and support have proven that person or organization to be a true friend of, and advocate for, ESPs and their contributions to public education and students.

“As an educator, Vicky understands that it takes a village to raise a child, and she works hand in hand with ESPs to build a true sense of community,” said NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson upon handing Hughes the award.

Hughes travels between two schools, teaching nearly 1,000 students and working with more than 200 staff members. She works to ensure that her students understand that the ESPs with whom they interact are educators, whether the staff members are secretaries, custodians, food service or transportation professionals, instructional technology staff members, paraprofessionals, teachers or any staff member in the school.

“I have always made it a priority to include special education paraprofessionals in my work and to interact with them as the fellow professional colleagues they are,” Hughes says. “We brainstorm together to ensure that all of our students learn the objectives of our lessons. We discuss content knowledge, not only for any given academic day, but as stewards of our students’ progress.”

Hughes goes the extra mile to include ESP members’ core content ideas in her classes.

“Their ideas are such a complement to my lesson plans because they are creative, inspiring, concise, and imbued with kindness and compassion.

A true people person

Scott Elliott, a special education paraprofessional at Phillipsburg Elementary School, nominated Hughes for the NJEA Friend of ESP Award. He notes that Hughes has over 30 years in public education. Now completing her 23rd year in Phillipsburg, Hughes began her career in Trenton Public Schools teaching in the family life program, which was a pilot program of Rutgers University. Hughes played a key role in a program that went on to have a statewide impact.



From left: Victoria Hughes was honored at the 2024 NJEA ESP Conference in February. NJEA Vice President Steve Beatty, NJEA Secretary-Treasurer Petal Robertson, 2024 Friend of ESP Victoria Hughes, 2023 Friend of ESP Christine Cito, NJEA President Sean M. Spiller and NJEA ESP Committee member Scott Elliott.

“Vicky is truly a people person, especially when it comes to ESPs,” Elliott says. “I can attest that she treats all ESPs like classroom teachers each and every day, and always asks for their opinions—especially when it comes to classroom management, behavioral intervention plans and the establishment of protocols and procedures that affect all students.”

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Hughes is one of the moderators for the AAA School Safety Patrol Program at Phillipsburg Elementary School. The primary goals of the program are to help children cross streets safely on their way to and from school, to help them achieve safety on the school bus, and to foster qualities of leadership and good citizenship.

Hughes knows that this work also requires the equal participation of ESPs, particularly paraprofessionals who work as one-on-one assistants for students who need such specialized services. As staff members who implement the goals of the patrol program, their specialized knowledge concerning their students’ needs, as well as their daily experience with students at crosswalks and on buses, is indispensable in running an effective program.

“Vicky is collaborative, proactive and dedicated to any task she applies herself to,” says Edward Labatch, the assistant principal at Phillipsburg Elementary School. “She is held in high regard by her fellow colleagues—including support staff and administration. They recognize her commitment to success in the school and the Phillipsburg community as a whole.”

NJEA's Kate Okeson garners national recognition

Rumson art teacher to receive NEA Virginia Uribe Memorial

Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights



Kate Okeson, the president of the Rumson-Fair Haven Regional Education Association the co-founder and program director of Make It Better for Youth (MIB4Y) – The Monmouth County Consortium for LGBTQ Youth in New Jersey, and an art teacher for more than 20 years, is this year's winner of the NEA Virginia Uribe Memorial

Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights.

Okeson also co-writes the *NJEA Review's* monthly column, the Rainbow Connection.

NEA presents the Virginia Uribe Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights to a nominee whose activities in human rights significantly impact education and the achievement of equal opportunity for those facing discrimination due to their sexual orientation.

At Rumson-Fair Haven Regional High School, Okeson facilitated the founding of Spectrum, the school's Gender and Sexuality Alliance (GSA) club and has served as its adviser for more than 15 years. Through her work with

MIB4Y and NJEA, particularly through the NJEA Consortium, Okeson's work has influenced how LGBTQIA+ education and inclusion are addressed in public schools across New Jersey.

Through MIB4Y, Okeson hosted summits to develop curricula to meet the LGBTQ education mandate. Through her affiliation with MIB4Y, Okeson organizes and presents trainings to families, schools and students on the impact of discrimination. These efforts led to MIB4Y and Garden State Equality coordinating the pilot implementation of LGBTQ inclusive curricula in 12 New Jersey school districts, beginning in 2020.

Okeson's support for students navigating all the struggles of being LGBTQIA+ youth is matched by her leadership in a wide variety of civic, educational and legal endeavors. She currently is working to ensure that the New Jersey state Department of Education's Transgender Student Guidance is codified into law.

The Virginia Uribe Memorial Award for Creative Leadership in Human Rights will be conferred at the 2024 NEA Human and Civil Rights Awards Dinner on July 3, 2024.

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LEARNING

Wilderness survival

By Kathryn Coulibaly

It took almost 10 years for Mark Haug to get district support for an unusual class idea. After working with the Boy Scouts for years, Haug was familiar with the wilderness survival merit badge and the skills it tested.

“When I read up on the badge, I thought that these skills were common knowledge,” Haug recalls. “These were things that you picked up just from being a child. But the kids I was teaching it to reacted like it was a new discovery. I was surprised that students didn’t know these basic skills, and I felt that it was important for them to learn them.”

Three years ago, Haug, a health and physical education teacher at Central Regional High School in Bayville, finally got permission to proceed with the program. He began teaching Wilderness I, and the immediate response from the students was positive.

“This class is a mix of biology and history,” Haug says. “It’s really a collection of everything. We talk about the history of New Jersey, Native American history and the history of scouting. We go on a hike and stop to look at birds and talk about their calls.”

The class was so popular that Haug is now only teaching Wilderness I and II classes. He has six sections with about 150 students in total. Class sizes are kept to about 20 to 25 students.

“The kids who shine in my class are not always the kids who shine in other academic areas,” Haug says. “Oftentimes it’s the kid who’s never really gotten much attention who is the one who gets the fire started. There are a lot of kids who are shining in this program who never shine in physical education classes.”

Haug created the class to be very hands-on. Not only is it the best way for many students to learn, but these are valuable skills that need to be practiced.



Mark Haug and several Wilderness Survival students display the class banner and “Wilson,” their mascot.

“When I first introduce some of these ideas, such as a three-mile hike, I get resistance from some of the students who have never done anything like that before,” Haug says. “But we are exploring our own environment. We are looking at things they’ve never seen or paid attention to before. They’re finding out things about themselves and where we live. I’ve had students come back and tell me that now they’re organizing even longer hikes with their friends and even camping.”

Try, fail, try again

One of the projects students work on in Wilderness II is building a shelter. Working in teams, they design the shelter, gather materials and work together to construct it. They try and fail and try again. Some of the designs are based on things they have studied, and some are original concepts.

“Students are gathering pine needles, digging to create new floors, finding tree limbs to create a roof,” Haug says. “They literally have to get their hands dirty to be successful, and that’s not something they’ve encountered in school before.”

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



Topics in Wilderness I and II



- Animal identification
- Ax use and safety
- Bushcraft
- Careers in the outdoors and nature
- Compass use
- Disaster preparation
- Emergency food/ Meals ready to eat (MREs)
- Fire building
- Fishing
- Forestry
- Hiking
- Invasive species
- Knife safety
- Knots
- Map reading
- Self-reliance
- Shelter building
- Teamwork
- Trapping
- Tree identification
- Water purification



One of the students' favorite parts of wilderness survival classes are the Friday cookouts.

"Every Friday, they bring in food and cook it over a fire that they've made themselves," Haug says. "One student really excelled at this. He's like the Gordon Ramsey of the school now and other students bring in things just to see what he can do with it."

Everyone has something to offer

Haug recommends that other districts implement wilderness survival courses. He's seen firsthand the positive impact it has on a wide group of students.

"We've had well over 250 students go through the class. It's popular because everyone can participate. Everyone has something to offer," Haug says.

"We've had a blind student, students with Down syndrome, autism or other special needs all thrive in this class," Haug says. "Students understand that in the wilderness, you have to work together and that everyone can contribute."

Haug has seen benefits to the students' mental health, as well.

"Connecting with nature is a huge tool in our mental health toolbox," Haug says. "We're showing students that not only are we all connected to each other as people, but we're connected to the natural world, as well. We can derive great strength from working together in nature." 🏕️



Haug developed the Wilderness Survival program to teach students important (and fun!) outdoor skills.

From classrooms to community

High school students organize successful family events

By Students of Samantha Shane who are future educators

As aspiring educators, we devote our time in school to studying learning theories, stages of development and curriculum design. We are high school students at the Morris County School of Technology in the Academy for Education & Learning. We spend each day in our Academy class diving into the field of education.

As we studied how important parental involvement is, we found ourselves proposing to host a family learning night. In a U.S. Department of Education study, 90% of teachers cited wanting more collaboration with parents. We felt that designing family learning nights would take the burden off teachers to plan another event and provide us with an enriching opportunity to learn more about community events.

Planning the events

Lincoln Park Elementary School, one of two schools in a small district in Morris County, was excited about collaborating with us on two family learning nights. One learning night would be centered on literacy and the other on math. Our teacher, Samantha Shane, met with Lincoln Park School District administrators and teacher Alyssa Mol to better understand their needs and communicate our vision for the event.

Our first event would be a Literacy Night that focused on providing parents with insight into how teachers instruct their students. They and their children would study reading concepts by participating in fun literacy activities.

The second event we planned would be a Math Night that focused on teaching parents and students about math concepts. With this, the parents would learn how to help their children enhance their skills in math as the students had a fun night filled with educational games.

Samantha Shane's students are exploring education as a career at the Academy for Education & Learning in the Morris County Vocational School District. Shane can be reached at shanesamantha22@gmail.com.



By having students create math sticker story problems, MCST student Jessica Tracy teaches Lincoln Park students how math and reading are interrelated.

Planning a community-wide event can seem like a large undertaking, especially with 31 students involved—there were a lot of moving parts that needed to be taken into account. While working, we had to remember the entire event would only be an hour and a half long with two tracks. One track was for students in kindergarten and first grade, and the other was for children from second through fourth grades.

The question that drove our academy toward success was, “How should we format educational activities in a way that is enriching and engaging for students of all ages, backgrounds, interests and learning preferences?”



Students from the Academy for Education & Learning get ready for their first family night with their teacher Samantha Shane (r) and Lincoln Park teacher Alyssa Mol (l).

When planning the stations, we had to ensure that the activities we chose were engaging, age-appropriate and had a lasting impact. We first focused on identifying key standards based on the feedback from the elementary school. It was important to use the information provided about the students at the school to design the activities. Using high-quality websites such as ReadWriteThink and the New Jersey Department of Education, we refined the focus of activities to be hands-on and collaborative and encourage critical thinking.

We were responsible for the following:

- Creating standards-aligned activities for students and their parents in grades K-4.
- Facilitating stations at each learning night and interacting with parents.
- Creating high-quality parent communication.
- Drafting and submitting set-up plans to Lincoln Park.

As we planned the stations, we assigned roles to each other and used checklists to ensure all tasks were completed. Since each night had a theme, we had a small budget to purchase prizes, decorations and essential materials. The Lincoln Park Parent Teacher Organization also provided snacks for the event.

We recognize that funding can be an issue for other schools trying to plan an event like this. If funding for an event like this is a concern, staff might consult their union on how to apply for an NJEA Pride in Public Education

How should we format educational activities in an enriching and engaging way for students of all ages, backgrounds, interests and learning preferences?

grant. Another source to explore is the New Jersey-based organization, Bridge of Books, which donated over 800 books for us to distribute at our event. You can find Bridge of Books at bridgeofbooksfoundation.org.

As we continued to plan the event, we used Canva, an online graphic design tool, to create station materials, promotional flyers and posters.

Putting on the events

Our first event was Literacy Night. The night of the event, we arrived an hour early to set up. Materials for each station were organized into separate bins to allow for



MCST student Veronica Luer uses a codable robot with Lincoln Park students to get them excited about coding.

easy set up. Some activities the students participated in included hopscotch, a matching letter game, a post office, word hunt games and a life-sized version of Scrabble.

Students received a passport to carry around with them, which was stamped after each station's completion. Students also received a map of the room labeled with each station's location. While students were visiting centers, parents had the opportunity to learn more about initiatives hosted by the local public library to support reading. The Lincoln Park Parent Teacher Organization provided snacks for the attendees.

Jessica Tracy, a high school junior from Morris County School of Technology and graduate of Lincoln Park Elementary School, said she felt "honored to give back to [her] community and shape learning." Jessica plans on pursuing the field of education in college and hopes to become a physical education teacher.

After the students finished their activities, they visited one of our volunteers at a station to pick out three books provided by Bridge of Books. We felt strongly that it was important that students were able to take home books to practice their skills at home with their parents.

In addition, we had a guest author, Heather Prinzo, who provided the children with a reading of her book, *Looking Within*. Prinzo donated several copies of her book to the event.

"Literacy night is a powerful school and community experience that brings families together to demonstrate the importance of reading," said Prinzo. "It was such a pleasure to read at Literacy Night and have the opportunity to connect and engage with young readers and their families!"

Alyssa Mol, the Lincoln Park teacher who had first worked with our teacher, Samantha Shane, was instrumental in planning and executing the family nights. She regularly kept in communication with us.

"These evenings allowed us as educators to expose parents and guardians to the vocabulary and strategies that we use in the classroom, which allows for continuity with the students in school and at home," Mol said.

A few weeks later, we hosted Math Night using the same format for planning. Math Night was centered on a camping theme. Stations included fishing on a coordinate "lake," insect symmetry, measuring nature and campfire shapes. We infused literacy by having a station that included children's books that taught various math concepts. We also ran a station using Sphero robots, which are programmable robotic balls, to infuse math and science concepts.



MCST student Monica Guzman has Lincoln Park students using movements while learning sight words.

Lessons from hosting

In reflecting on both events, we learned valuable lessons about teaching, hosting an event, and communicating with school leaders and parents. We hope teachers and schools can use our advice to plan their own learning nights.

Here are our takeaways:

- To ensure collaboration, consider creative solutions to communicate when multiple people are working together.
- Start planning early and think about even the smallest details.
- Include voices to gain feedback and new ideas.
- Bring extra supplies to the event setup.
- Focus on the goal of the event.

What's next?

We had so much fun planning these learning nights. In the future, we hope to plan more learning nights centered on more subjects, such as history and science. We want to explore other important tasks educators face such as designing curricula, creating professional development programs and creating classroom communities.

“High school students thrived when planning and facilitating these events,” said Shane. “By providing strong support, these students rose to the occasion to plan two successful events. Teachers should explore how to implement authentic learning models in their classrooms.”

Planning a community event can seem like a daunting task. However, clear communication, meaningful goals and community involvement strongly benefit students of all ages.

Students in the Academy for Education & Learning at Morris County School of Technology have the opportunity to teach in a full-time preschool setting, intern at local schools throughout Morris County, shadow educators and learn important educational theories. 🏡



MCST student Giselle Mogro teaches measurement.



Student authors and editors

Grade 9 and 11 students contributed to writing this article. Grade 9 students created an outline and the initial draft. Grade 11 students served as editors adding the final touches.

Student authors: Duncan Felch, Gabriella Goodman, Erika Grissom, Krishna Maheta, Abigail Melamed, Lucie Parrish, Benjamin Picache, Francesca Piccolo, Elizabeth Quinn, Cathryn Smith, Kathryn Tubbs and Victoria Johnston.

Student editors: Lila Bazar, Monica Guzman, Ethan Statlander and Jessica Tracy.



Thrifter upper teaches fashion and sustainability

By Kathryn Coulibaly

Like most middle schoolers, the students at Christa McAuliffe Middle School in Jackson care a lot about their clothes. Recognizing this, Bridgit Valgenti, a library media specialist at the school, applied for a grant from the NJEA Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education to fund an eco-conscious fashion club. The goal was to help students learn to rework items donated to their existing school thrift shop and repurpose things they might already own. Students would learn to sew by hand and on a machine, embroider, perform alterations and, ultimately, participate in a fashion show to display their creations.

In April 2022, Valgenti learned that their team, which included art teacher Lizbeth Murphy and physical education teacher and founder of the school thrift shop Victoria Hay, had won a \$5,560 Hipp grant from NJEA. Over the following summer, they worked to put the program together.

"The response to the program was overwhelming, not only from the students, but from people in the school and wider community willing to step in and help," Valgenti says. "When we started Thrifter Upper, we thought that we would have 30 students total and focus on sewing and

alterations. We ended up with 90 students!"

One of the assets Valgenti and her colleagues had going into the project was the robust Vintage Shoppe at the middle school. Students were already comfortable and familiar with the shop, which has clothing, shoes, jewelry, hair accessories and other accoutrements, as well as access to menstrual products for students.

"We're really proud of our Vintage Shoppe," Valgenti says. "Thrifter Upper seemed like a great way to build on that success while teaching our students new skills and showing them how they could modify existing materials to make clothes they were excited to wear."

One of the biggest surprises about the project was not only the number of students who were eager to participate, but how many boys wanted to be a part of it. However, according to Tik Tok, the hashtag #boyswhosew had 53.4 million global views as of July 2023. Part of this interest

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



Apply for an NJEA HIPP Grant

NJEA Frederick L. Hipp grants help educators bring creative ideas to life. The only foundation of its kind in New Jersey, the Hipp Foundation supports initiatives to promote excellence in education. More than \$2.56 million in grants for innovative educational projects that represent a bold, fresh approach by public school employees has already been awarded.

Apply for a Hipp grant and bring your innovative ideas to life. The deadline is always March 1, but it's never too early to start planning. Grants range from \$500 to \$10,000.

Learn more at njea.org/hipp.



Bridgit Valgenti discusses a student's design ideas and helps them create a plan to bring it to life.

is attributed to the pandemic, when sewing video views and machine sales increased exponentially.

"We didn't have as many boys clothing items donated to the thrift shoppe, which forced them to be more creative," Valgenti says. "They sewed pillows, aprons and repurposed other items."

Increasing operational capacity

With 90 students in the program, space and attention became a challenge. The district provided an instructional trailer to operate from and store supplies and equipment, but there wasn't enough room for everyone to be in there at the same time. Valgenti and her team divided the students into three groups and had them rotate through the trailer, where the sewing machines and serger were located. When students weren't working in the trailer, they met in the library and focused on hand sewing.

Community members stepped forward to help. One of the student's grandmothers, Susan DaGate, a retired Jackson teacher, volunteered to teach the students how to crochet. Anne Riguer, a professional fashion redesigner and Instagram influencer who goes by @effortlessly_striking, met with students to help them put their designs together and coached them for their fashion show. Gail McLaughlin, a retired food and consumer science teacher, was one of their sewing instructors. Her husband, Jim McLaughlin, provided sewing machine repair and maintenance. Marie Crevenz, a retired seamstress, donated all her leftover fabric, ribbons and buttons to Thrifter Upper.

"We relied on community members to share their talents," Valgenti says. "We had many parents who could not attend our meetings, but who assisted their students at home and then the students shared what they learned with the group. One example is a student who was shown a form of Colombian embroidery. She then showed the group the pattern and the technique."

The club met weekly after school. During the school year, they held three late-night meetings leading up to the fashion show.

"The response from staff was overwhelmingly positive," Valgenti says. "They would often stop by during our club meetings to observe or help out."

Students created a variety of products, including bags, aprons, scrunchies and more. They altered many items and added embroidery and other embellishments to existing items.

"Thrifter Upper is an opportunity for students to learn a valuable, marketable skill while expressing their creativity," Valgenti says. "As advisers, we were given the opportunity to connect with our students as we watch them problem-solve and master skills." 🏠





ShopRite® @ school

By Kathryn Coulibaly

Jessica DiMino and Stacey Villa, special education teachers at Old Bridge High School, are known as the “ShopRite ladies” around Old Bridge High School. That’s because for many years, they have run a program, in conjunction with Wakefern Food Corporation’s ShopRite, that provides essential life and career skills to their students.

“The ShopRite at Schools program is really hands-on and practical,” says DiMino. “Our students are literally working in a functioning grocery store. It just so happens to be in their high school.”

The grocery store is adjacent to the Learning Lab, and it looks exactly like a small corner store. There are shelves lined with students’ and staff favorites such as macaroni and cheese, Pop-Tarts, chips, drinks and so much more.

“The students have input into what we order to stock the shelves,” Villa says. “They know what their classmates like, and they see what is most often purchased. That helps us meet our customers’ needs.”

What students purchase sometimes leads to nicknames given them by the Old Bridge ShopRite staff.

“I don’t always know all the students’ names who use the store,” Villa says. “So I call them by what they purchase, such as ‘apple juice’ or ‘Fruity Pebbles.’ It’s a way for us to connect with students outside our program in a light-hearted way.”

Old Bridge High School staff also use the mini-ShopRite. They can find cans of vegetables or soup on the shelves, in case they need a last-minute item to make dinner or forgot to pack a lunch.

DiMino and Villa also have added a coffee bar. The students are trained to act as baristas. After school, when the cafeteria is closed, student workers are able to heat up food for their classmates who stay after school for activities or sports.

While there are several other in-school ShopRites in the region, Wakefern Food Corporation is no longer taking on new school partnerships. Wakefern has kept the Old Bridge program in place, as well as the other remaining programs around the state.

Practicing real-world skills

The ability to practice real-world skills in a school environment is so important for students. Villa is the transition planning liaison for the students. DiMino is the ShopRite liaison and works with Wakefern to order supplies, schedule deliveries and handle billing.

“This is a physically taxing job,” DiMino says. “Students have to unload the truck, stock the shelves, break down boxes, and stand at the register or at the coffee bar to serve customers. Students have to interact socially with their customers as well as complete the transaction.”

Old Bridge’s program has been operating for seven years. Currently, nine students participate in the program, and they earn money for their work outside of the school

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



Students are proud to work in their own ShopRite, tackling tasks such as stocking shelves, working the register and creating signage.

“Our students are literally working in a functioning grocery store. It just so happens to be in their high school.”



With a smile on their faces, students unload the ShopRite delivery truck and organize the products.



day. They are paid \$15.13 an hour, New Jersey's minimum wage, when they work after school.

"The students love working in the store, and they like making money," Villa says. "This gives us a chance to talk about paychecks, how to check that they're accurate, how to open an account and pay taxes."

The students, who range in age from 17 to 21, join the program based on teacher recommendation, although DiMino and Villa also keep an eye out for students who would benefit. Most students self-select and approach the ShopRite ladies about joining the program.

In addition to on-the-clock skills, DiMino and Villa have also had an opportunity to teach students about "breakroom etiquette." This includes time management for students who struggle to eat their meals before their break is over, cellphone etiquette, as well as appropriate conversations with co-workers.

All of these skills help make it easier for students to be hired by employers after they leave the program—and more likely that they will retain those jobs.

DiMino and Villa are always looking for new opportunities for their students. Since grocery stores need signage and promotion, some of their students have been working on Canva, a graphic design platform, to create business cards, posters and other signs for the store. They also have begun a laminating business and water delivery service throughout the building.

"This program has really given a lot of our students a higher profile in the school community," DiMino says. "They flew under the radar before, but now, wearing their aprons and working in the store is getting them recognized and appreciated."

For DiMino and Villa, being ShopRite ladies is a labor of love, and one that benefits all the students in the Old Bridge High School community, not just those who work in the store.

"This program has such an impact on our students and on the morale of the entire school community," Villa says. "We're really proud of it and proud of our students." 🇺🇸



Students learn life, career and social skills through the program.

A different kind of coach

Academic Decathlon inspires achievement

By Rodney Lane

When we think of coaches, we often think of sports. Football, basketball and track coaches are traditionally some of the most celebrated coaches in New Jersey. But for more than 30 years the Academic Decathlon has held competitions in the Garden State led by the coaching of highly talented NJEA members. Dr. B. Franklin Reinauer, a business executive, economist and local elected official from Ridgewood, brought the Academic Decathlon to New Jersey in 1985.

The Academic Decathlon takes students out of their comfort zones. It prepares them for college because it focuses on helping young people develop into well-rounded students.

Decathletes compete in 10 competitions. These include:

- Seven multiple choice tests—in mathematics, science, music, social science, economics, literature and fine arts.
- Speech—impromptu and prepared.
- A written essay.
- An interview—conducted by a panel.

The Academic Decathlon has three student divisions: Honors, Scholastic and Varsity. Three students comprise each division. The Honors Division is made up of students with A averages. The Scholastic Division is made up of students with B averages. The Varsity division consists of students with C averages.

“The Academic Decathlon is something along the lines of sports for kids who weren’t sports kids,” says Lora Santucci, a member of the Morris Hills Regional District Education Association. “They prepare, practice and condition themselves through various ways of studying. There is a place for everybody.”

Santucci is a math and computer science teacher at Morris Hills High School. She has been an educator for 25 years and an Academic Decathlon coach for the past 11 years.

Rodney Lane is a part-time NJEA Communications and Professional Development and Instructional Issues consultant. He is a full-time special education teacher at Hackensack High School.



Coach Laura Durso holding her team’s Third Place Academic Decathlon trophy at the New Jersey State Awards Dinner.

Santucci has found it challenging to get students to participate in the Varsity Division. Many of these students are not typically recognized for academic achievement, so it has proven more difficult to recruit them for the team. But led by the team captains, students are assigned to various parts of the curricula. Student-driven crash courses have been proven to be effective in building Varsity-level students’ confidence. The courses that they present to each other increase their mental conditioning.

“Most schools do not have Academic Decathlon teams,” Santucci says. “Many schools don’t have the funding for Academic Decathlon the way they do for sports. Visibility would be one way to change that.”

Santucci notes that funding the program may be an issue in many schools. She hopes, however, that with more visibility around the Academic Decathlon, more districts will be interested in funding it.



Seen here at the New Jersey State Awards Dinner, Hackensack High School finished Third Place overall and First Place in the large school division.

Connecting the academic disciplines

“What Academic Decathlon does for our students is amazing because it takes a content area and connects all the academic disciplines,” says Meredith Noah of the Ramapo Indian Hills Education Association. “It gives them a base of things that they may not have access to.”

Noah is in her 26th year both as a social studies teacher and as an Academic Decathlon coach. What has kept Noah involved with the decathlon for so long is seeing students stretch themselves to the point that they end up being rewarded for academics.

“The structure of the three divisions allows for a variety of students to receive acknowledgment,” Noah says. “I work in a school noted for its successful athletic program. I am proud of those kids, but I think it’s really important and special to also reward students academically. It’s rare for students who may not be the best students to receive academic accolades.”

Noah notes that some of her students find it challenging to juggle multiple activities. Over the years, Noah has had numerous memorable moments, many of them involve students that participated on the Varsity level who have struggled with academics.

“It gives them a lot of confidence and a lot of drive,” Noah says. “And the fact that it covers every academic area builds their confidence even more.”

Seeing students from a different perspective

“The best thing about the Academic Decathlon is the students,” says Stacy Cozin of the Parsippany-Troy Hills Education Association. “As a librarian, I don’t always get

The Academic Decathlon is a vehicle for many students to be recognized who may not necessarily fit into the traditional definitions of success.

to know a core group of kids, but with this I get to know a core group who are dedicated, and I watch them evolve over the years.”

Cozin has been a library media specialist at Parsippany High School for 15 years and a coach for Academic Decathlon for 11 years. Cozin is not in the classroom, but her experiences as library media specialist gives her a unique perspective as an Academic Decathlon coach.

Parsippany has been to the Academic Decathlon at the national level seven times, but Cozin still recognizes the challenge in getting students committed to work beyond their rigorous schedules. Cozin reflects on numerous students who have come back from college and expressed how the Academic Decathlon prepared them with solid study habits for college.

Hackensack students Rihanna Jeanfrancois (l), Varsity Division silver overall state high scorer, and Shruti Sangamkar, Honors Division bronze overall state high scorer.





Coach Laura Durso back at school with Hackensack decathletes. From left: Alyssa Cavallo, Marissa Dooley, Rihanna Jeanfrancois and Durso.

"It's not just for 'A' students," Cozin says. "A successful team has all different levels of students. You don't need to be an 'A' student, you just come and bring your best and you'll get something out of it."

Building positive habits

"The best outcomes for our students who participate in the Academic Decathlon are the positive habits it builds for them—not just the knowledge that they learn, but the study skills, the dedication and the teamwork," says Laura Durso of the Hackensack Education Association. "At the end of the day, it is a team effort to get as far as we do."

Laura Durso has been a social studies teacher at Hackensack High School for 15 years and a coach for Academic Decathlon for seven years. She got involved in the Academic Decathlon by attending a competition to support her students.

Durso is a New Jersey state champion coach and one of only three female coaches in the decathlon's Region 1. The emphasis is on the students' academic success, and Durso understands that student leadership must play the ultimate role.

"There are 10 different content areas that the students have to try to master in a short amount of time," Durso says. "As the coach, I have limitations in helping with those content areas, but that's when the kids have to really assert themselves as leaders in the various subject areas and do a lot of peer teaching."

Not just for students with 'perfect' GPAs

"One of the things that I really love is that it's not just for students with perfect GPAs," says John Marshall, president of the Academic Decathlon Board of Trustees.

The Academic Decathlon is a vehicle for students who may not fit into the traditional scholastic definitions of success and allow them to be recognized for their academic achievements. Marshall believes that the dedicated coaches and students found in this article serve as examples, leading others to follow them. That will make it certain that the Academic Decathlon will grow to even greater heights.

For more information, visit the Academic Decathlon of New Jersey at adnj.org. 

Maps reveal the invisible

By Dorothy Wigmore

Want to start a conversation about health and safety? Find out if members have aches and pains or are getting hurt or sick? Look for patterns of injuries and illnesses? Show workers they're not alone? Have fun in the process?

It's time to bring out the mapping tools.

Unions around the world have used them for years, often thanks to the United Kingdom's *Hazards* magazine editor Rory O'Neill, who first saw these maps in the U.S. and Canada in the 1990s. (For early examples, see the "Participatory research" link in the Hazards.org resource.) In a key advance, Canadian Margaret Keith developed the "Map Your body, Map Your Workplace, Map Your World" approach, described in the 2002 book, *Barefoot Research*.

Map your body: Where does it hurt?

People's experiences are a good place to start organizing around health and safety.

Originally used for aches and pains, body maps can be made to investigate violence, stress, chemicals, long-term effects like cancer or long COVID, or to see the patterns of 300 Log reports or workers' compensation claims. A 300 Log is a form the state's Public Employee Occupational Safety and Health (PEOSH) agency requires employers to use to record work-related illnesses and injuries. Workers and their authorized representatives can get access.

Here are some basic instructions. The resources in the sidebar provide more details.

1. Use a prepared back and front body outline on flip-chart-size paper. Try to keep the shape neutral or use a male front and female back for mixed groups. Participants can add colored sticky dots or use markers (red for aches and pains, green for stress and blue for other symptoms) to indicate each spot where they "hurt" in each category.
2. Give groups of five or six workers two flip chart sheets. Ask them to draw (in black or brown) a front body outline on one and a back on the other. Label them. Then ask them to use the same colors and categories.

Dorothy Wigmore is a long-time health and safety specialist and WEC consultant. She has worked in Canada, the U.S. and Mozambique, focusing on prevention and worker participation to solve job-related hazards. She's a pioneer of body and workplace mapping for health and safety hazards.

3. If you have clear plastic sheets that can fit over a large, prepared body map, have small groups of people fill in a body map hand-out using the same instructions. Each group then uses colored sticky dots to mark up the layered version.

However they're made, display the results. Ask "What do you see?" Answers often include "lots of pain" or something about having common symptoms.

"Ah-hah!" is not an unusual reaction, once patterns are visible.

"This is the first time I've known I'm not alone in my pain," is how an experienced operator responded in a workshop for the Boston-area Operating Engineers union, where groups had marked their aches and pains with different colors depending on their job.

It was a profound insight. Why would he say anything if he thought he was alone? Why would he try to get the hazards fixed if he thought it was "just me"?

Patterns and "new eyes" emerge in discussion, with questions such as:

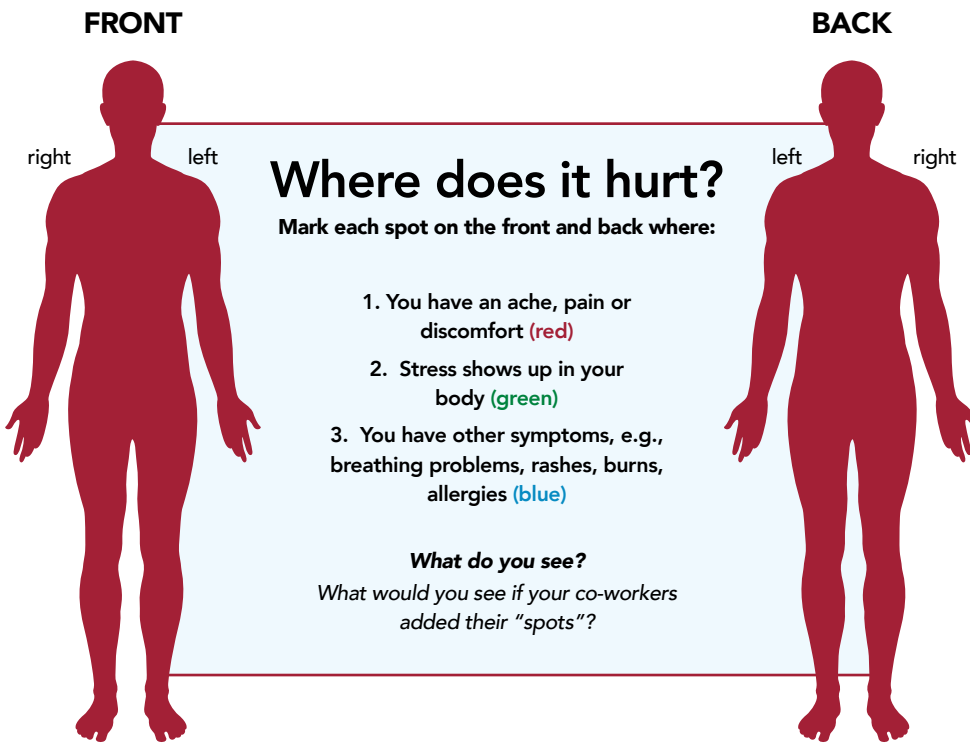
- What's the story here (pointing to specific marks)?
- How many (of the symptoms) were reported to the employer or workers' compensation?
- What's missing? Who's missing?
- What about long-term effects?

The maps and these questions lead to conversations about people's experiences, their rights and getting hazards fixed.

Map your workplace: What makes it hurt?

Workplace maps make hazards visible. Many versions go back to the 1970s Italian Workers Model of health and safety. Guided by the slogan "Our health is not for sale," workers and academics cooperated, making maps with four hazard categories, using them to propose solutions and inform strategies to get fixes.

It's not enough to know where hazards exist. It's essential to know who deals with them. That's why a current mapping version uses six hazard categories, adds codes for people (workers, employers/management, others) and separates information into layers (the physical space, people, hazards, other information). Integrating social



information, demographics and health and safety issues helps see the complexity of a workplace or job. (See the [wigmorising.ca](#) in the resources sidebar for details.)

Photographs can be added to the map, along with indications of the severity of a hazard.

Once something is visible, it's hard to ignore situations. People talk about "seeing the workplace with new eyes." The maps can be used to tell stories, identify those involved and start prioritizing issues. They also can be used to imagine healthy and safe jobs with the hazards fixed.

Map your world

This tool gets at the emotional and psychological toll of work and its effects on the rest of our lives. A complement to body and workplace mapping, it makes harm visible in drawing answers to "How does work affect your life?" Examples include teachers drawing stick figures being pulled apart and construction workers drawing broken hearts from a divorce related to long hours at work.

Why use these maps?

Mapping is fun, creative, participatory and revealing. The tools provide data, reveal patterns, bring order to apparent chaos, and unleash stories and members with "new eyes," inspiring action and solidarity. They make the invisible visible and hard to dismiss.

How can health and safety committees use these maps?

- Start with body maps to identify symptoms and possible hazards, at union meetings or workshops.
- Complement them with "map your world" drawings.
- Hold gatherings to make workplace maps for input before walk-throughs and/or when issues come up possibly affecting several members.
- Use workplace maps to record walk-through findings, including photographs.
- Use the maps to report to members, brainstorm solutions and strategies and (with anonymity ensured) make the case for changes. 🏠



Resources

Hazards.org

"DIY Research"

hazards.org/diyresearch/index.htm

International Labor Organization

"Barefoot Research: A Worker's Manual for Organising on Work Security"

By Margaret Keith, James Brophy, Peter Kirby, Ellen Roskam
bit.ly/ilo-barefoot

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

Aurora Casket Company

"Health Hazard Evaluation Report"

Appendix B

bit.ly/cdc-aurora

New Jersey Work Environment Council

"Hazard Mapping"

bit.ly/wec-hazard-map

Labor Notes

"Using Maps to Identify Health & Safety Problems"

By Dorothy Wigmore

labornotes.org/node/329

Wigmorising.ca

"Body Mapping"

wigmorising.ca/body-mapping

"Workplace Mapping"

wigmorising.ca/workplace-mapping

"Mapping Tools to See

the Workplace

with 'New Eyes'"

bit.ly/44CyIPQ



PAST, PRESENT
AND FUTURE

WHAT IS COORDINATION OF BENEFITS?

When does it apply?

Retired members with 25 years of eligible service in New Jersey (or eligible purchased time) who retire from a benefits-eligible position qualify for post-retirement medical and coverage for themselves and qualifying dependents.*

The health benefits coverage is provided through the state's School Employees' Health Benefits Program (SEHBP). Coordination of benefits occurs when an individual is covered by two different payers for their health insurance. When that happens, one insurance is considered primary and pays first. The other insurance is secondary. Coordination of benefits comes into play most commonly for our members in the following ways:

1. Children covered by parents with two different insurance plans.
2. Non-Medicare retirees qualifying for SEHBP coverage who are also covered by a spouse's retired health benefits.
3. Medicare retirees who have Medicare along with supplemental insurance or who have a Medicare Advantage plan.
4. Over-age children with disabilities.

Each is considered separately below.

Children covered by parents with two different insurance plans

Sometimes parents have separate medical coverage and "double-cover" the child. Typically, when this happens, the insurance coverage for the parent with the birthday that falls earlier in the calendar year will pay first. The year of birth does not matter. For example, if the father's birthday is June 3 and the mother's birthday is July 3, the father's plan would pay first. However, if there is a court order that requires one parent to cover the child, that parent's insurance is primary.

*Out-of-state and U.S. government service purchases after Nov. 1, 2008, do not count toward the 25 years needed for post-retirement medical benefits. However, up to 10 years of military service credit can be purchased, and that time does count toward post-retirement medical benefits.

The birthday rule isn't a law, but many insurance companies and states have adopted it as a way to determine which insurance company pays first when someone has double coverage.

Non-Medicare retirees qualifying for SEHBP coverage who are also covered by a spouse or partner's health benefits

If you take your retiree medical benefits and you also have retired coverage through your spouse, your plan will pay first for you and your spouse's will be secondary. The opposite will be true for your spouse—your spouse's plan will be their primary coverage and your plan will be their secondary. You cannot coordinate benefits if you and your spouse both qualify for coverage through the state of New Jersey.

If you both qualify for post-retirement medical benefits from your public service, you have two options:

- You can both take single coverage (or one person takes parent/child if you have children on your medical when you retire), or
- One person can cover everyone in the family, and the other spouse can waive their coverage and take it later. Please keep in mind that if you go on one person's medical, you must go into Benefitsolver and waive the coverage, otherwise you will not be able to elect coverage later.

If you are retired and over age 65 and plan on taking your spouse's insurance while they are still working, you do not need to sign up for Medicare until later. You will need to waive your health benefits through Benefitsolver so that you have access to it once you are no longer covered under your spouse's employer coverage.

Medicare retirees who have Medicare along with supplemental insurance or who have a Medicare Advantage plan

Retired members and spouses on Medicare have the choice of an Original Medicare plan with a supplement through Horizon or an Aetna Medicare Advantage plan. All retirees must be enrolled in Medicare A and B, or coverage will be terminated. When you are of Medicare age, Medicare is the primary payer and the supplemental

or advantage plan coverage is secondary. This means you must go to a provider that accepts Medicare. You cannot have two Medicare supplements or two Medicare Advantage plans. If you or your spouse takes any other supplemental plan or Medicare Advantage plan, you will be terminated from SEHBP coverage.

Over-age children with disabilities

Children are covered through your post-retirement medical benefits plan until the end of the calendar year in which they turn 26. A child who is considered disabled and reliant on you for their care can potentially be covered beyond age 26.

If the child is not on Medicare, they will go into the New Jersey Educators' Health Plan or the Garden State Plan. If that child applies for and becomes a recipient of SSI (Supplemental Security Income) or SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance), they will be put on a Medicare plan. This happens after 24 months of receiving SSI or SSDI.

Once the dependent is on a Medicare plan, Medicare becomes their primary coverage and pays first. This means that if a provider does not accept Medicare, the child will not have access to that provider.

A fact sheet providing more information on coverage for over-age children with disabilities can be found at bit.ly/sehbp-51.

Want to know more?

More information on how coordination of benefits works with your retiree health benefit coverage can be found in the *SEHBP Guidebook* on the Division of Pensions and Benefits website at bit.ly/sehbp-guidebook.

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.

MIDDLESEX COUNTY REA

June 13: Scholarship meeting/luncheon with officer installation at The Grand Marquis on Old Bridge. Cost is \$43. To attend, contact Susan Jaysnovitch at 732-925-1606 or andyjace@aol.com by June 3.

MONMOUTH COUNTY REA

June 4: Officer installation and philanthropic luncheon/meeting at Battleground Country Club in Manalapan. Cost is \$45. To attend, call Debbie Adamchak, 848-459-2672 by May 25.

MORRIS COUNTY REA

June 12: Scholarship Awards Ceremony and luncheon at Birchwood Manor in Whippany. Cost is \$35 for members and \$53 for guests. To attend, call John Beekman at 973-514-1080 by June 1.

PASSAIC COUNTY REA

June 5: Summer meeting/luncheon at the Brownstone House in Paterson. To attend, call Kitty Sausa at 201-445-7577.

Sept. 25: Fall meeting/luncheon at The Brownstone in Paterson. Cost is \$35. To attend, contact Kitty Sausa at 201-445-7577.

WARREN COUNTY REA

June 5: Meeting/luncheon at Hawk Pointe Golf Club in Washington. Registration required by May 29. Luncheon is \$30. To register, go to www.warrencountyrea.org/meetings.

Your summer reading list

From the NJEA Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division

Compiled by Richard Wilson

The iconic American singer and jazz artist, Nat King Cole, had a great hit singing about rolling out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer. Educators can probably relate to these words more than most any other profession. Even those who work in 12-month positions find the pace of the summer slows down, allowing for just a bit of the lazy, hazy and crazy.

The relaxed nature of the summer offers the opportunity to pick up that book that's been sitting on your end table since the winter break, or perhaps you're looking for a completely new read. In that spirit, the Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division once again offers their picks for summer reading.

This year, the list sports great variety, from fiction to historical fiction to nonfiction. From pressing contemporary issues to professional practice, from children's books we can learn from to adult themes, the list offers a little something for everyone. We hope you find a title that speaks to you.

After watching the series, *Lessons in Chemistry*, Vicki Serreino, was eager to start reading the book by Bonnie Garmus. *Lessons in Chemistry* is a captivating novel set in the early 1960s. It's the expertly narrating journey of Elizabeth Zott, an ingenious yet unconventional chemist confronting sexism and bias as she navigates her scientific career. The story intricately weaves together themes of gender inequality, ambition, determination and societal norms. It delves into the intricacies of interpersonal and professional relationships, emphasizing the significance of resilience and perseverance in the face of adversity.

Krista Orellana was learning life lessons through Kai Harris's novel *What the Fireflies Knew*

This dazzling and moving novel about family, identity and race poignantly reveals that heartbreaking but necessary component of growing up—the realization that loved ones can be flawed and that the perfect family we all dream of looks different up close.

Carolyn Thompson goes for a flight of fancy in *Weyward* by Emilia Hart. This historical fiction novel centers on three women, related by blood, from three different centuries, as they discover their gifts of witchcraft. They use their powers for good through nature while fighting for their lives.

Richard Wilson is an associate director in the Professional Development and Instructional Issues Division. He is the coordinator of the NJEA Teacher Leader Academy. He can be reached at rwilson@njea.org. For more information about the academy, visit njea.org/tla.



Adventure and Greek mythology are on the mind of Jamaya Newton as she tackles the *New York Times* best seller *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*, a series by Rick Riordan. These books follow the life of Percy Jackson, a teenage ADHD demi-god hero, and his friends, as they embark on multiple quests to save humanity and aid the Olympian gods. The series is as humorous it is informative, teaching Greek culture and history from a 21st century perspective.

Elisabeth Yucis recommends another piece of historical fiction with *The Women* by Kristin Hannah. This captivating novel tells the story of Frankie, a young woman who enlists in the Army Nurse Corps and serves in Vietnam. It is a beautiful story of love, resilience and healing. As a former English teacher, Elisabeth believes strongly that the summer is for fiction because our members have earned the time to relax and breathe!

On the flip side, Rich Wilson recommends *The PD Book: 7 Habits that Transform Professional Development* by Elena Aguilar and Lori Cohen. The keynote speaker from this year's NJEA Transform Conference pulls back the curtain on her process in developing high quality professional development. This is a must-read for anyone who has a passion for their own practice and is interested in working with colleagues to create positive professional learning experiences.

While reviewing children's books this past year, Camy Kobylinski discovered *All the Way to the Top* by Annette Bay Pimentel. This is the biography of Jennifer Keelan-Chaffins who was a disability rights activist from the age of 6. At 8 years old, she climbed the U.S. Capitol steps during what became known as the Capitol Crawl, drawing attention to the need to pass the Americans with Disabilities Act. The interest level for the book begins with kindergarten, but older children and adults will appreciate the forward and supplemental information provided.

Tamanyka Booker is looking to enhance her spiritual journey with *Crazy Faith* by Michael Todd. Using his life experiences, Pastor Todd writes of how hope and faith

have brought him to the space where he is today. He helps us remember that our biggest leaps of faith, while reflecting our own reality, may seem crazy to others. By surrounding ourselves with community who encourage us in our faith walk we can deal with the obstacles that block the way. It's not about religion, but your personal spiritual walk in your faith.

Amanda Adams takes a look at a blistering account of four decades of education reform through the lens of the people who lived it in *Punished for Dreaming: How School Reform Harms Black Children and How We Heal* by Bettina Love. The book lays bare the devastating effect on 25 Black Americans caught in the intersection of economic gain and racist ideology. Then, with input from leading U.S. economists, Dr. Love offers a road map for repair, arguing for reparations with transformation for all children at its core.

Dr. Chrissi Miles has also taken a look at equity in her recommendation, *Caste: Origins of our Discontent* by Isabel Wilkerson. Caste is a must-read for those committed to cultivating an environment of equity, understanding, and justice in our classrooms and beyond. Wilkerson presents a poetic and deeply eye-opening exploration of the unspoken caste system that has shaped America. This book not only illuminates the systemic barriers to equity, but also challenges educators to reflect on our own positions within these structures.

Making sense of serious illness brings Dawn Howlen to *The Cancer Journals* by Audre Lorde. Through intimate journal entries, Lorde takes us on her journey through the ups and downs of breast cancer. She expresses her frustrations with her body, politics and life but also shows tremendous strength and makes the reader more appreciative of life, family and friends.

Whether you are looking to sit back and relax with a good novel, take on serious issues of the day, or take some time to reflect and work on your own sense of self, we hope you will take some time, take a deep breath, and enjoy the lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer. 🌞



GETTING YOUR VITAMIN B

By Amy Moran, Ph.D. and Kate Okeson

Happy Gay Pride Month, NJEA family! It's the last month of the school year, and we're all thinking about activities and strategies that will help make these last weeks productive. We're infusing LGBTQIA+ affirmation in our class culture and content and planning ways to rejuvenate for a successful return in September.

Summer finds most of us orchestrating a combination of activities: summer jobs, time with family, traveling, hobbies, DIY home projects, and centering our own physical, mental and emotional wellness in the time away from the classroom. And many of us will pick up a good book to help us disappear from it all, bringing new ideas and ways of seeing the world as we turn pages or tap e-reader screens.

Books, however, have caused scandals throughout time. In the 1950s, books like *1984* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* were banned from various schools, only to become canonical must-reads in school curricula in decades to follow. In the 1970s, it was *Lord of the Rings* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*, followed by *The Grapes of Wrath* and *The Color Purple* in the 1980s—all with the same outcome. By now, we've read and used many of these as tools for teaching critical literacy, whose vital skills prepare young people to engage with ideas not necessarily aligned with their own.

Critical literacy centers on principles that are central to critical thinking:

1. Disrupt taken-for-granted ways of thinking.
2. Examine multiple viewpoints.
3. Focus on sociopolitical issues.
4. Take action and promote social justice.

Book challenges—which aim to ban, remove or restrict books from circulation—are an attempted power flex

Amy Moran, Ph.D. and Kate Okeson (both she/her) are out queer educators, leaders and activists working to make education affirming and inclusive for all of their students and colleagues. Moran has taught middle school for 29 years and was a high school GSA adviser for 16 years. Okeson is a 26-year art educator, GSA adviser for 14 years, local association president, and co-founder/program director of Make it Better for Youth.

**By reading banned books,
we gain insight into
authentic experiences that
others seek to silence.**

designed to limit exposure to ideas and people that exist in marginalized spaces, question power structures and/or challenge the status quo.

The book bans now sweeping across America center on books that explicitly address issues of race, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression: some of the most important social justice issues of our time. Those book bans seek to eradicate visibility of LGBTQIA+ people, BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) folks and others whose lives and experiences differ from those who've been published in the past.

This is the *opposite* of American freedom, because it seeks to constrict free thinking, a long-championed hallmark of the American experience. Notably, in late



Banned or not, stretch your reading to include unfamiliar authors and experiences that are part of any beloved genre!

Kate is reading *Survivor's Guilt* by (New Jersey's own!) Robyn Gigl. "I love legal thrillers, and a series that sees LGBTQIA+ folks—and a main character!—in real and affirming ways is terrific."

Amy is reading *Gender Queer: A Memoir* by Maia Kobabe, *The Cemetery of Untold Stories* by Julia Alvarez, and *Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude* by Ross Gay.

#ReadAsIfOurLivesDependOnIt

2023 a Washington Post investigation revealed that only 11 people were responsible for 60% of the book challenges in the 2021-22 school year.

Because of this, **we encourage you to spend your summer reading banned books!** At “Rainbow Connection,” we understand that books are uniquely powerful cultural artifacts. A challenged or banned book is typically one that serves a most vital function: to offer us a view of often-unfamiliar parts of the world that we’re growing to understand and to help us see our place in them.

By reading banned books, we gain insight into authentic experiences that others seek to silence, and we learn about the hypocrisy and manipulation of those preaching American freedoms whose actual motive is for others to have fewer freedoms than they enjoy. Moreover, we learn from Rudine Sims Bishop by using literature to mirror our own experiences, be the window we peer through into another way of life or become the door we use to join someone whose lived experience is not like our own. 🏠



Books lists and more

Scan this QR code for a list of banned books to read this summer.



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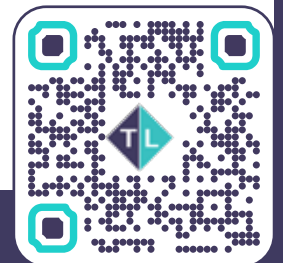
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Old tools, new twist

By the NJEA Technology Committee

There are dozens of new EdTech apps developed every day, all promising to revolutionize your classroom practice. But do these apps significantly benefit learning, or are they distracting digital toys?

Recent research suggests what many seasoned educators already implicitly know: traditional or “old school” methods promote certain kinds of learning better than new digital methods. Handwriting notes appears to be more effective than typing at promoting memory and making mental connections. Flashcards, manipulatives, and hands-on tasks can anchor learning in the real world, making those mental connections even stronger.

In classrooms increasingly relying on digital technology, are we losing touch with tried and true “old school” methods?

This article, however, is not an urgent call to discard educational technology altogether! When employed thoughtfully, technology emerges as a potent ally, bolstering rather than diverting from the essence of effective learning.

Productivity tools

Some technologies bridge the gap between the physical and virtual, benefitting from the best of both worlds. Get your hands on some of these if you can!

- **Anki** (ankiweb.net): This is a digital flashcard app where students can create basic flashcards. However, they can extend these by embedding multimedia in each card such as audio pronunciations, animated GIFs, etc., to help trigger their memories. (Free)
- **Google Drive**: Upload a photo of handwritten notes and use optical character recognition (OCR) to annotate the document. Works great on scanned prints. (Free and paid versions)
- **Livescribe** (us.livescribe.com): The Livescribe smartpen captures everything that you write and everything that is spoken. The pen contains a camera that takes a picture of your notes as you write them. It also has a built-in microphone that lets you record what is being said. (App is free. But the pen must be purchased separately.)
- **Rocketbook** (getrocketbook.com): This is a modern-day notebook that is reusable and can connect to cloud services to upload your work, organize it and allow you to erase and begin again. (App is free, but the Rocketbook must be purchased separately.)

- **PolyPad** (polypad.amplify.com): Virtual Manipulatives for Math including fractions bars, number blocks, algebra tiles, function machines, tangram puzzles, probability, geometry, and more! (Free)
- **Google’s Voice Typing**: You can type and edit by speaking in Google Docs or Google Slides speaker notes. Go to Tools->Voice Typing to turn it on. It can also be used to create transcripts of videos or lessons for students. (Free)

Artificial intelligence applications: websites

When used thoughtfully, these can be excellent time-savers for educators or expand the potential of students. Use them to create exemplars (good or bad), worksheets and other learning artifacts.

- **ChatGPT** (openai.com/chapgpt): This is a chatbot developed by OpenAI. Based on a large language model, it enables users to refine and steer a conversation toward a desired length, format, style, level of detail, and language. (Free and paid versions)
- **Craiyon** (craiyon.com): This is an online image generator that allows users to turn text into images. The platform is easy to use and offers a range of customization options, including font, color, size and style. Users can enter their text and choose from a variety of templates to create personalized images. (Free)
- **Google Gemini** (gemini.google.com) Formerly known as Bard, Google Gemini is a generative artificial intelligence used in many different ways, including text, image, audio, and video understanding. (Free and paid versions)
- **Grammarly Free AI Writing Assistance** (grammarly.com): This is a writing assistant software that checks and improves the user’s spelling, grammar, punctuation, clarity and style used in various platforms such as emails, documents and web content. It uses artificial intelligence to analyze and make suggestions to enhance the quality of writing. (Free and paid versions)
- **Quizizz** (quizizz.com) This platform offers a built-in AI tool that will generate questions for you. Users can input a summary of what they need or upload a document, PDF, or even a video! It will create relevant questions and design a quiz for any topic. (Free and paid versions)

Whiteboard tools

Use digital whiteboard applications as a multimedia substitute for paper notebooks where students can write notes by hand the old-fashioned way on their touchscreens but have access to modern the modern functions of copy/paste, drag and drop, embedding multimedia (maps, photos, graphs, etc.). They can also use digital flashcards to drill vocabulary, concepts, and world languages.

- **Microsoft Whiteboard:** For those in Microsoft districts, this integrates well with OneDrive to back up all your personal and collaborative boards in one place. (Free)
- **Limnu** (*limnu.com*) This is a digital whiteboard platform that allows users to create, share, and collaborate on digital whiteboard content. It offers a variety of features, including the ability to drag and drop content, add text and images, and collaborate with others in real time. (Free and paid versions)
- **Miro** (*miro.com/online-whiteboard*): This is an online collaborative whiteboard platform that enables users to create, share and collaborate on interactive visual maps, mind maps and diagrams. Its interface is user-friendly and intuitive, making it an excellent tool for remote teams or groups working together in the same physical space. (Free)
- **Excalidraw** (*excalidraw.com*) is an open-source platform that allows users to create and collaborate on whiteboard drawings in real time. It runs on a web browser, and users can access a variety of stylus and keyboard shortcuts to add shapes, text and images to their drawings. (Free)

Presentation tools

Help students organize and communicate their thoughts in a powerful (and beautiful) new way that goes beyond the poster board.

- **Prezi** (*prezi.com*): This multimedia presentation tool features useful templates and 3D zoom. (Free and paid versions)
- **Canva** (*canva.com*): Canva is free and has templates to create infographics, social media posts, videos, posters and so much more. It also can create AI-generated images to include in your projects. (Free and paid versions)
- **Animoto** (*animoto.com*): Create videos that engage and impress. Animoto's drag-and-drop editing tools and visual effects make it easy. (Free)
- **Beautiful AI** (*beautiful.ai*): This is generative ai presentation software for the workplace. (Free and paid versions)
- **Slidesgo** (*slidesgo.com*): This platform provides templates for Google Slides and PowerPoint. (Free)

- **Emaze** (*emaze.com*): Content creation with the help of AI. Use professionally designed templates to create presentations, websites, blogs, and surveys. (Free and paid versions)
- **Wakelet** (*wakelet.com*): Save, organize, and share content from across the Internet into beautiful collections. (Free and paid versions)

And click, just like that, what was old is new again!



Make sure you check out our **Tech Talk series** on the NJEA YouTube Channel youtube.com/njeaweb. Our latest video features the presentation tool Wakelet.

Scan the QR code to take our NJEA Tech Talk Series Survey.

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MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2024 NJEA PRESERVICE CONFERENCE

On April 13, NJEA hosted a conference for NJEA Preservice members at the Crowne Plaza Princeton in Plainsboro, complete with speeches from student and NJEA leadership, as well as an award ceremony to honor the work done by members during this service year. Some attendees shared their highlights with the *NJEA Review*.

“The NJEA Preservice Conference was a fantastic opportunity for all preservice students and very informative. My favorite part of the conference was being able to meet and socialize with so many other preservice educators and hearing their stories. It is great to meet so many new, fantastic educators!” – Kayla Kanarkowski, Rider University

“My favorite part of attending the 2024 NJEA Preservice Conference was the professional development session, From Mandates to Movements: Building Inclusive Classrooms. This session was incredibly engaging as members read from textbooks and shared thoughts and personal experiences. The speakers had great chemistry. Their presentation was raw, intriguing and insightful. I appreciated their time and hope to attend more sessions with them in the future.” – Chelsea Berwick, The College of New Jersey

“My favorite part of the Preservice Conference was the wonderful professional development opportunities we had. The speakers were so inspirational and touched on such vital aspects of education. I felt really empowered, and I’m grateful I had this opportunity!” – Kylie Smith, Kean Ocean University

**College students interested
in pursuing a career in
education can attend all
NJEA conferences when
they join NJEA Preservice
at njea.org/preservice.**



NJEA Preservice members at the 2024 NJEA Preservice Conference. From left: Jade Reynolds from Montclair State University and, from Stockton University, Madeleine Reilly, Victoria Tierney and Samantha Pray. For more photos from the conference, visit flickr.com/njea/albums.

“My favorite part was all the material we learned from current NJEA members. It all was information that I hadn’t known but that is so important for a future educator to know. And I always enjoy being able to see all the local chapters and my fellow preservice members!” – Maddie Baca, Rutgers University

“My favorite part of the NJEA Conference was its focus on including diverse voices in the classroom. The speakers did a great job of showing that just because you are teaching children, that does not mean your students cannot understand nuanced issues and inequities.” – Isabella Lombardo, The College of New Jersey

The NJEA Preservice Conference is only one of many opportunities that NJEA offers for college and university students preparing to become teachers. Encourage these students to visit njea.org/preservice to learn more. 📌

How to *write* for the NJEA Review

What can I submit for publication?

Feature article

Review feature articles address areas of interest to NJEA members. This is an opportunity to help your colleagues improve their skills by describing a successful approach or strategy. A feature article should range between 1,400 and 2,000 words. Remember to use subheads to break up sections; consider listing resources or tips as a separate sidebar.

Letter to the editor

Respond to content that has appeared in the *Review* by submitting a letter to the editor that is about 250 words or less. A letter/email must be received by the 10th of the month in order for it to appear in the subsequent issue (e.g., Sept. 10 for the October *Review*).

Speak out

This occasional column lets members opine about a hot topic in education. If you have strong feelings about a current issue that would be of interest to other members, speak out in an essay of 600 words or less.

I Am NJEA

Are you involved in a local, county or state association activity such as a workshop, a rally, a meeting, a protest or other event? Consider snapping a few photos to be considered for this page, which consists primarily of photos and captions of members engaged in association activities. Make sure your local president is informed if you are sending photos from local association events and activities.

Proud moments

Has your local association used Pride funds to promote our great public schools? Send a brief description and your best photo to NJEAREview@njea.org.

Toolbox

If you have a great way to incorporate technology to boost student learning, consider writing about it in the "Toolbox" column. Share your expertise in 1,000 words or less.

How do I submit for publication?

Submitting content

Email submissions to NJEAREview@njea.org. Be sure to include your name and contact information, the name of your district and what you do there, the name of your local association, as well as the name and contact information of your local association president.

The review process

You will receive an email acknowledging receipt of your submission, but the review process can take several weeks. Please be patient; the editor will get back to you and let you know if we will use your submission. You may be asked to revise the piece but will be given specific suggestions on what needs to be changed.

If your submission is not accepted for publication in the *Review*, don't be discouraged! While your article may not be right for the *Review*, it may be appropriate for another publication. All submissions, even letters to the editor, may be edited for length, style and content.



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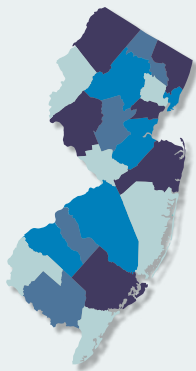


Questions? Call your EIS account executive at 800-727-3414, Option 3, or visit www.educators-insurance.com

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SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY

Workshops and conferences

highlights

Artificial intelligence,
civics

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 Division.

AI & EDUCATION BOOT CAMP

Course Format: Live

PD Hours: 10 Hours

Price: \$74.99

This course is live, not asynchronous, and has set dates.

AI Summer Boot Camp provides educators with the opportunity to catch up on the latest AI trends, policies and tools in preparation for the 2024-25 school year. The three-week online course will help educators understand AI's impact on education and to start using it to ease workload, enhance creativity and prepare students for a world with AI. In six virtual, synchronous sessions, trainers will address numerous themes relating to education and AI, including "Using AI for Daily Tasks," "AI for Formative Activities" and "Plagiarism, Academic Integrity."

In addition, this professional development offering will be split into two distinct tracks which differ depending on educator exposure to AI in order to provide a relevant and adequately challenging experience. Finally, each person enrolled in the AI Summer Boot Camp will receive a copy of Priten Shah's book, *AI and the Future of Education*, as well as access to a Pedagogy.ai Pro Account in order to continue their education on AI in education following completion of the AI Summer Boot Camp.

These sessions are held live:

- **Session 1:** Mondays and Wednesdays, June 24-July 10; 1-2 p.m. EDT
- **Session 2:** Saturdays, July 20-Aug. 3; 10am-noon EDT

For each session, there is a beginner and advanced track available, based on participants prior experience with AI.

Offered by Pedagogy.ai, this remote, synchronous course offers 10 hours of professional development credit. The fee is \$74.99.

You can find all the details and the registration form at pedagogy.ai/ai-education-boot-camp-summer-2024.

AI TRAINER CERTIFICATION COURSE

This course trains teachers and administrators who want to be prepared to help others at their school navigate the impact of AI on education.

By the end of this course, participants will be prepared to show educators the various ways that they can use AI in their workflow and teaching, lead conversations about the ethical and security concerns posed by AI and have important conversations with various stakeholders.

Offered by Pedagogy.ai this remote, asynchronous course offers 10 hours of professional development credit. The fee is \$74.99.

For more information and to register visit pedagogy.ai/pd/ai-trainer-certification-course for a complete description of the course.

CRASH COURSE: AI & EDUCATION

This asynchronous course is designed to give teachers an introduction to all the basics, including what generative AI is and how teachers can leverage its capabilities for everything from writing emails, to creating lesson plans to teaching students key AI literacy skills.

This course is designed for teachers of all levels and subjects. The modules include examples from across disciplines and the assignments allow everyone to apply the skills in a way that's relevant to their teaching context.

Offered by Pedagogy.ai, this remote, asynchronous course offers five hours of professional development credit. The fee is \$29.99.

For more information and to register visit pedagogy.ai/pd/crash-course-ai-education for a complete description of the course.

MORE TO LEARN

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR CIVICS AND HISTORY

The New Jersey Center for Civic Education at Rutgers University is offering one-day workshops on a variety of civics and history topics. The workshops are supported by state funds and free to all New Jersey teachers. All of the workshops will be held at Rutgers University in Piscataway.

JULY 11: Teaching Controversial Issues and Media Literacy (K-12)

JULY 16: Project Citizen

JULY 24: Engaging Students in Middle School Civics

JULY 30: Infusing Civics, New Jersey and Economics into High School U.S. History

All workshops start at 8:30 a.m., include lunch, and conclude by 3 p.m. Teachers can find workshop descriptions and register by going to civiced.rutgers.edu/events/range.listevents.

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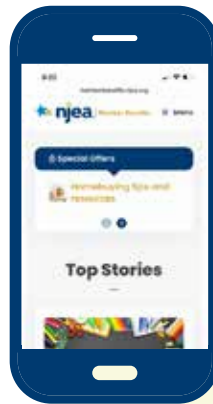


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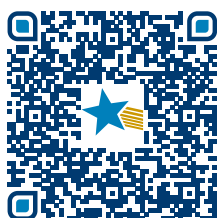
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MAST Graduation – After working to win and implement a Hipp grant, students and teachers at the Marine Academy of Science and Technology learned a powerful lesson in tenacity. Superstorm Sandy not only devastated their project, it also damaged their school and changed their lives. As the Class of 2013 celebrated their graduation, they embraced the lessons they learned and the skills they had to build in order to persevere and finish strong.

NJEA's Frederick L. Hipp grants provide \$500 to 10,000 grants for educators just like YOU and projects like this one!

The only foundation of its kind in New Jersey, the Hipp Foundation supports initiatives to promote excellence in education. Since 1993, the foundation has disbursed more than \$2.3 million in grants for innovative educational projects.

Applications are due by March 1 each year. Applications are closed at this time but learn more and start thinking about your grant ideas and explore previous grants at njea.org/hipp.

STAFF NEWS

HIRES AND PROMOTIONS



NJEA congratulates **CRYSTY JENKINS** on her promotion to UniServ field rep in the Region 1 office in Galloway Township. The office serves Atlantic and Cape May counties. Jenkins has over 25 years of service to NJEA, first joining staff as a part-time office assistant in the Region 20 UniServ office in Jersey City shortly after her high school graduation. In September 2004, Jenkins was promoted to full-time secretary, working in the Region 21 office in Livingston. In October 2010, she was promoted to administrative assistant in the same office. In April 2016, she transferred to the position of administrative assistant for the Northeast regional director. In January 2017, Jenkins transferred to her most recent position, administrative assistant in the UniServ Region 1 office in Galloway Township.

Jenkins earned an associate degree in criminal justice from Hudson County Community College, graduating magna cum laude. She graduated cum laude from New Jersey University in 2005 with a bachelor's degree in criminal justice. In 2008, Jenkins earned a certification in Public Sector Labor Relations from the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations and another certificate in Leadership Training from the NJEA Union School that same year.

An advocate for both NJEA members and for her colleagues on NJEA staff, Jenkins served as a staff association representative and on the Executive Committee, Negotiations Committee, and Negotiations Research Committee for the United Staff Association (USA), the union that represents NJEA staff. She has served as a delegate to the Representative Assembly of the National Staff Organization, the USA's national counterpart.

Jenkins is a co-founder of the USA Members of Color and NJEA Staff of Color networks. She chaired the USA's Employee Support and Advancement Committee (ESAC), which created the USA/NJEA Mentor Program and, later, the NJEA Member Advocate Program. Through ESAC and the mentoring program, Jenkins became the first associate-staff level Black woman to be promoted to a professional staff position in NJEA's history.



NJEA welcomed **CECILIA TROMP** to NJEA staff on May 1 as an administrative assistant in the Office of Accounting in the Business Division. She comes to NJEA with over 25 years of experience in project support and management in the financial industry. Prior to joining NJEA staff, Tromp provided top administrative support to eight wealth management advisers and one director for an investment firm in Princeton. Tromp holds an administrative assistant certification from the Cittance Institute and is a proud graduate of Perth Amboy High School. She lives in Hamilton.



NJEA welcomed **KIM MUEHLEISEN** to NJEA staff on April 1 as principal clerk/bookkeeper in the Office of Accounting in the Business Division. Prior to joining NJEA staff, she worked as the finance database and project manager for The Lawrenceville School. A longtime resident of Bordentown Township, Muehleisen lives in Florence with her two adult children, Erin and Tommy.



NJEA welcomed **LESHAUN ARRINGTON** to NJEA staff on April 16 as a UniServ field rep at the Region 17 office in Parsippany. The office serves Morris and Sussex counties. Arrington comes to NJEA with over 25 years of teaching and training experience. She had most recently served as a National Education Association fellow for the Labor Management Collaborative since July 2023. From 2020 and 2022 respectively, she was a part-time NJEA consultant for the Communications and UniServ divisions. A teacher in the New Brunswick Public Schools since 1998, Arrington was the president of the New Brunswick Education Association from 2018 to 2022. A proud HBCU graduate, Arrington received her bachelor's degree from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University in Greensboro. She earned a master's degree in education with a concentration on teaching English to speakers of other languages from New York University. Arrington served with the Peace Corps in both Haiti and Mali. She lives in Somerset with her son Vaughn, daughter Sierra, and grandson, Bryson.

JUNE & beyond

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

JUNE 07-08	FRI & SAT MOC Empowerment Conference	JULY 02	TUESDAY Delegates arrive at NEA RA	JULY 24	WEDNESDAY RISE Conference
JUNE 14	FRIDAY Executive Committee	JULY 08	MONDAY Delegates depart from NEA RA	JULY 27	SATURDAY Executive Committee
JUNE 15	SATURDAY NEA RA Statewide Caucus	JULY 17	WEDNESDAY PDII Impact Conference	JULY 27-31	SAT TO WED Summer Leadership Conference

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

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July 17
2024

On the heels of the successful NJEA TRANSFORM Conference in April, the **IMPACT Conference** will offer even more professional learning opportunities and programs designed for all members around wellness, professional practice, and much more.

For more details, and to register, visit njea.org/impact.

Employment Opportunities at NJEA

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



NJEA is an equal opportunity employer. Visit njea.org/jobs.

Become a pension advocate

Over the last decade and a half, the economic standing of New Jersey public employee pensions has changed dramatically. Before July 1, 2007, all public education employees, full time and part time, benefited from the same formula and same age requirements when it came to calculating their pensions at retirement.

That changed on July 1, 2007, when everyone hired on or after that date was enrolled in Tier 2. In subsequent years three additional tiers were added until those hired on or after June 28, 2011, were enrolled in Tier 5. Today, nearly half of all NJEA members are in Tier 5 of the Teachers' Pension and Annuity Fund (TPAF) or the Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS)—and that proportion grows every year.

Members in Tier 5 must work far longer for a lower total pension, with harsh penalties for retiring before age 65, even for those who have 25 or more years in the pension system.

To make matters worse, staff hired on and after Nov. 11, 2008, who work fewer than 32 hours a week are enrolled in a Defined Contribution Retirement Program (DCRP) rather than TPAF or PERS—a savings plan that provides no real security in retirement. This change disproportionately affects educational support professionals (ESPs), who are more likely than teachers to work in part-time positions. It also disproportionately affects members of color, who comprise a higher proportion of ESP positions compared to their representation on teaching staffs.

How the current pension system divides us

"David" and "Christine" are married. Christine began teaching in September 2000 at age 22, and David began teaching in September 2003 at age 25, putting them both in Tier 1.

In 2009, Christine stopped working when she had her second child. She came back three years later. Christine's district allowed a one-year maternity leave. However, since she began working again a full 24 months after the end of that approved leave, Christine lost her eligibility to remain in her Tier 1 account when she returned to her job.

When Christine began working again in 2012, she was enrolled in Tier 5. If Christine wants credit for her first nine years of service, she must buy that time into her Tier 5 account.

Even though David and Christine are both paying 7.5% of each paycheck into their pensions, David can retire with

The current pension system provides very little incentive for young people to consider entering the profession.

an unreduced pension in 2033. Christine, however, can't retire with her full pension until 2043.

David plans to retire at age 60. If Christine were to retire at age 60, she would take a 15% age penalty for life on her pension.

The tiering of the pension system has made it so that tens of thousands of members—those like Christine and those who started working after Tier 5 was instituted—earn a much lower pension or no pension, making a secure retirement out of reach.

At a time when school districts are struggling to fill teaching and ESP positions, the current pension system provides very little incentive for young people to consider entering the profession or to stay until retirement if they do.

Join the fight for equity, security and dignity

It doesn't have to be this way. Each of the changes to the pension system was enacted through legislation—and legislation can undo them.

As a justice-centered union, we must stand together to fight for pension justice for all members. For the sake of our students, our profession and our colleagues trapped in Tier 5 and DCRP, we must act now.

You can sign up today to be a Pension Justice Advocate, and help us achieve pension equity, security and dignity for all NJEA members.



Visit njea.org/pensionjustice to sign up and learn more.

TORY CHATMAN
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- Resorts
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Shuttle service will be available from the hotels listed here.

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

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