

Good morning, everyone!

Welcome back to Lindenwold , and the start of another great year! For those of you who don't know us, I'm Janelle Mungro and I'm Michelle Bernardino. We are co-presidents of the Lindenwold Education Association.

For our newcomers, as LEA members, we are also members of the Camden County Council of Education Associations, the New Jersey Education Association and the National Education Association.

Today, it's my pleasure to share some thoughts as we begin a new year together.

This school year will be like nothing we have ever experienced before. Undoubtedly, this year we will experience more and more challenges in our "new normal". Also, this is indeed a unique and challenging moment for our nation and our state. There is a palpable sense that things cannot go on as before. In fact, we have had many examples of how resilient we are, and when we believe in something we stick to our plan, and we reach our goals.

At this time, we would like to introduce the rest of our Association Executive Board. Our Vice President-Ryan Strouthers, Secretary-Kristin McNight, Treasurer-Marie Aberant, Grievance Chair- Jane Clifford. Our committee chairs, Communication- Johandane Pierre from LMS, Legislative - Kelli Galleghar from LMS, Health and Safety- Dale DiVenti, Undoing Racism- Noelle Boyer, and Member Benefits Coordinator- Carmen Asticio. Our High School Head Rep- Bryan Callow, Middle School Head Rep. -Jeanne Grigri, School 5 Head Rep.- Jen Teti and Dana Boguszewski, School 4 Head Rep.- Nichole Johnson and Rasheena Powell, Pre-School Head Rep Karen Thompson and Kim Accardo, ESP Rep. Dawn Dreher, and Custodial Rep- Quayyam Bey. We are proud to represent you and look forward to a successful school year.

We'd also like to welcome our new colleagues. We are excited to have you become a part of our Association family. Know that we are here to help you and support you. We have a lot of talented veteran educators in our school district so don't ever be afraid to reach out for help.

We would like to congratulate our newly tenured members. You will be receiving a gift and acknowledgement at one of the 10 minute meetings.

And last but not least, welcome to all of our veteran members. It's so great to see you ready for another year. I hope you had a relaxing summer or some well-deserved time off and are energized for a great year to come.

Let's take a look at some highlights!

### **Covid-19 response and reopening schools**

When Covid-19 threatened our schools this past spring, literally overnight, we went from our brick and mortar buildings to virtual learning. We may have had a few bumps in the road as we navigated the digital divide, but we did our absolute best to make sure every student had what they needed to succeed and we did an amazing job!

Our ESPs and teachers helped to make and distribute work packets, distributed chromebooks, and delivered meals to the students in our community. All while, our custodial staff continued to work on keeping our schools clean and sanitized and our secretaries spent summer hours preparing for the opening of school. And let's not forget we had several teachers televise their hour long lesson on NJTV live.

### **Chapter 78 and Job Justice Legislative Win**

Congratulations! After years of hard work, NJEA members secured two important victories this summer! The Assembly joined the Senate in overwhelmingly passing our long-sought Ch. 78 relief and our ESP Job Justice bills. These laws will provide much-needed savings to NJEA members as well as important due process protections and collective bargaining rights for our 50,000 Educational Support Professional. We have asked NJEA to provide our members with a comparison chart of our current healthcare plan and the NJ Educator's plan to help members make the best healthcare choice. Stay tuned for information on a Zoom session.

### **Fighting for Social Justice**

This summer there were many protests across the United States (and in many cities around the world) against police violence. The fight against racism isn't only about combatting individual racism. It's also about acknowledging and dismantling institutional racism wherever it exists. It's about removing racism from within our schools by addressing the inequities that exist both in how students are treated and the opportunities they are given. It's about dismantling the school to prison pipeline. It's incorporating curriculum that integrates many voices of experience, using Amistad, Holocaust and LGBTQ+ curriculum, for example. We must lift the voices of our Indigenous, Black, and People of Color, and wherever we can, we must continue to encourage school districts to hire staff

that is representative of the student population. In response to this the LEA held its first Undoing Racism event in August and has established a committee which will plan for several events throughout the school year. We had over 45 members attend this event and we hope to see many more at the next event.

### **Negotiations**

This summer we formed a bargaining council team! Your colleagues reviewed the contract and provided suggestions for the upcoming negotiations. We would like to thank Bryan Callow, Jenny Paulino, Rashena Powell, Maria Carabello, Jillian Taylor, and Karen Thompson. We plan to start negotiations meetings in January. There is a google form on the LEA website to provide suggestions for the upcoming negotiations. Currently we do not have a teacher representative from the Middle School, School Four, or the Preschool. We also need representatives for the secretaries and the custodial staff.

### **Here are some ways to stay involved.**

**Communications**—we have set-up the following methods of communication on our [LEA Website](#) (Remind, Facebook, Instagram) so that you can stay informed of the issues and challenges that our local association is going to face this year. Please be sure you're connected to one of these methods. We also have a community facebook and instagram page through PRIDE.

**Representation**—we have monthly rep council meetings scheduled for the year which you are all welcome to attend. The dates and times are posted on our LEA website. The head association reps will be reporting pertinent information in monthly 10 minute meetings which will occur prior to the start or at the end of one of the required monthly building meetings.

**Get Involved**—think of belonging to our association like a gym membership, you only see results when you show up and get to work. We need you on our committees, at school board meetings, and many other things which will not demand much of your time.

You will be receiving a short LEA survey at the end of today, please consider completing this form.

Let's get to work and have a great year together! Thank you.

