



Department Introduces Monthly Newsletter

Welcome to the inaugural edition of "The Bridge," a newsletter for educators from the New Jersey Department of Education. Why the name? We hope that this newsletter will serve as a bridge between the NJDOE and educators across the state and provide valuable information and resources to help educators in the classroom.

The Bridge will be a monthly resource for educators to find out the latest information from the NJDOE on a number of educational issues including policy considerations and changes, statewide initiatives and NJDOE programs. We will also highlight best practices, award winning educators and successful models in districts and schools around the state. Finally, we will provide you with some links from the NJDOE to provide useful resources and relevant news articles to keep you abreast of the most recent information about public education.

As we each work in our respective roles to advance public education in New Jersey we recognize we are united in purpose to provide the best education for our students. We hope you find this new resource beneficial.



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Message *from the Commissioner*

The last two years have brought a number of changes to New Jersey schools. Educators across the state are implementing the Common Core State Standards, which redefine the knowledge and skills our students need in reading and math at each grade level. At the same time, districts are developing new educator evaluation systems, outlined in the recently passed TEACH NJ Act, that are based in part on a two year statewide pilot designed to help all educators continuously improve their practice. The state has received flexibility from NCLB by developing a new school accountability system designed to give the large majority of high-achieving schools additional flexibility while focusing our supports and interventions to our lowest-performing schools. In addition, the state is undertaking a deregulatory effort to provide districts and educators the opportunity to craft their own path to success while holding all schools accountable for results.

These are all significant changes, and we are committed to providing support to each of you to meet each of these challenges head on. One way we have done that is by completely reorganizing the state Department of Education around our four main building blocks of reform – academics, talent, performance, and innovation – to make sure we are focused on what matters most.

Today, we are launching this newsletter to provide information directly to you about state initiatives and available resources to help all New Jersey students, regardless of zip code, graduate from high school ready for college and career.

I hope that you find this information helpful. The newsletter also includes information about how you can reach out to us directly with questions.

Educators are the heart and soul of our schools and our state. There are few professionals that are more passionate, dedicated, and hard-working than educators, and yet too often your work goes unrecognized as you develop the young minds that will become our future leaders. I want to thank you for the work you do every day with our students, and I look forward to the start of this dialogue with you.

Best Regards,
Chris



New Jersey
Department of Education

Tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary

Our hearts are heavy as our thoughts go out to the community in Newtown, CT.

At the time of this writing, news is still coming in as we all hug our children a little tighter and remind our students how much we love and value them. As adults and educators, it doesn't matter how many times we have practiced lock down drills in our schools, we never expect that we will have to actually put them into practice. Across the country, we are in a state of shock from the horror of this tragic event.

The loss of any child is tragic, but what has educators across the country feeling this more acutely than most is the fact that this tragedy happened in a school, just like the ones we work in every day. The people killed were students, just like ours, and educators, just like us, who died trying to protect their students.

Many educators are wondering exactly what to say to their students as we continue to nurture, support and protect them. Here are some resources that may help.

[A National Tragedy: Helping Children Cope](#)

National Association of School Psychologists

[Talking to Children About Violence](#)

National Association of School Psychologists

[Listen, Protect and Connect: Psychological First Aid for Teachers and Schools](#) www.ready.gov

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/schools/security/>

For details on New Jersey schools and emergency preparedness training.

Hurricane Sandy JERSEY PROUD, JERSEY STRONG

Teachers have been leading the way in hurricane relief efforts.

Months later, images of devastation in the aftermath of Sandy remain fresh in our minds. While it is tragic that many of the boardwalks and businesses of our summer memories are gone, shore dwellers know that there is a large population that lives there year round which includes some of our hardest working citizens, police, fire, emergency personnel, and educators.

Anyone who has been in a classroom and watched a teacher work will tell you that educators are great at crisis management. They do classroom triage on a daily basis and can handle bee stings, bloody noses, bathroom requests lunch money issues while simultaneously diffusing an argument and teaching a lesson. It makes sense that in the aftermath of a disaster, educators concerned about their students and community would direct relief efforts across the state. And they did, everywhere.

In Stafford Twp, 2012 Ocean County Teacher of the Year, Michael Dunlea, looked at the devastation in the community of Beach Haven West and knew he had to help.

Scenes like the picture above were repeated block after block because of the flooding in a community of about 4000 homes. What started as 14 teachers grew



because of social media and became S.T.A.R.T. (Stafford Teachers and Residents Together). To date they have had over 1400 volunteers and have helped clear out 600+ homes for free, most down to the studs in the walls, saving residents over \$1,500,000 (based on the \$2,500

“...the focus on lessons is a challenge when all of this is swirling around in their heads. It has impacted every student in varying ways.”

average per house that people were asking to do the same work).

Danielle Kovach, 2011 NJ Teacher of the Year, organized when her community lost power and many homes were

destroyed due to downed trees. Hopatcong High School was turned into a Red Cross relief shelter that served over 2,000 meals daily and housed hundreds. In need of supplies, Danielle organized lists via social media and fellow State Teachers of the Year from around the country responded, sending truckloads of supplies for those in need.

In order to provide the students with a sense of normalcy, Danielle and fellow teacher Kristine Mendyk managed to organize a belated Halloween celebration, complete with donated costumes which provided some joy in the face of so much disaster.

While it is difficult enough to deal with trauma as an adult, our students are going to have to adjust to a new normal as they settle into temporary homes, classrooms and schools.

Dunlea explains, “...the focus on lessons is a challenge when all of this is swirling around in their heads. It has impacted every student in varying ways.”

Here are some links for information and coping skills to help students dealing with hurricane-related behavioral health, stress, and trauma issues.
<https://www.nasemso.org/documents/DisasterHealth.pdf>

Want to Help?

Hurricane Sandy
New Jersey Relief Fund
A relief fund to collect monetary donations to provide assistance to families and businesses that have been affected by the destruction of the storm.
www.sandynjrelieffund.org

NJSBA Match-A-School
If your district or school is in need of assistance or if you would like to adopt a school, please contact the NJSBA at 1-888-88NJSBA, Ext. 5209
www.njsba.org/news/hurricane-sandy

DonorsChoose.org is a non-profit that invites teachers, principals and school staff from across the country to request materials they need in their classrooms and schools.
www.donorschoose.org/sandy

EVALUATION UPDATE

Teachers matter. This belief lies at the heart of evaluation reform to ensure that every student has an effective teacher and every teacher gets the guidance and feedback necessary to help them fine tune and improve their craft. We are in the second year of

of our evaluation pilot program which includes twenty two districts. We also have fourteen districts participating in a pilot for principal evaluation.

By October 31, 2012 all school districts, regardless of whether or not they are a pilot, needed to establish a District Evaluation Advisory Committee (DEAC) to make sure all stakeholders are engaged in evaluation reform. They should be meeting regularly to plan and discuss progress toward evaluation goals and activities.

Deadlines

- By **December 31, 2012** all districts must have adopted an educator evaluation rubric that includes state-approved teaching evaluation instruments.
- By **January 31, 2013**, all districts must begin to “test and refine evaluation rubrics” as per the **TEACHNJ Act**.
- By **February 1, 2013**, all districts must form a School Improvement Panel (SIP) to oversee evaluation activities. Members must include the school principal or designee, an assistant/vice principal and a teacher selected in consultation with the “majority representative”, which in traditional public schools refers to the local teachers’

This committee must include teachers from each school level represented in the district, school administrators conducting evaluations (including at least one who participates on the School Improvement Panel and one special education administrator), central office administrators overseeing the evaluation process, superintendent, supervisor, a parent, and a member of the district board of education.

In the coming months, the NJDOE will be introducing regulations to help implement the TEACH NJ Act and outline detailed

requirements for all schools for next year. We will provide information to you each month about these changes.

There are many resources available on the NJDOE website that may be helpful. <http://www.state.nj.us/education/EE4NJ/resources/eval.htm>

For more information about all aspects of educator evaluation in New Jersey see the evaluation page on the NJDOE website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education/EE4NJ/>



Congratulations to Lauren Marrocco, an outstanding 4th grade teacher at Perth Amboy's Edward J. Patten Elementary School in Middlesex County. According to Commissioner Chris Cerf, “Lauren Marrocco represents the type of spirit and drive that inspire her students to realize their full potential. In addition, she extends her love of teaching to encourage her colleagues and future teachers to model best practices. She is a fine representative of the exemplary teachers we have in New Jersey.”

After being selected by her school, Lauren had to compete at the district, county, and state levels and had to complete an eight-part essay application with references, a 15 minute unedited DVD of her teaching a lesson, and 45 minute interview in front of a panel. She now moves on to compete on the national level. Good luck, Lauren! NJ is proud of you!

For more details on the Teacher of the Year program, go to. <http://www.state.nj.us/education/clear/>

Check out our monthly Teacher Spotlight at <http://education.state.nj.us/feature/>



Common Core Q&A

Q: What is model curriculum?

A: The purpose of model curricula is to assist districts and schools with the transition to the Common Core State Standards by providing a resource that can be used directly by teachers or that can be used to revise or refine district curricula.

The model curriculum for Mathematics and English Language Arts was developed by New Jersey teachers and curriculum supervisors who were selected for their content-area expertise.



For each grade level (K-12), the standards were “unpacked” into specific Student Learning Objectives (SLOs), which were organized into five, six week units that serve to sequence and pace instruction. The end-of-unit assessments provide a means to measure students’

mastery of the SLOs at an appropriate level of rigor. Data from these assessments can then be used to guide planning and inform instruction. For more info: <http://www.state.nj.us/education/sca/>

Contact Us!

Do you have ideas, information, or pictures you would like to submit? For comments, concerns, questions or feedback, contact us at:

thebridge@doe.state.nj.us

Would you like to be on our direct mailing list? Click on the link below to ensure that you are connected to "The Bridge" every month.



[Subscribe here](#)



Upcoming Events

- Interested in Discussing Policy Issues?
The NJDOE is proud to present Teacher Advisory Panels. These regional groups of 20-30 teachers will meet once a month after school to discuss a current policy issue in education. Contact Jeanne DelColle with any questions at Jeanne.delcolle@doe.state.nj.us. The deadline for applications has been moved to January 7.
- Take our Survey! We want to hear from you so that we can better help you.
How do you receive information on issues such as educator evaluation and Common Core? What is your preferred form of communication? What topics would you like additional support on?

Log on and tell us!

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/KVHCSGF>

What's happening at the NJDOE? Here is the events calendar. <http://education.state.nj.us/events/>

Are there pressing questions about the NJDOE that you want to know?

Ask Ed!

Dear Ed,

Q: Can teachers share feedback, ideas, and questions about evaluation, or is it too late?

A: Absolutely – teachers have several avenues for sharing and receiving information about evaluation. You can contact your district administration to learn more about your District Evaluation Advisory Committee, request to attend a meeting, and share comments and questions. You can talk to your school administration about its plans for the School Improvement Panel. Finally, you can email educatorevaluation@doe.state.nj.us or call the state Evaluation Help Line at 609-777-3788.

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In the News....

Local, State and National Education News

Schools Still Struggle to Cope with Sandy's Aftermath, John Mooney, NJ Spotlight Displaced students, lost class time, fiscal worries among lingering problems, Assembly panel told

<http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/12/12/13/schools-still-struggle-to-cope-with-sandy-s-aftermath/>

NJDOE Reports Increases in Graduation Rate, Student Test Scores. In a report to the State Board of Education, the New Jersey Department of Education reported an increase in the state's graduation rate and an overall improvement of student achievement on the state's standardized exams.

<http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/12/12/05/scoresmap/>

State Offers Fellowships for Teachers Who Commit to High Need Schools. New Jersey is the first state on the East Coast to offer fellowships to math and science teachers who commit to teach students who need their help the most.

http://www.northjersey.com/news/education/NJ_to_offer_fellowships_to_high-need_teachers.html?page=all

Confusing Achievement With Aptitude, Dave Powell, Education Week

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/12/12/14powell.h32.html?tkn=MUXFrtnVQpu6idHalV70xZgyXsrWK1%2Fo8JDb&cmp=ENL-EU-VIEWS1>

Reports of Note

NJ:

The Center for Research on Education Outcomes' report on New Jersey charter schools:

http://credo.stanford.edu/pdfs/nj_state_report_2012_FINAL11272012.pdf

From ED:

When looking at NAEP data from states, researchers found that states with high standards saw bigger gains in their poorest-performing students than states with low standards. Read the study by Constance Clark and Peter Cookson. <http://www.educationsector.org/publications/high-standards-help-struggling-students-new-evidence>



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