

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS
NEW JERSEY SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION
TRENTON, NJ**

January 30, 2026

7 p.m.

A regular meeting of the New Jersey School Boards Association Board of Directors was held virtually on Friday, January 30, 2026. President Michael A. Jacobs presided over the meeting virtually. Immediate Past President Dr. Karen Cortellino and Vice Presidents Barry Walker and Dr. Tom Connors also participated virtually. Executive Director Timothy J. Purnell provided his report to the board from headquarters.

Executive Committee members present were Michael A. Jacobs, president; Barry Walker, vice president for county activities; Dr. Tom Connors, vice president for finance; Dr. Karen Cortellino, immediate past president; and Dr. Timothy Purnell, executive director.

Association staff present were Dr. Nicholas Diaz, deputy director; Carl Tanksley, Esq., general counsel; Gwen Thornton, senior director of content; Lauren Cuervo, senior director of connection; Jonathan Pushman, senior director of advocacy; John Faford, director of finance and operations; Ray Pinney, chief membership engagement officer; Ann Marie Smith, assistant editor & program specialist; Brian Green, network administrator; and Samantha Matias, special projects assistant.

The following members and alternates of the Board of Directors were present:

Atlantic	Louis Della Barca	Gloucester	Not Represented
	Theresa Hudson (Alt.)	Hudson	Hector Gonzalez, Jr.
Bergen	Behrooz Pasdar (Alt.)	Hunterdon	Robert Imhoff
Burlington	Michael McClure		Elizabeth Fiore (Alt.)
Camden	Karen Sorbello	Mercer	Dana Krug
Cape May	Jacqueline McAlister		Addie Daniels-Lane (Alt.)
Cumberland	Not Represented	Middlesex	Not Represented
Essex	Kasey Dudley	Monmouth	Kathy Winecoff
	Parul Aneja Khemka (Alt.)		Kenneth Cook (Alt.)

Morris	Diane Morris	County	Julie Kozempel (Alt.)
	Irene LeFebvre (Alt.)	Association	
Ocean	Dana Weber (Alt.)	Leadership	
Passaic	Alan Paris	Urban Boards	Rita Martin
Salem	Not Represented		Marsha Hershman (Alt.)
Somerset	Jean Trujillo		Cynthia Atkins (Alt.)
	Jennifer Agugliaro (Alt.)		Diane Johnson
Sussex	Ronald Hoffman	Vocational	Jon-Henry Barr
Union	William Hulse		Ruth Hands (Alt.)
Warren	Jaclyn Rowbotham		
	Vickie Mendes-Branch (Alt.)		

ROLL CALL – President Jacobs called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. A roll call indicated 4 officers, county association leadership, urban boards, vocational boards, and 17 counties were represented. Those present constituted a quorum.

NON-BOARD MEMBERS: The following non-board members were also present at the meeting: Dr. Rena’ Morrow, Barry Fitzgerald, Prashant Patel, Judy Bassford, Anna Braun, April Miller, Lorenzo Richardson, and Patrick Jo.

FLAG SALUTE – President Jacobs led the members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

MOMENT OF SILENCE – President Jacobs asked for a moment of silence to recognize that, despite differences, everyone present shares one goal: to work together and provide every student with the opportunity to succeed. He also asked for a moment of silence in memory of Scott Nodes, who recently passed away.

MISSION STATEMENT – President Jacobs led the members in reciting the Association’s Mission Statement.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT – No public comments.

RECOGNITION OF RETIRING AND NEW MEMBERS - The following retiring members were recognized for their service to the New Jersey School Boards Association and the students of New Jersey: Benjamin Morse, member for Essex County; Dr. Rena’ Morrow, member for Gloucester County; and the late Scott Nodes, member for Warren County.

The following new members and alternates were introduced: Parul Aneja Khemka, Livingston Board of Education, alternate representing Essex County, and Vickie Mendes-Branch, Phillipsburg Board of Education, alternate representing Warren County.

The following members were acknowledged for being appointed to member from the alternate position: Kasey Dudley, Essex County and Jaclyn Rowbotham, Warren County.

OATH OF OFFICE – New members and select members and alternates who were not present at a previous Board of Directors meeting were asked to take the oath of office. The following members took their oath of office: Theresa Hudson, Karen Sorbello, and Julie Kozempel.

APPOINTMENT OF DR. CONNORS - In accordance with GO 9308, President Jacobs appointed Dr. Tom Connors as Interim Vice President for Legislation/Resolutions until the May 16 Delegate Assembly. According to the Bylaws, Section 7b, “In the case of a vacancy in a vice-presidency, the president shall either perform the duties of the vacant vice president position or assign them to another vice president.”

EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS REPORT - Dr. Purnell addressed NJSBA activities, and the progress made in enabling school districts to meet the challenges presented to them ensuring that members continue to benefit from essential training, advocacy, and direct service.

We Want to Hear From You – In an effort to increase engagement and deliver better service, NJSBA recently sent out a survey to urban board members. The Association also plans to send out a survey on the Delegate Assembly after the formation of a Delegate Assembly Task Force. NJSBA is looking for honest feedback about what’s working and where improvements can be made.

New Board Member Orientation Weekend - Despite last weekend’s inclement weather, NJSBA held its first New Board Member Weekend Orientation program of the year. Based on the feedback received so far, the program was a huge success. Dr. Purnell was unable to attend but is looking forward to the February weekend orientation taking place February 20-22. From September to December 2025, NJSBA provided 1,609 members with their mandated training. These numbers do not include training numbers from other workshops for programs delivered by staff.

Coach Carla Member Feedback – Revisions to the Gov. I, Gov. II, III, and IV trainings in a variety of formats have successfully been completed. AI chatbot Coach Carla was launched, and Dr. Purnell provided some feedback from members who have taken sessions with Carla.

Commissioner Nominee Begins Tenure with Visit to NJSBA - On January 16, Governor-elect Mikie Sherrill announced Lily Laux as her nominee to be the next Commissioner of Education. On January 21, NJSBA welcomed Dr. Lily Laux, Dr. Joe Howe, and Chief of Staff Chris Williams to their first LEE (New Jersey Leadership for Educational Excellence) meeting. NJSBA is proud to be the first state association to meet with the Commissioner nominee.

State Level Advocacy - Assemblywoman. Reynolds-Jackson and Senator Gopal will remain as education chairs of their respective legislative branches. Jonathan Pushman, NJSBA Senior Director of Advocacy, participated in Governor Mikie Sherrill's "Delivering a Strong Education for New Jersey Children" Action Team. The Winter edition of *Capitol Watch* has been released. This edition includes a *Names to Know* section which features an introduction to the new Commissioner of Education and to legislative leadership for the 2026-2027 legislative session.

Reminder from NJSBA's General Counsel – The General Counsel's office shared a reminder regarding the new standards contained in P.L. 2025 c.72 pertaining to legal notices published by public entities. The new law, as of March 1, requires public entities to create and maintain a publicly available webpage of all public notices published during the past year and to notify the Secretary of State. The law also requires public entities to provide public notice, twice per month through the end of 2026, of the website where such public notices can be located. NJSBA's public notice is in development.

New Partnerships - NJSBA has announced two new strategic partnerships. One is with the Future Ready New Jersey Coalition to help more residents achieve postsecondary degrees/credentials and provide employers with a more educated and skilled workforce. The second is with the New Jersey Education and Technology Association (NJETA). NJETA is a professional membership organization dedicated to supporting the wide range of school technology professionals across the state.

Training Programs - Upcoming NJSBA programs include:

- NJSBA LEAD Mater Class Series – Thursday, February 19, 2026
- 3rd Annual Women's Leadership Conference - Friday, March 20, 2026
- School Public Relations Forum: "The PR Productivity Lab: Maximizing Impact with Minimal Time" – Friday, April 24, 2026

Workshop 2026 - Planning for Workshop 2026 has already begun. The Workshop team is analyzing feedback from Workshop 2025 and making adjustments, finalizing theme and sponsorship options, and reviewing keynote speaker options. If interested in presenting, the call for proposals and student performances opens in February. Registration will open in April.

NJSBA's Newest Employee – NJSBA's newest employee is no stranger to the Association. Former Vice President for Legislation/Resolutions Chanta L. Jackson has joined the team and

will serve as Chief Public Affairs Officer. Chanta brings a wealth of school communications and journalism experience to NJSBA.

School Board Recognition Month – January is School Board Recognition Month. President Jacobs and Dr. Purnell represented school board members at the NJ State Board of Education meeting earlier this month. Dr. Purnell thanked the Board for their commitment, guidance, and efforts, which are the driving force behind NJSBA's ability to serve its member districts effectively.

Remembering Scott Nodes – Dr. Purnell took a moment to remember Scott Nodes, who passed away on Tuesday, January 13. Scott was a pillar of the Greenwich Township and Warren County educational communities for more than a decade. In addition to serving on the Greenwich Township Board of Education, he served as an alternate on the NJSBA Board of Directors for six years, and most recently as Warren County's delegate. His celebration of life will take place next Saturday, February 7.

NJSBA 2026-2027 Budget - The budget for the next school year includes:

- Average 2.0% increase in members' district dues
- Non-dues revenues – significant funding source
- \$1.175 million of free balance/surplus funding
- Skyrocketing health care costs and pension contribution
- Slight decrease in staff headcount
- 6% average increase in salaries to help employees pay for rising healthcare costs

ACTION ITEMS

Roll Call Agenda Items:

President Jacobs asked for a motion to approve the proposed 2026-2027 NJSBA budget.

Kathy Winecoff moved to APPROVE the 2026-2027 NJSBA budget. The motion was duly seconded and carried, with 23 members voting in the affirmative and 1 in the negative.

President Jacobs asked for a motion to approve the annual ACES grant request from ELFNJ.

Background: The Education Leadership Foundation of New Jersey (ELFNJ) is making application to the Board of Directors of the New Jersey School Boards Association for funding through the Alliance for Competitive Energy Services (ACES) for a grant in the amount of \$125,000 for fiscal year 2025-26. These funds will be used to cover the costs for the 2025-26 county school boards associations' meetings.

Karen Sorbello moved to APPROVE the grant request from ELFNJ to ACES as stated above. The motion was duly seconded and carried, with 24 members voting in the affirmative. Jean Trujillo abstained from voting on the grant request.

Consent Agenda Items:

President Jacobs asked for a motion to approve the following consent agenda items:

- A. Open Session Minutes of the November 14, 2025 Meeting
- B. Closed Session Minutes of the November 14, 2025 Meeting
- C. 2026-2027 Advocacy Agenda
- D. Legislative Committee Appointments
- E. Resolution Subcommittee Appointments

Dana Krug requested that the open session minutes of the November 14, 2025 meeting reflect that she left the meeting at the beginning of the Executive Director's report and that she did not vote on any of the action items. Jean Trujillo provided a couple of edits for the closed session minutes of the November 14, 2025, meeting, which included the addition of "and virtual" to two instances of the first sentence, as the meeting was hybrid, and a change to the date of her request from November 11 to November 7.

Lou Della Barca moved to APPROVE the consent agenda items as amended. The motion was duly seconded and carried. Dana Krug, Jean Trujillo, and Alan Paris abstained from voting on the open and closed session minutes of the November 14, 2025 meeting. Alan Paris also abstained from voting on the Legislative Committee and Resolution Subcommittee appointments.

REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT AND OFFICERS

The Board of Directors also received both written and verbal reports from the president, vice president for county activities, vice president for finance, and the immediate past president.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS – Jean Trujillo reported that, following the November 14 meeting, she received a letter from a lawyer representing Dr. Purnell. She inquired as to her ability to ask questions of the Executive Director. President Jacobs noted her concern and advised that it would be addressed at the appropriate time.

NEW BUSINESS – No new business.

SUMMARY

President Jacobs reminded members they will receive “take-away” points from this meeting, which can be used in making reports to the county associations.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, *Kasey Dudley moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was duly seconded and carried. The meeting was adjourned at 9:52 p.m.*

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Timothy J. Purnell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Timothy J. Purnell, Ed.D.

Executive Director