

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

March 27, 2026

7 p.m.

A regular meeting of the New Jersey School Boards Association Board of Directors was held in-person and virtually on Friday, March 27, 2026. President Michael A. Jacobs presided over the meeting from the Association's headquarters in Trenton. Immediate Past President Dr. Karen Cortellino and Vice Presidents Barry Walker and Dr. Tom Connors were also present at headquarters. 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; Daniel Snyder, manager of communications and publications; Mary Ann Friedman, senior field service representative; Melissa Del Rosso, field service representative; 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
Bergen	Michael Sprague	Hudson	Not Represented
Burlington	Michael McClure	Hunterdon	Robert Imhoff
Camden	Karen Sorbello	Mercer	Dana Krug
Cape May	Not Represented		Addie Daniels-Lane (Alt.)
Cumberland	Not Represented	Middlesex	Liwu Hong
Essex	Kasey Dudley		Diana Jaquez (Alt.)

Monmouth	Kenneth Cook (Alt.)	County	Jennifer Knittel
Morris	Diane Morris	Association	
	Irene LeFebvre (Alt.)	Leadership	
Ocean	Victoria Pakala	Urban Boards	Rita Martin
Passaic	Alan Paris		Marsha Hershman (Alt.)
	Maryann Capursi (Alt.)		Rosa Moreno-Ortego
Salem	Eileen Miller		Cynthia Atkins (Alt.)
Somerset	Jennifer Agugliaro (Alt.)		Diane Johnson
Sussex	Ronald Hoffman	Vocational	Jon-Henry Barr
Union	William Hulse		Ruth Hands (Alt.)
Warren	Jaclyn Rowbotham		

Guest Presenter: Jennifer Maita, assistant vice president, Brown & Brown

ROLL CALL – President Jacobs called the meeting to order at 7:02 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: Prashant Patel and Lisa Focaccia.

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

MOMENT OF SILENCE – President Jacobs asked for a moment of silence for all children in the throes of war, a moment of silence to serve as a refusal to let their suffering be invisible.

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 new members were introduced: Jennifer Knittel, Washington Township Board of Education, member representing County Association Leadership.

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: Diana Jaquez and Rosa Moreno-Oretga.

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.

Crisis Communication Service - NJSBA has launched a new Crisis Communication Service in partnership with Laura Bishop Communications. This offering connects members and districts with experienced, vetted communications professionals when needed the most. The goal is to help members respond thoughtfully, communicate effectively, and maintain public confidence.

FREE Policy Manual Update - NJSBA is offering members free access to their policy manual. Since the January launch, 80 districts and 7 charter schools have downloaded the new Core Online Policy Manual. The Policy Services department is preparing its first set of updates, which will be available on April 1. Notifications will be sent via *School Board Notes* and directly via e-mail to those who currently subscribe. The updates will include new policy language on electronic notice requirements under the Sunshine Law and the bell-to-bell cell phone ban, among others. Next month, Policy Services will host a live, interactive webinar titled “NJSBA Policy Briefing: Key Updates for Districts and Charter Schools.”

Alliance for Competitive Energy Services (ACES Update) - The Alliance for Competitive Energy Services (ACES) has saved New Jersey school districts more than \$118 million on energy bills over the past decade by leveraging collective buying power for electricity and natural gas. Of New Jersey's 626 boards of education, 326 (52%) participate in the gas program, and 376 (60%) are part of the electric initiative. The top saver thus far is Freehold Regional in Monmouth County, which has saved \$244,383.

NJSBA’s Newest Employee – NJSBA is delighted to welcome back Jesse Young as Director of Governmental Relations. Jesse returns to NJSBA after spending time at the Department of Education, gaining an inside perspective that will sharpen the Association’s advocacy efforts.

Training Programs - Upcoming NJSBA programs include:

- NJSBA LEAD Mater Class Series – April 8, April 22, and May 6
 - Now being offered in the evening (6:30 to 8:30 p.m.)
- NJSBA/NJASA Women’s Leadership Breakfast – April 22
- School Public Relations Forum – April 24
- Virtual Spring Conference – May 8
- Technology Conference – June 5
- Spring School Law Forum – June 11

Workshop 2026 - The team has been hard at work on Workshop 2026, set for October 19–22. The call for program proposals is closed. Registration and housing open April 1.

The keynote speaker for this year is Timothy Shriver, Chairman of Special Olympics International, co-creator of the Dignity Index, and a lifelong educator. Tim co-founded and currently chairs the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) and

began his career in a classroom. His Dignity Index scores language along an eight-point scale from contempt to dignity.

Salute to Association Excellence – On March 5, NJSBA was honored at the 46th Annual Salute to Association Excellence Luncheon, organized by Association Trends, a leading voice in the nonprofit community. The recognition was for NJSBA's Workshop 2025 campaign, themed "Your Ticket to Big Ideas and Bright Futures." NJSBA was awarded Silver for the best Exhibitor Sales Kit/ Exhibitor and Sponsorship Opportunities.

Read Across America: Education Commissioner Dr. Lily Laux - Read Across America is officially March 2, but NJSBA chose to celebrate throughout the month of March. It was a privilege to welcome the new Commissioner of Education, Dr. Lily Laux, to the NJSBA studio, where she read aloud her favorite childhood story: "Be Kind," by Pat Zietlow Miller.

Health Plan Update – Due to the significant increase in healthcare costs under the State Health Benefits Program, NJSBA sought to explore whether better, more sustainable healthcare options were available. NJSBA engaged Brown & Brown to conduct a full market review. Brown & Brown brought back three proposals for consideration, and based on the analysis, the recommendation was to transition to the South Jersey Health Insurance Fund (SJHIF). The South Jersey Health Insurance Fund utilizes the Aetna network and provides an equal to or better than benefit structure, along with meaningful savings and predictable costs for the Association. Jennifer Maita, assistant vice president, Brown & Brown, joined the meeting to review the analysis and answer any questions.

ACTION ITEMS

Roll Call Agenda Items:

President Jacobs asked for a motion to approve the resolution concerning group medical and prescription drug benefits.

Karen Sorbello moved to APPROVE the resolution concerning group medical and prescription drug benefits. The motion was duly seconded and carried, with 22 members voting in the affirmative. Dana Krug and Victoria Pakala abstained from voting on the resolution.

President Jacobs asked for a motion to terminate participation in the State Health Benefits Program.

Michael McClure moved to APPROVE the termination of participation in the State Health Benefits Program. The motion was duly seconded and carried, with 24 members voting in the affirmative.

President Jacobs asked for a motion to join the Southern New Jersey Regional Employee Benefits Fund.

Kasey Dudley moved to APPROVE joining the Southern New Jersey Regional Employee Benefits Fund. The motion was duly seconded and carried, with 22 members voting in the affirmative. Dana Krug and Victoria Pakala abstained from voting.

President Jacobs asked for a motion to approve the Southern New Jersey Regional Employee Benefits Fund Indemnity and Trust Agreement.

Diane Morris moved to APPROVE the Southern New Jersey Regional Employee Benefits Fund Indemnity and Trust Agreement. The motion was duly seconded and carried, with 23 members voting in the affirmative. Dana Krug abstained from voting.

President Jacobs asked for a motion to approve the appointment of a fund commissioner.

VP Connors moved to APPROVE the appointment of a fund commissioner. The motion was duly seconded and carried, with 23 members voting in the affirmative. Dana Krug abstained from voting.

President Jacobs asked for a motion to approve the donation of one hundred thousand (\$100,000.00) dollars to ELFNJ to support continued operations for the duration of the 2025-26 fiscal year.

Eileen Miller moved to APPROVE the donation of one hundred thousand (\$100,000.00) dollars to ELFNJ to support continued operations for the duration of the 2025-26 fiscal year. The motion was duly seconded.

Diane Morris moved to AMEND the resolution. The motion was duly seconded and carried, with 21 members voting in the affirmative and 1 in the negative. Michael McClure and Dana Krug abstained from voting.

Diane Morris moved to APPROVE the resolution as amended. The Board of Directors of the New Jersey School Boards Association approves a one-time donation of one hundred thousand (\$100,000) dollars from non-dues revenue to the Educational Leadership Foundation of New Jersey to be used to support its financial obligations for the balance of the 2025-26 fiscal year. The motion was duly seconded and carried, with 21 members voting in the affirmative. Michael McClure, Dana Krug, William Hulse, and VP Connors abstained from voting.

Consent Agenda Items:

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

- A. Open Session Minutes of the January 30, 2026 Meeting
- B. Legislative Committee Appointments

Liwu Hong moved to APPROVE the consent agenda items. The motion was duly seconded and carried.

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 – Liwu Hong shared that last night was Middlesex County’s 40th Unsung Heroes Awards Ceremony. Middlesex County is proud of its students and their achievements, as well as of the Middlesex County leadership, which has participated in the Unsung Heroes program for 40 years.

Jennifer Knittel thanked the NJSBA staff and officers for the extra time they put into the Unsung Heroes program on behalf of the county leaders.

Michael McClure thanked the NJSBA Board of Directors, as the Vice Chair of the Educational Leadership Foundation of New Jersey, for their contribution.

NEW BUSINESS – President Jacobs informed the board that an anonymous letter alleging inappropriate conduct by a member of the Board of Directors was forwarded to the General Counsel’s office. A separate complaint was later filed by an NJSBA staff member. Both matters were referred to the Executive Committee, which reviewed the matters, conducted an investigation, and took appropriate action. President Jacobs reminded the board that personnel matters are confidential to protect the privacy of the individuals involved.

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, *Ronald Hoffman moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was duly seconded and carried. The meeting was adjourned at 9:33 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