

notes DIGEST

Newcomer Academy in Mercer County Aims to Help New Arrivals to the USA



Dr. James Fazzone

Dr. James Fazzone recalls giving a tour to an English language learner from Vietnam while completing an administrative internship at Steinert High School in Hamilton.

“It seemed he just didn’t speak one word of English,” said Fazzone, now the interim superintendent of the Mercer County Technical School District. “But I was told his transcripts were good.”

When Fazzone walked the student into a classroom, there was a “high-end math problem” on the blackboard that looked like it was written by Albert Einstein, he said.

“I pointed at it and asked the student,

‘What do you think?’” Fazzone said.

The student looked him square in the eye and said the only word of English he uttered the entire tour: “Easy.”

Math is a universal language — just like autobody work, culinary arts, horticulture, building trades and other such subjects, Fazzone said.

That was what hit him that day, and also what made him so excited to launch the Hernández Newcomer SLIFE Academy at the Arthur R. Sypek Center in Pennington in September, a new academy that serves English language learners at the Mercer County Technical School District. (SLIFE stands for “students with limited or interrupted formal education.”)

The Newcomer Academy was named after *continued on page 6*

NJSBA Leaders Highlight Accomplishments, Vision for the Future at Delegate Assembly

Irene LeFebvre, president of the New Jersey School Boards Association, presided over the Nov. 20 Delegate Assembly, noting that the Association “rose to the challenge” in delivering a second straight Virtual Workshop.

“Our keynote speakers did a wonderful job, including Maura Baker, the student representative to the New Jersey State Board of Education, who spoke so eloquently,” she said. “I thought she was incredible.”

LeFebvre noted that the NJSBA must con-

tinue to encourage boards to take advantage of the information and training it provides. “We know for a fact that highly-functioning boards have a major impact on the achievement of students,” she said. “We have a sacred responsibility to push forward with our mission.”

Dr. Lawrence S. Feinsod, executive director of the New Jersey School Boards Association, gave his semiannual report to stakeholders at the Delegate Assembly, which

continued on page 4

School Dashboard Reveals COVID-19 Data

Do you want data — broken down by county — on COVID-19 cases in New Jersey schools?

There’s now a dashboard for that at www.nj.gov/health/cd/topics/covid2019_dashboard.shtml. Once on the page, select “Schools” at the top of the menu bar to review the latest COVID school data.

Speaking at a media briefing Nov. 22, Gov. Phil Murphy announced the New Jersey Department of Health’s launch of the dashboard, which includes K-12 schools as well as colleges and universities.

“This data goes beyond the numbers currently reported weekly and which are related solely to instances of in-school transmission,” Murphy said. “This dashboard breaks down the data by county, and the department is continuing its outreach with school districts to ensure as robust a report as possible.”

Dr. Christina Tan, state epidemiologist, said while not every school is reporting COVID data, health officials are anticipating more schools will do so, which will make the dashboard more robust. “For the purpose of monitoring trends, we feel this type of information is very valuable for schools, for parents, for administrators to get a sense of what is the disease burden,” she said. “We have to remember that the cases that are being reported might not have occurred through in-school transmission. These are self-reported cases, for example, that parents and staff might be reporting or that we’re picking up from the school testing itself.”

During the briefing, the governor and health officials highlighted a recent increase in transmission and hospitalizations, noting that they are hopeful that more people will get vaccinated for the first time or get a booster shot to keep COVID-19 in check.

Legislators Act on a Wide Array of Education Bills

A bill that would require the commissioner of education to prepare a series of reports on student learning loss during the COVID-19 pandemic has resurfaced and appears to be on its way to final legislative approval. The proposal was approved by the full Senate last December and by an Assembly committee in January. It had been scheduled for a final floor vote in March but was pulled. On Dec. 9, the bill went back to committee to adjust the deadlines by which the reports must be issued.

Under A-5126/S-3214, the commissioner of education would be tasked with preparing two reports on the impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency on public schooling. The first report would be a learning loss report that identifies and quantifies the impact of the COVID-19 public health emergency on student academic outcomes. This report would be due by May 31, 2022.

The second report, due Sept. 30, 2022, would focus on the continuation of school services during the public health emergency.

During committee deliberations on the bill, the NJSBA expressed support for its intent as it would set a framework for the assessment of student learning during the pandemic. The required study and report would be an important step toward developing a funded strategic plan to help address remediation. However, the NJSBA also recognizes the strain that the emergency has placed on staff and resources. Therefore, the Association cautioned against the immediate imposition of additional responsibilities on staff that would take away from districts' top priority – advancing student learning and achievement while protecting the health and safety of students and staff. Working with its partners at other educational organizations, the NJSBA successfully obtained a significant delay in final passage of the bill, which allowed school staff to focus on more immediate tasks.

The bill must now be approved by both houses of the Legislature before it can be sent to the governor.

The following bills affecting New Jersey school districts also received committee approval:

Assembly Education Committee

Mentoring Teachers of Color A-4595/S-2829 would establish a three-year “Male Teachers of Color Mentorship Pilot Program.”

Teacher Workforce Data S-2835/A-5292 requires compilation of data and the issuance of annual reports on the New Jersey teacher workforce. NJSBA supports the legislation.

Evaluating Teacher Prep Programs

A-5291/S-2830 requires each educator preparation program to annually report to the department of education on the first-time and overall test pass rates of candidates for an instructional certificate, for each test required for instructional certification. The bill also requires the department to annually

compile the test pass rates of candidates for an instructional certificate into a comparative profile of all educator preparation programs. The pass rates will be included within the documentation required for the commissioner of education's periodic review of educator preparation programs.

COVID Assistance Reporting A-5999 requires NJDOE to annually report to the governor and Legislature the amount of federal aid related to COVID relief it receives and distributes to districts as well as the purposes for which grant funds were used by these districts. Additionally, NJDOE would submit a final report regarding the expenditure of federal grant funds received to address the impact of COVID-19 on public education no later than six months following the complete exhaustion of funds by recipient school districts. NJSBA continues to monitor this bill.

Alternate Basic Skills Testing for CTEs

A-6000/S-4074 eliminates the requirement to pass a basic skills test to become a career and technical educator. As an alternative, a prospective CTE can demonstrate basic skills proficiency in a manner to be determined by the NJDOE. NJSBA supports the bill.

NJQSAC Postponement

A-6001 provides for postponement of New Jersey Quality Single Accountability Continuum review for certain school districts for the 2021-2022 school year. NJSBA supports the bill. Similar legislation was approved last December that applied to districts that were up for review in the 2020-2021 school year.

AAPI Instruction

A-6100/S-4021 Requires school districts to provide instruction on history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as part of implementation of New Jersey Student Learning Standards in social studies.

Senate Higher Education

FAFSA Pilot Program S-1229 Establishes a pilot program to provide guidance to students applying for federal financial aid. NJSBA supports the bill.

Assembly Judiciary Committee

School Security Drills A-5727 aims to ensure students' well-being during school security drills by dictating certain measures that must be taken in advance of, during, or after conducting such a drill. NJSBA supports the bill as amended. Both the Assembly and Senate version may now be posted for floor votes.

Assembly Appropriations Committee

Health Care and Unfunded Mandates A-6217 provides that local public employee health care plans or programs are not unfunded mandates. It also gives the Legislature's presiding officers the right to intervene as parties or appear as amicus curiae without Council on Local Mandates approval.

The NJSBA strongly opposes the bill. In testimony

submitted to the committee, the NJSBA cited both cost and constitutional concerns with the legislation.

The NJSBA was joined by the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, New Jersey Association of Counties and the New Jersey Association of School Business Officials in opposition to the bill.

Dec. 2 Voting Session

On Thursday, Dec. 2, the Senate and General Assembly convened for their first scheduled voting sessions since June. The Senate acted on a number of education-related bills, including several that the governor conditionally vetoed last month. The Assembly was also scheduled to vote on a number of bills the NJSBA had been actively tracking. However, the Assembly voting session was cut short after several members defied a new requirement that they submit either proof of having gotten a COVID-19 vaccine or a negative test result to enter the State House. Instead, the Assembly acted on just a handful of pressing matters, none of which directly affect local school districts.

Senate Voting Session

The Senate concurred with the governor's conditional vetoes on the following education measures. They now return to the Assembly, which must also concur, before heading back to the governor:

Student Journalists' Rights

S-108/A-169 concerns speech rights of student journalists at public schools and public institutions of higher education. Specifically, the bill provides that a student at a public school or a public institution of higher education who gathers, compiles, writes, edits, photographs, records, or prepares information for dissemination in school-sponsored media has the right to exercise freedom of speech and of the press, and is responsible for determining the news, opinion, feature, and advertising content of the school-sponsored media.

The NJSBA worked with its partners in other educational associations and successfully secured conditional veto language that will permit school district administrators to restrain student expression simultaneously with showing a justification for the restraint, rather than requiring that such a showing precede the restraint. This will ensure that students have the right to speak freely, while preserving the ability of administrators to maintain the safe and orderly operation of the school district.

Teacher Loan Redemption

S-969/A-2687 establishes a loan redemption program in the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority to allow teachers to redeem a portion of their New Jersey College Loans to Assist State Students loan amounts for service as a teacher in a high-need field in a “low-performing school.” The governor conditionally vetoed the bill to include a \$1 million appropriation to fund the program. He also recommended revisions to permit forgiveness of 25% of the principal and interest of the loan amount in return for each consecutive year of service, for up

to a four-year period and a maximum redemption of \$20,000.

Culturally Responsive Teaching A-5312/S-2834 would mandate that all candidates for teaching certification complete a course on culturally responsive teaching. As conditionally vetoed by the governor, the requirement goes into effect for the 2022-2023 school year.

Regionalization S-3488/A-5537 modifies various procedures pertaining to school district regionalization. The bill also establishes a grant program for conducting regionalization feasibility studies in this voluntary program, as well as other financial incentives for districts to explore regionalization, particularly those that are losing state aid because of declining enrollment. Importantly, the bill maintains voter approval over any final decision to regionalize — a key NJSBA priority.

Following legislative approval of the bill, the NJSBA requested and obtained conditional veto language that will ensure consistency in the voting rights of all sending districts in a sending-receiving relationship. As passed by the Legislature, the bill would have granted limited voting rights to a district that belonged to a limited-purpose regional district, but it opposed the formation of an all-purpose regional and subsequently entered into a sending-receiving relationship with the newly formed district. The Senate also approved the following measures, which now head to the Assembly for further consideration:

Teacher Workforce Data S-2835 requires compilation of data and the issuance of annual reports on the New Jersey teacher workforce.

Renaming “Security Aid” as “Health Safety Aid” S-3013 renames “security aid” as “health and safety aid” to reflect that secure schools provide for students’ mental health and well-being. NJSBA supports the bill.

AAPI Instruction S-4021 would require school districts to provide instruction on history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as part of the implementation of New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Social Studies. If enacted, the bill will first apply to the 2022-2023 school year.

Alternate Basic Skills Testing for CTEs S-4074 eliminates the requirement to pass a basic skills test to become a career and technical educator. As an alternative, a prospective CTE can demonstrate basic skills proficiency in a manner to be determined by the New Jersey Department of Education. NJSBA supports the bill.

Committee Activity The following school-related bills received legislative committee approval:

Assembly Consumer Affairs Committee

Mercury Flooring A-2078 requires new flooring for

K-12 schools and childcare centers to be certified mercury free. NJSBA supports the bill.

Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee

FAFSA Graduation Requirement S-3471 requires students to complete a financial aid application as part of high school graduation requirements. A student will be exempt from the graduation requirement if the student submits to the school district either of the following:

- a form signed by the parent or guardian, or by the student if he is at least 18 years of age, requesting the exemption.
- a form signed by the school counselor authorizing the exemption for good cause as defined by the State Board.

The bill now heads to the full Senate for consideration.

Electric School Buses S-4077 requires the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection to develop and implement an electric school bus program. The legislation provides for \$15 million in the first year and \$15 million annually in the subsequent two years to the department, subject to availability, to provide grants to support the program. NJSBA supports the bill, which can now be posted for a Senate floor vote.

Senate Labor Committee

Work Readiness Training Incentives A-1534/S-1573 “New Jersey Works Act” permits businesses to create pre-employment training programs in partnership with nonprofit organizations or educational institutions; provides tax credit to businesses that provide financial assistance to pre-employment training programs. NJSBA supports the bill, which now heads to the full Senate for consideration.

Senate Health, Human Services and Senior Citizens Committee

Expanding Eligibility for Special Ed Services S-3298 allows certain persons with developmental disabilities 21 years of age and older to attend special education programs and to simultaneously participate in adult day and employment programs.

Screening for Child Abuse S-3723 requires school districts to implement a training program for employees on the detection and prevention of child abuse during a public health emergency that requires remote learning, social distancing, or other restrictions on person-to-person contact. The bill was amended to make the training program an online module with free access for all school districts. The NJSBA supported the bill once it was amended.

Read more: See the Legislative Updates in the online edition of *School Board Notes*, Number 17 and Number 18.

Deadline to Complete Training Looms

School board members only have until Dec. 31 to complete their mandated training requirement for the 2021 cycle. As of Jan. 1, 2022, members who have not fulfilled their mandated training requirement for the 2021 cycle will be out of compliance.

New Jersey state law requires school board members and charter school trustees to attend training in the first, second and third

Completion of the online course satisfies the requirements of the School District Accountability Act.

years of a first term, and in the first year of a reelected or reappointed term. NJSBA is the state-designated provider of mandated training, which is available at no cost to members. Board members who have not yet fulfilled their requirement may complete the training online. Completion of the online course satisfies the requirements of the School District Accountability Act.

The following training is required:

Governance I: New Board Member Orientation Board members and charter school trustees in the first year of their first term.

Governance II: Finance Board members and charter school trustees in the second year of their first term.

Governance III: Student Achievement Board members and charter school trustees in the third year of their first term.

Governance IV: Legal Update Board members and charter school trustees in the first year of a reelected or reappointed term.

For more information, visit the Mandated Training page on the NJSBA website at www.njsba.org/training/mandated-training. Questions should be directed to the NJSBA Call Center at callcenter@njsba.org.

The U.S. Army and NJSBA Continue to Promote Student Success



New Jersey School Boards Association staff and representatives from the U.S. Army met at the NJSBA's headquarters in Trenton Dec. 14 to talk about how they can continue to serve school board members and students through the annual STEAM Tank Challenge and other initiatives. Left to right: Jennifer Siehl, manager, STEAM Tank; John Henry, senior manager, STEAM and Sustainable Schools; Lt. Col. Dion Hall; Dr. Lawrence S. Feinsod, executive director of the NJSBA; Irene LeFebvre, NJSBA president; First Lt. Andrew Becker; Vincent R. DeLucia, educator-in-residence at the NJSBA; Mike Halleron and Giovanna Hanson, U.S. Army Mid-Atlantic Recruiting Battalion, education services specialist.

Delegate Assembly continued

was held virtually.

Noting that he views his remarks as a report to shareholders, he looked back at the Association's recent accomplishments and shared the staff's vision for continued success and growth.

He called Virtual Workshop 2021 a "resounding success."

"We have had extremely positive feedback from board members and others in the education community," he said of Workshop. The event drew more than 5,000 registrants, and several hundred more participated when you include speakers, sponsors, exhibitors and guests — as well as parents who tuned in to the annual STEAM Tank Challenge, which encourages students to apply science, technology, engineering, arts and math in response to issues facing the world today. The challenge is open to K-12 public school students in New Jersey and is sponsored by the U.S. Army.

Feinsod highlighted the Wind Down fea-

tures that were added to this year's Workshop, noting that participants appreciated the opportunity to meet in smaller groups where they could chat with each other and NJSBA staff about the issues that were important to them.

"We received such glowing feedback that we are actually planning to institute regular virtual sessions" using the Wind Down sessions as a framework, Feinsod said.

The NJSBA's mission to promote professional development will continue with the rebranding and launch of the new Online University Hub, a professional development academy for educators that is being launched with the New Jersey Association of School Administrators.

The Online University Hub will offer engaging and interactive e-learning courses to all K-12 public school district stakeholders.

NJSBA's collaboration with The College of New Jersey and the New Jersey Department of Education, which resulted in the introduction of the Sustainable Jersey Digital Schools Program, also continues to pay dividends, Feinsod

said. The program supports schools in meeting the challenges of digital learning; in September, 37 schools from nine districts became the first schools to achieve Digital Star status.

Feinsod also mentioned the numerous research reports that the NJSBA has published over the past year to help school districts navigate the pandemic as well as the resources published for both new and veteran board members, including the latest edition of "Fundamentals of School Board Membership."

The NJSBA's strategic plan, Feinsod noted, gives it a blueprint to continue in the right direction for the next three years, focusing on key areas such as promoting student growth, providing services for tomorrow's world, providing professional learning opportunities for effective governance, teaming up with others on public education advocacy and focusing on innovations and technology.

The Association did not receive any resolutions prior to the official cutoff date on Sept. 16 for the semiannual Delegate Assembly.

As a regular course of business, the Association conducted a "sunset review" of its positions and policies on education according to standards and criteria, identifying which policies required reaffirmation and which ones required changes, including wording, amendment or deletion. Staff reviewed all policies classified as part of the 3000 Business and Noninstructional Operations and Section 4000 Instructional and Support Personnel.

Staff identified those policies that required reaffirmation and those that required change. The members of the Delegate Assembly received and acted upon those recommendations.

A motion to approve the proposed policy change to File Code 4112.1 of the NJSBA Manual of Positions and Policies on Education passed. 🍏

Get the Full Story Online

The print edition of *School Board Notes Digest* is published monthly, and it includes condensed versions of articles that have appeared in the weekly online version of the newsletter. The current issue is available at www.njsba.org/sbn. Follow links on that page to view archived editions.

Social Media Behavior Takes Center Stage in Two School Ethics Cases

The School Ethics Commission issued decisions Nov. 16 in two cases involving school board members' actions on social media.

CASE I

A complainant alleged that a school board member had violated various provisions of the School Ethics Act in a three-count complaint.

Count One First, the complainant alleged that the respondent board member continued to act as an “administrator” of a social media page after her membership on the board of education began and participated on a second site wherein postings and comments about the school district and personnel were allowed by invited members of the group.

The complaint alleged that during this time, the websites contained critical statements about the district’s superintendent and business administrator. The school board member responded that she acted only as an “administrator” of the site for the first five months of her board membership and thereafter resigned. She said she had no editorial control over the page.

The School Ethics Commission held that “merely serving as an administrator of the social media page, which may have included complaints or posts by third parties that were unflattering or critical of district administrators does not give rise to a violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24(j)*.” The SEC cautioned school officials to be mindful of their obligations as board members, but stated in this particular case, the facts did not show a violation.

Count Two In the same case, it was also alleged that the respondent board member attended multiple committee meetings of the Buildings, Grounds and Transportation Committee and publicly commented on her disagreement with the district’s proposed cleaning protocols and use of certain disinfectants during the COVID-19 pandemic. The SEC found that the respondent did not make any decision or take any action contrary to the educational welfare of the students by “merely questioning purported experts at a public meeting about the district’s protocols, including the use of certain disinfectants, used or to be used during the pandemic to ensure the safety and security of students and staff as school buildings reopened

... it is important that board members take great care when using social media.

for in-person learning.”

Count Three Lastly, the respondent board member was charged with serving as an administrator of a private Facebook group in which she posted information related to the district. This group was not open to the public and was not used by the respondent board member in her official capacity. The complainant alleged that this forum amounted to taking “private action that may compromise the board.” The board ultimately could find no facts that demonstrated that the private site was in any way done in her official capacity and there were no facts to demonstrate that any statements on the site compromised the board. The SEC once again urged school officials “to exercise caution while navigating the inter-connected world of social media.”

As such, all charges were dismissed against the respondent board member and no penalty imposed. This case can be found at [tinyurl.com/yc74sykj](https://www.tinyurl.com/yc74sykj).

CASE II

In a consolidated matter involving two complainants, it was alleged that a former board member violated the School Ethics Act when he made multiple anti-Muslim statements on his personal Facebook page.

The respondent did not dispute the fact that he made the statements as alleged. However, he stated that they were intended to be only viewed by people on his private site. Lastly, the respondent did have a disclaimer on his page that stated that the opinions expressed were his and not that of his board of education.

The matter went to a full hearing before the Office of Administrative Law. The administrative law judge held that even though the respondent was no longer a board member as he had not sought reelection, that he had violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)* insofar his

statements did indeed take private action that compromised the board. It was determined that the respondent’s statement could be seen as “violating the public trust or creating such an impression so as to cause the impairment of the board or to expose it to discredit or suspicion.” The administrative law judge recommended a censure for the respondent.

The SEC upheld both the findings and the proposed penalty. The penalty phase of the case will now go on to the New Jersey Commissioner of Education, who can adopt, reject or modify the censure.

This case can be found at [tinyurl.com/5n8yu7ye](https://www.tinyurl.com/5n8yu7ye).

Board members must be aware that every SEC analysis relies solely on the evidence presented to the SEC. As such, it is important that board members take great care when using social media. Questions on these cases should be directed to your district’s school board attorney or the NJSBA’s Attorney of the Day at 609-278-5279.

NJSDA, NJDOE Announce \$75M for Emergent and Capital Maintenance Needs

The New Jersey Schools Development Authority is getting a direct appropriation of \$75 million from New Jersey’s fiscal year 2022 budget to provide funding for projects related to emergent and capital maintenance needs, according to a joint memo from the New Jersey Department of Education and New Jersey Schools Development Authority.

The funding is available to Schools Development Authority districts and regular operating districts to address emergent projects as well as capital maintenance projects, especially for facilities costs to address COVID-19 concerns.

The funding is available to offset district costs associated with ensuring students have safe and healthy learning environments. Districts can use these funds to offset appropriate project costs incurred this fiscal year.

Questions regarding this process should be directed to NJSDA at FY22Grant@njsda.gov.

EDUCATION matters

Two Expert Communicators Share Tips on 'Education Matters'

Two communications professionals recently shared best practices on how New Jersey school districts can communicate better with the community on "Education Matters," the popular video series hosted by Ray Pinney, director of county activities and member engagement with the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Lori Perlow, public information officer for the Haddon Township School District Consortium and president of the New Jersey School Public Relations Association; and Paul Zeller, director of technology and communication, Pascack Valley Regional High School District, and president-elect of the New Jersey School Public Relations Association, shared an array of insights to help school districts bolster communication skills.

Visit tinyurl.com/2p8e4t5m to watch the interview.

Education Matters' Highlights Late Start Times

Dr. Christine Burton, superintendent of Millburn Township Public Schools, was also interviewed by Pinney and featured on the popular video series.

She highlights how her district studied moving back the start time for the school day, answering questions such as:

- Why did the district move in this direction?
- What challenges has the district faced?
- Why should school districts consider adjusting their schedule?

Visit tinyurl.com/2p8jrum7 to watch the interview.

Newcomer Academy continued

Yasmin E. Hernández, the interim executive county superintendent for Mercer County, which has 11 public school districts. Hernández was instrumental in advocating for the need of such an academy after district super-

intendents approached her about the need.

Mercer district superintendents explored the idea further at roundtable meetings and leaned on Hernández for support, who spearheaded the creation of the Newark International Newcomer Student Center when she was an education administrator at Newark Public Schools. In April 2010, the Newark center was designated as a Bilingual/ESL N.J. Model Program Resource Center of Excellence for the 2010-2012 award period for New Jersey.

"I kept hearing about a center for English language learners and thought it sounded like a good idea – and I wasn't sure why we hadn't done it," Fazzone said. "Hernández's initiative, her thought process and her bringing to us the need has been invaluable. She is very enthusiastic and supportive of everything we have done so far."

Fazzone, who served as principal of MCTS for two years before taking the interim superintendent role for the district, was happy to help make the concept a reality.

"I don't like talking about things too long and not acting on them," he said. "There were some grandiose thoughts: rehabbing a building and restoring it, but that takes a lot of work. I had experience as a mayor (of Burlington City) and as a board president – and I know it takes a long time to get a big building ready."

So, he advocated for starting the program at MCTS's Arthur R. Sypek Center, which could accept students from various districts. The freshman class began with 15 students, and the intent is to add 15 more next year and in subsequent years. When the freshmen of the inaugural class are seniors, if all goes as planned, there will be 60 students enrolled at the academy. Students could potentially stay a fifth year – and Fazzone did not rule out the possibility of expanding the program if needed.

"I would like to keep the Newcomer Academy right where it is for now, but we are going to have another facility by Nottingham High School (in Hamilton), and we can possibly move some of our other current programs there," he noted.

The Newcomer Academy students will get a sampling of MCTS's traditional offer-

ings, but the focus will be on horticulture and culinary arts. MCTS has hired a bilingual supervisor and bilingual teacher to support the program. There was a ribbon-cutting ceremony Sept. 28.

Fazzone thinks a vocational education is a great option for all students. In addition to

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Dr. James Fazzone

the Newcomer Academy, the Mercer County Technical School District includes the Academy of Culinary Arts, the Health Sciences Academy, a STEM Academy, numerous Shared-Time Programs and an adult evening school. The campuses include the Arthur R. Sypek Center of Pennington, the Assunpink Center in Hamilton and the Career Prep Program located on the grounds of Mercer County Community College.

"Many of the kids within a year of graduating can get high six-figure jobs without ever having had to take out a college loan," Fazzone said. "After learning to be a mechanic, you can go anywhere in the country and get a job tomorrow. You can come here and learn a trade. We earn our money the old-fashioned way: We work for it."

Download an NJSBA Special Report "Educational Opportunities for the Non-College-Bound Learner" is a special report published by the New Jersey School Boards Association. It highlights dozens of recommendations from an NJSBA task force and reveals strategies to ensure schools meet the needs of the career-focused student. The full report can be found at www.njsba.org/news-information/research/projects/final-report-educational-opportunities-for-the-non-college-bound-learner/. 

A Key NJSBA Staffer Highlights the Benefits of the New Online University Hub

With next year around the corner, it's time to think about setting your team up for future success. A big part of that will mean leveraging the resources the NJSBA offers, including its new Online University Hub, a professional development academy.

The New Jersey School Boards Association launched the hub with the New Jersey Association of School Administrators. It offers engaging and interactive e-learning courses to all K-12 public school district stakeholders.

The hub provides school districts with targeted professional learning options for school leaders, staff and educators. From social-emotional learning, to accelerated learning, diversity and equity and much more, the curriculum encompasses some of the most important and timely topics in education.



Lou Schimenti

School Board Notes recently caught up with Lou Schimenti, senior manager, products and services at NJSBA, to learn more about the hub and why the education community is so excited about all it has to offer.

How is the Online University Hub different than the NJSBA Online University? The NJSBA Online University for school board members, created in partnership with Rutgers University Division of Continuing Studies, offers on-demand and flexible online professional learning opportunities for school board members.

The Online University Hub expands on this idea and offers training and professional development courses for educators and other district stakeholders.

Why did the NJSBA and NJASA team up on this initiative? Whether you are an administrator or a school board member, you need to continually focus on professional development. At the end of the day that's what helps both groups work together to optimize student learning. Teaming up on the Online University Hub was a natural fit as it gives both associations the opportunity to promote this vital new platform to districts. Visit www.njlearninghub.org to learn more.

NJSBA's New Labor Initiatives to Help Schools

The New Jersey School Boards Association is proud to announce its new Labor Contract Wellness Check and Salary Guide Wellness Check programs.

NJSBA has reimagined the way we provide our members with valuable labor contract and salary guide analyses by offering a product more directly tailored to issues important to your district. All school districts are different and have different hot-button topics when going into negotiations. As such, the one-size-fits-all contract or salary guide analyses of yesterday will be customized to the issues you tell us are important.

Contract Wellness Check Contract Wellness Check will analyze teacher contracts and consist of the following two mandatory contract clauses analyses: expiring salary guide analysis and health care.

The submitting district will then be able to specify up to three additional clauses for the NJSBA to analyze. Examples include: Contract duration, grievance procedures, workday/

Webinar to Focus on Transitioning to Electric Vehicles



Sustainable Jersey will hold a free webinar, Wednesday, Jan. 26, from 1 to 2:30 p.m., on "Funding for Transitioning Fleets to EVs."

The webinar will highlight funding options available to help municipalities and school districts add electric vehicles to their fleets. The webinar supports the Sustainable Jersey for Schools Sustainable Fleets action.

Visit tinyurl.com/2p9e9ajd to register.

school year, negotiation procedures and tuition reimbursement/professional development. Additional clause analysis requests will be \$150/clause.

Some additional benefits of this program include: one virtual staff member conference with district staff/board negotiations committee, more expedient service, a legal update of hot topics in negotiations that will be updated quarterly and credits toward board certification in NJSBA's Board Member Academy.

Salary Guide Wellness Check The Salary Guide Wellness Check will analyze a union's teachers' salary guide proposal. The SGWC will include a structural analysis of the base year, a cost analysis, legal update of hot topics in negotiations and the most recent county settlement data from NJSBA's data services. Additional unit salary guide analysis requests will be \$150/hour. Some example units can include secretaries, custodians, paraprofessionals, etc.

Also included in this service is one virtual staff member conference with district staff/board negotiations committee, more expedient service, credits toward board certification in NJSBA's Board Member Academy as labor credits — and the district will automatically receive county settlement data information, with no need for a formal request.

If your district is interested in either of these programs, please contact Gina Cuciti at gcuciti@njsba.org.

NJEA Reiterates 2022 Convention Dates

As school districts throughout New Jersey make plans for the 2022-2023 school year, the New Jersey Education Association reminds everyone that its 2022 convention will be Nov. 10-11. Full convention details will be posted in coming months at NJEA.org.



NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

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BRIEFLY NOTED

NJSBA 2022-2024 Strategic Plan Approved

On Nov. 19, NJSBA's Board of Directors approved "Framework for the Future," NJSBA's Strategic Plan for 2022-2024.

The plan was developed with input from NJSBA member and staff surveys, as well as involvement in Strategic Planning Forums held in October.

"The NJSBA Strategic Plan represents both continuity and growth for the Association," said Dr. Lawrence S. Feinsod, NJSBA executive director. "I want to thank the officers and the board members who participated in the planning forums and provided insights through our survey. Your contributions to the process were critical."

Visit www.njsba.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/strategic-plan-online.pdf to read the full text of the plan.

Get Involved: Volunteer to Help NJSBA

NJSBA President Irene LeFebvre reminds board members that the NJSBA has opportunities for volunteer service on standing committees and task forces, as well as on occasional ad hoc committees that are formed for a limited term to consider a specific issue or project. Board members can also volunteer to serve as a small group leader for training programs such as new board member orientation or leadership programs.

All are welcome "We encourage board members to get involved in the statewide Association and we welcome the experience, expertise and viewpoints of those from all types of districts — large and small; urban, suburban and rural — and from throughout the state," said LeFebvre.

Committee vacancies occur sporadically and the terms of the appointments can vary from a few months to three years. Most standing committees have a fixed number of

members, and some may have special requirements for membership.

NJSBA strives to appoint members who are interested, well-qualified and free from bias or conflict of interest, and everyone with a desire to serve is urged to apply.

Additional standards of selection may include an applicant's expertise and experience in the committee subject matter, fresh perspective, communications skills, knowledge of the diverse community, availability, ethical standards and other relevant factors.

To ensure an open process to fill committee slots or other volunteer commitments, NJSBA has posted a member volunteer application that asks for contact and basic information. Visit www.njsba.org/about/membership/njsba-member-volunteer-application/ to complete the Volunteer Form.

For questions, contact Janet Bamford, at jbamford@njsba.org.