



KEYPOST

A PUBLICATION OF THE NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS

ASBO INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE: EMPOWERING SCHOOL BUSINESS LEADERS IN TAMPA

By Chris Mullins | NJASBO Second Vice-President



NJASBO was well-represented at the ASBO International conference. The attendees took a break from working to enjoy the beautiful Tampa day.

The Association of School Business Officials International (ASBO) hosted its 2025 Leadership Forum from March 6–7 in Tampa, Florida. The two-day event was designed for both emerging and established leaders in the field of school

continued on page 4

IN THIS ISSUE:

ASBO CONFERENCE
RECAP

NJASBO 2025-2026
SLATE OF OFFICERS

BA SERVES ON NJBOE

IRMAA
REIMBURSEMENT

NJASBO COUNTY
PRESIDENTS

USFA UPDATE

STUDENT
TRANSPORTATION

NJASBO ANNUAL
CONFERENCE

CONFERENCE
KEYNOTE SPEAKER

NJASBO BOARD APPROVES 2025-2026 SLATE OF OFFICERS

We congratulate the newest NJASBO Slate of Officers and wish them the best for the 2025-2026 school year.



Chandra Coady **President**

Chandra Coady, School Business Administrator/ Board Secretary for the Mainland Regional High School District, will serve as President for the 2025- 2026 school year.

"Just like the spaghetti bridge I built in grade school, we've spent this 24-25 year working on bridging the gap of knowledge between us as Business Administrators and our support staff."

She previously served as the Business Administrator/ Board Secretary and Assistant Business Administrator for Egg Harbor Township School District.

Chandra has served on several NJASBO committees. She also has been active in the Atlantic County ASBO, where she served as President (2020-2022). Coady also serves on several committees with Atlantic & Cape May County ASBO Joint Insurance Funds and enjoys being an alternate trustee and learning so much with SPELL JIF.

Before joining the education field, Coady spent a few years in public accounting with Bob Swartz. She was responsible for planning, supervising, and supporting audits for municipalities, school districts, and non-profit organizations. As a lifelong learner

continued on page 2



NJASBO BOARD APPROVES 2025-2026 SLATE OF OFFICERS *continued from page 1*

and educator, she performs consulting work for commercial and individual clients.

Coady is a certified public accountant and is a Past President of the Atlantic-Cape May Chapter of the New Jersey Society of Certified Public Accountants (2014- 2020). She is also a Registered School Business Administrator.



James Sekelsky **President-Elect**

James Sekelsky is the Assistant Superintendent for Business and board secretary for Newton Public Schools. Sekelsky will serve as the President-Elect for the upcoming school year.

Sekelsky began his career in education as an instructor at the United States Military Academy, West Point. After holding that position for a year, he joined Seton Hall University as an assistant professor of ROTC for two years, where his focus was on marketing, public relations, and recruiting. He was selected as the Recruiting Officer of the Year for New York City, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Sekelsky also taught "Individual Leadership Skills" for two semesters while at Seton Hall. Other military assignments include Defense Language Institute, Operation Desert Storm 1992, United Nations Observer Mission in the Republic of Georgia, Operation Brave Eagle (Poland), Joint Military Commission in Bosnia, and Operation Iraqi Freedom. Jim has been a mayor, a school board member, a U.S. Selective Service Board member, and an Assistant Scoutmaster.

"NJASBO invests in leaders," Sekelsky said, "I'm humbled to serve, excited at the opportunity, and plan to have some fun along the way!"

In June 2004, Sekelsky joined the Rochelle Park Board of Education as the assistant to the school business administrator. In April 2006, after a tour of duty in Iraq, he joined the Sussex County Educational Services Commission as its school business administrator (SBA).

After leaving the Sussex County district in 2009, Sekelsky served as the SBA for the Hardyston Township Public Schools until February 2020. Before joining Newton Public Schools in 2021, he spent a year as the SBA for Lodi Borough Public Schools.

Sekelsky is a member of the Sussex County Association of School Business Officials, where he has served as secretary, vice president, and president.

He served eight years as a commissioner for the Schools Health Insurance Fund and chaired the fund's finance committee. Sekelsky was also a trustee for the Municipal Reinsurance Fund for seven years. He also holds a School Finance and Operations certificate from ASBO International.



Christopher J. Mullins **First Vice-President**

Christopher J. Mullins is a school business administrator with nearly three decades of experience in educational administration, financial management, and leadership. He currently serves as the school

business administrator and board secretary for the Monmouth-Ocean Educational Services Commission (MOESC), the Bayshore Jointure Commission, and the Bay Head Elementary School District, while also acting as treasurer for the Avon-By-the-Sea and West Long Branch school districts.

Mullins has built a distinguished career dedicated to fiscal responsibility, operational efficiency, and the advancement of school business administration. His expertise has been recognized through accolades such as the NJASBO Distinguished Service Award. A respected thought leader in the field, he has contributed to the education of future school business officials as an adjunct professor at Georgian Court University and remains committed to mentoring aspiring professionals across New Jersey.

continued on page 3



NJASBO BOARD APPROVES 2025-2026 SLATE OF OFFICERS *continued from page 2*

His career includes leadership roles in multiple school districts, including Hazlet, Sea Bright, Robbinsville, Highlands, Pleasantville, and Long Branch. Prior to his work in education, Mullins served as a senior accountant at Green, Holman, Frenia & Company.

In addition to his professional accomplishments, Mullins is actively involved in organizations such as ASBO International, NJASBO, Monmouth & Ocean ASBO, and NJSIAA. His commitment to community service is evident through his roles as a former Point Pleasant Beach school board member, commissioner for the Ocean County Library, and treasurer of the Monmouth-Ocean Foundation for Children. He has also served as treasurer of the Hazlet Rotary Club and as a board member of the Beachwood Yacht Club.

"As I step into the role of First Vice President, I reflect on my first year of service, which has truly opened my eyes to the incredible work our association does to support school business administrators across New Jersey. I look forward to my second year on the Executive Board, working alongside our dedicated leadership team and members to continue advancing our profession and strengthening the resources and advocacy that make a difference in our schools and communities."

complete a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration at Rutgers University in Camden, NJ. In 2008, she was hired by the then Business Administrator/Board Secretary Mark Ritter as the Assistant Board Secretary at Haddon Township School District and later continued her education with an MBA from Wilmington University. She was promoted to Business Administrator in 2012, where she has excelled ever since.

With encouragement from Ritter, Gauld became involved in NJASBO, recognizing the importance of staying connected with the organization to foster industry growth.

"I am excited to serve NJASBO," said Gauld. "I look forward to inspiring and mentoring new Business Administrators to ensure the future of the profession remains strong and that the next generation is well-prepared for success."

She finds the best part of being a Business Administrator is the constant learning and excitement, as there is always something new to tackle. Though describing the role to outsiders can be challenging, she values being the "man behind the curtain" that keeps the district running smoothly.



Jennifer Gauld
Second Vice-President

The newest member elected to NJASBO's Slate of Officers is Jennifer Gauld, the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the Haddon Township School District.

She also serves as President of Burlington County Insurance Fund and as an instructor for NJASBO.

Gauld began her career in the public sector, working full-time for a defense contracting firm while attending college part time. She earned an associate degree at Camden County College and went on to



Katherine Attwood
Immediate Past President

School Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the Hamilton Township School District, Katherine (Katie) Attwood, served as the NJASBO president from 2024-2025.

An active member of NJASBO, Attwood has served on various committees including Legislative, Accounting, and Public Relations, among others.

continued on page 4



NJASBO BOARD APPROVES 2025-2026 SLATE OF OFFICERS *continued from page 3*

Her relationship with NJASBO goes back to when she joined the New Jersey Department of Education in 1998, as a Policy and Planning Associate. Later, she held the positions of Director, Office of Fiscal Policy and Planning, and then Assistant Commissioner, Division of Finance.

Before joining Hamilton Township in 2014, Attwood served as the Business Administrator/Board Secretary for four years with the Branchburg Township Public School District.

Attwood's public service career began after graduate school when she was accepted into a two-year program that enabled participants to intern in federal agencies of their choice. She worked for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in Washington, D.C., and then moved to the regional office in Philadelphia, where she managed state grants and programs for the water protection division.

Attwood also is active in the Mercer County ASBO where she has served in various leadership positions.

ASBO INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE *continued from page 1*

business management. The forum featured multiple tracks, allowing attendees to learn about and enhance various facets of leadership. Due to the timing of budget season, attendance was limited to approximately 20 representatives from New Jersey, including executive committee members and county presidents from across the state.



Tampa at night has a view that's hard to beat!

Dynamic Programming and Interactive Learning

Participants engaged in focused sessions covering essential leadership skills in areas such as association leadership, innovation, communication, and behavior. The interactive learning environment fostered networking and in-depth discussions, enabling attendees to connect with peers from across the country, share experiences, and gain diverse insights.

The NJASBO Executive Committee members in attendance used the time to focus not only on improving their own districts, but also on enhancing the leadership and collaborating on the strategic direction of NJASBO. This dedication to continuous improvement ensures that New Jersey's school business officials remain at the forefront of best practices.

Engaging Activities

NJASBO provided a dinner for attendees from New Jersey, reinforcing the collaborative spirit fostered

continued on page 5

"Spring will come and so will happiness. Hold on. Life will get warmer."

- Anita Krizzan



ASBO INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE *continued from page 4*

during the conference. This gathering allowed for meaningful discussions on leadership challenges, opportunities for professional growth, and ways to strengthen the role of school business officials within the state.

Beyond formal sessions, attendees took advantage of Tampa's vibrant setting to build connections in a more informal environment. The forum concluded with a scavenger hunt through the Tampa River Walk, fostering team-building and camaraderie among participants.

Looking Ahead

ASBO International continues to offer valuable opportunities for professional development. Upcoming events include the Legislative Advocacy Conference from July 8–10, 2025, in Washington, D.C., and the Annual Conference & Expo from October 21–23, 2025, in Fort Worth, Texas. These events will provide additional avenues for school business leaders to refine their skills, stay informed about industry trends, and advocate for the needs of their districts at both the state and national levels.

These events are an important part of the NJASBO partnership because they open the lines of communication between county BAs. By making these connections, it encourages people to reach out to one another as resources and collaborators.



L-R: NJASBO leadership, including Second Vice-President Chris Mullins (MOESC), First Vice-President James Sekelsky (Newton), President Katie Attwood (Hamilton Township), President-elect Chandra Coady (Mainland Regional), and NJASBO Assistant Executive Director Matt Clarke collaborated during a workshop.



L-R: James Sekelsky (Newton), Greg Burns (ABM President), Sacha Pouliot (Hillsdale), Mike Halik (North Caldwell), and Chris Mullins (MOESC) enjoyed a networking breakfast.

CLIFTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS ASST. SUPERINTENDENT OF BUSINESS LOOKS TO MAKE AN IMPACT SERVING ON THE NJ BOARD OF EDUCATION



Ahmed Shehata, Assistant Superintendent of Business at Clifton Public Schools, is making an impact far beyond the district he works in. Shehata, 31, is finishing his sixth month serving on the New Jersey State Board of Education

(BOE), helping to shape the educational policies and standards that impact all public schools across the state.

“My journey into public service and education wasn’t something I initially planned—it was something I felt compelled to do because of my experiences growing up,” said Shehata. “Losing my father at a young age, working multiple jobs to help support

continued on page 6

CLIFTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS ASST. SUPERINTENDENT OF BUSINESS LOOKS TO MAKE AN IMPACT SERVING ON THE NJ BOARD OF EDUCATION *continued from page 5*

my family, and navigating life as a first-generation American all shaped my perspective on the power of education. I know firsthand how transformative access to education can be, especially for students in urban communities.”



Through education, Shehata learned the skills, opportunities, and confidence to overcome his challenges and build a better future—not just for himself, but for his family. He draws inspiration from students who remind him of his younger self—kids who may not see a clear path forward but have the potential to achieve incredible things with the right support. This perspective helped to shape his goal: Making sure supports are in place for every student in New Jersey.

“I started as a Board of Education member in my hometown, and that experience shaped my understanding of how policy decisions directly impact students, teachers, and communities,” explained Shehata. “Serving on the State Board of Education allows me to take my experiences and use them to advocate for policies that ensure every student, no matter their circumstances, has the same opportunities that helped me build a better future.”

One of Shehata’s main goals while serving on the board is ensuring that no child in New Jersey goes hungry, especially during extended school breaks.

“For many students, school meals are their most reliable source of nutrition, and when schools close for holidays or summer vacation, too many families struggle to put food on the table. That’s why we are piloting a program to provide meals for children during these breaks. I want this initiative to be my legacy—creating a sustainable solution to combat food insecurity and ensuring that every child in our state has access to the nutrition they need to learn, grow, and thrive. No child should ever have to worry about where their next meal is coming from, and I am committed to making this a reality.”

Believed to be the youngest to ever serve on the State BOE, Shehata is one of 13 Governor-appointed members who are responsible for setting curriculum standards, establishing graduation requirements, and developing regulations that guide the operation of schools during their six-year term. For Shehata, this is in addition to managing 1,600 employees and a \$300 million budget for the state’s 11th largest school district. Regardless of which hat he’s wearing, Shehata is committed to advocating for the needs of students, educators, and administrators.

While ultimately education is all about shaping young lives, Shehata recognizes the struggles districts are facing when it comes to teacher recruitment and retention and financial sustainability – both areas he plans to focus on while serving in this capacity. Part of that plan includes making sure New Jersey remains a place where talented educators want to work and grow. He also recognizes the need to ensure that school districts have the funding they need to maintain strong academic programs while being fiscally responsible.

State-level leadership in education has always been important, but with potential shifts at the federal level, this role is even more crucial. That includes ensuring that policy changes—whether at the state or national level—don’t negatively impact students, teachers, or school districts. Shehata is committed

continued on page 7



CLIFTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS ASST. SUPERINTENDENT OF BUSINESS LOOKS TO MAKE AN IMPACT SERVING ON THE NJ BOARD OF EDUCATION *continued from page 6*

to working with the incoming Governor and administration to ensure students continue to get a fair share in future budgets.

"We need to be proactive in protecting funding, maintaining high academic standards, and making sure that our schools remain places of opportunity for all students," said Shehata. "Regardless of what happens in Washington, our commitment to New

Jersey's students must remain strong, and I take that responsibility very seriously."

Shehata holds a Master of Business Administration in data analytics from Seton Hall Stillman School of Business, a Master of Public Administration from Rutgers University School of Public Affairs and Administration, and a bachelor's degree in criminal justice/political science from Rutgers University.

SEHBP RETIREES ON MEDICARE MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR MEDICARE IRMAA REIMBURSEMENTS

By Bob Murphy, NJASBO Pension Consultant

Education Retirees who are 65/+ and are receiving free or cost-shared health benefits in retirement may be eligible for a reimbursement of the Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA) that they paid in 2024 for their monthly Medicare premium.

Every November, retirees who are enrolled in Medicare receive a letter that informs them of the premium they will be billed for in the next year (beginning in January). The Medicare premium is determined by the modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) from the tax year before the date of the letter. For example, for 2024, IRMAA was based on MAGI from the 2022 tax return. Medicare enrollees are billed for at least the base Medicare premium amount - for 2024 that was \$174.70 a month. In some cases, income level puts retirees in a category where they pay more than the base amount - this is called IRMAA. (See the chart on page 8 for the six IRMAA income levels. The amounts listed in the chart indicate the amount that exceeds the base amount.)

All education retirees who qualify for free or cost-shared health benefits and are enrolled in Medicare will receive reimbursement for the base Medicare level in their monthly pension check. That reimbursement is for the retiree and/or their spouse. If their monthly Medicare payment includes the IRMAA, they will have

the opportunity to apply for reimbursement of that additional premium amount from March through May of the following year. Therefore, the application period for 2024 reimbursements is now open.

The Division of Pension and Benefits should have mailed or emailed the information needed to submit for the IRMAA Reimbursement for 2024 by the end of February. You can also find all of the information in your BenefitSolver account when you login to the Members Benefits Online System (MBOS) and click on the Health Benefit icon. If you did not receive the information from the Division of Pensions and Benefits, you can find it under your name at the top of the Health Benefit home page and click "Personal Documents". This information includes all of the filing instructions and the claim form if you decide to submit your claim by **mail, email, or fax**. You can also submit your claim online through your BenefitSolver account. They have a detailed video that shows you step-by-step how you submit your claim. You can find that video by clicking on IRMAA FAQ, along with answers to many other questions regarding submitting your claim.

Submitting A Claim

To submit a claim by mail, email or fax, use the form from the mailed material from the Division of Pension *continued on page 8*



SEHBP RETIREES ON MEDICARE MAY BE ELIGIBLE FOR MEDICARE IRMAA REIMBURSEMENTS *continued from page 7*

and Benefits **or** download the packet for IRMAA Reimbursement under the Personal Documents section of MBOS. One form can be used to submit a claim for spouses if both qualify.

Supporting Documents

Supporting documents will need to be submitted along with the claim; this includes proof of payment amount and proof of payment. The November 2023 IRMAA letter detailing the 2024 IRMAA payment **and** a Social Security 1099 for 2024 will satisfy these needed documents. Another option in place of the IRMAA letter would be to submit pages 1 and 2 from the 2022 tax return. If a retiree is not collecting Social Security and paid their Medicare Premium monthly, they should submit a Medicare premium bill or go to [medicare.gov](https://www.medicare.gov) and print the 2024 payment history as proof of payment. The claim amount does not have to be calculated, simply indicate the number of months the premium was paid for both Part B and Part D.

To submit a claim online, which may be the quickest way to receive your reimbursement, scan the required documents to easily drop them into the application. Be sure to save a scan for each individual, since separate online claims will need to be submitted for each.

To calculate your payment amount, use the chart below. Note that separate reimbursements must be submitted for both Medicare Part B and Medicare Part D, according to eligibility. When submitting online, separate reimbursements must also be submitted for each person, including spouses.

To calculate your surcharge amount, identify the number of months for which you are seeking reimbursement. Then, take the number of months and multiply it by the applicable monthly surcharge amount below. Please note that two claims per retiree must be filed, for Part B and another for Part D.

2024 IRMAA Reimbursement Amounts

(Monthly surcharge X number of months eligible for reimbursement = total payment amount)

Filing Single	Married Filing Joint	Married Filing Separately (MFS)	Monthly Part B Surcharge	Monthly Part D Surcharge
Over \$103,000 to \$129,000	Over \$206,000 to \$258,000	Not applicable	\$69.90	\$12.90
Over \$129,000 to \$161,000	Over \$258,000 to \$322,000	Not applicable	\$174.70	\$33.30
Over \$161,000 to \$193,000	Over \$322,000 to \$386,000	Not applicable	\$279.50	\$53.80
Over \$193,000 to <\$500,000	Over \$386,000 to <\$750,000	Over \$103,000 to <\$397,000	\$384.30	\$74.20
\$500,000 and above	\$750,000 and above	\$397,000 and above	\$419.30	\$81.00

There are resources available on the Division's [website](#).

Robert T. Murphy is a consultant to NJASBO and is the Former Assistant Executive Director of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association. He can be reached at rmurphy@njpsa.org



GETTING TO KNOW YOUR COUNTY PRESIDENTS

We're continuing to introduce the county ASBO presidents. These professionals lead their colleagues throughout the county by promoting the highest standards of ethics and efficiency through support and collaboration.



Michael Blake **Burlington County**

Burlington County ASBO President Michael Blake has been the Business Administrator at Maple Shade School District for the past five years and previously worked at Hainesport Township Schools for more than four years.

Michael was initially drawn to the profession because he realized during his time as an auditor that he wanted to do something bigger than himself and have an impact on people's lives. While Michael was in the process of getting his MBA, he stayed in touch with his college friend Nick Bice, who was the BA at Hainesport. Conversations with Nick about his experiences as a BA opened Michael's eyes to the great impact the position has on the lives of students and staff members and that's when he decided to pursue this career.

What Michael loves most about his job and makes it feel the most rewarding is the connections he makes with BAs and ABMs. He enjoys the diversity of ideas, experiences, and emotions and how every conversation is a chance to understand someone's perspective, help them work through challenges, or just be a sounding board.

His claims to fame are winning Best Dressed from Sue Young during the 2024 ABM Family Feud professional development session and winning a baby beauty contest at eight months old.



Sheryl Leidig **Passaic County**

Sheryl Leidig holds the president position at the Passaic County ASBO. She currently works as the BA in Wayne Township Public Schools, where she's been for more than four years. However, starting in April 2025, Sheryl is taking over as the BA for Ringwood School District.

Her education includes a master's degree in accounting. Sheryl is licensed in New Jersey as a Certified Public Accountant and a Public School Accountant, and has received the ASBO Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting.

Working as an audit manager for over 14 years for a firm and working primarily with schools helped Sheryl realize she loved auditing schools and the accounting and compliance that was associated with that. This experience helped steer her toward the BA profession when she left the auditing field, so she could still use her accounting skills while branching into other areas.

The most rewarding part of being a BA for Sheryl is the ability to facilitate the accomplishment of goals and objectives of the district. Plus, in this role, Sheryl is able to help people, in a variety of ways, from ordering needed supplies to figuring out how to fund a capital project.

Sheryl is a huge NY Giants fan and on Sundays you can find her watching football with her family!



Daniel Choffo **Hudson County**

Daniel Choffo is the Hudson County ASBO President and he has worked for the Harrison School District since 2008, serving as the BA since 2016. Daniel's master's degree is in business.

continued on page 10



GETTING TO KNOW YOUR COUNTY PRESIDENTS *continued from page 9*

What drew Daniel to becoming a BA is that he could make a positive impact for the district's students and staff. His connection to the district goes beyond work, which makes it even more special that he gets to give back to Harrison. Daniel was born and raised in Harrison. He now resides there with his wife, who works as a teacher, and his children, who attend the district schools.

The parts of the job that Daniel enjoys the most vary. They range from everyday tasks like working on long-term facility projects and annual budgeting and forecasting, to recognizing the variety of requirements it takes to successfully run a school district. He enjoys how each day presents something unexpected that challenges him.

He loves to travel and experience different vacation spots with his family and enjoys golfing in his free time.



Michael Halik
Essex County

Essex County ASBO president Michael Halik has been the BA for North Caldwell Public Schools for 12 years. Mike has an MBA in finance, holds a School Administrator Certificate and a certificate as a Registered School

Business Administrator (RSBA).

Mike first discovered the BA profession when he was working at Wayne Public Schools. After his experience there, he became a staff accountant and went back to school to earn his MBA before becoming an Assistant BA and then a BA.

The variety of work is what Michael likes about being a BA. The job goes beyond just crunching numbers. He takes pride in seeing how the business office's hard work results in many benefits for the students.

In his spare time, Michael enjoys being at the shore and spending time outdoors in the warmer weather (he hates the cold) with his wife, son, and dog.



Jim Schlessinger
Warren County

Jim Schlessinger is the Warren County ASBO President and has been the Business Administrator (BA) for Warren County Special Services School District since 2017, where he also serves as the Superintendent. He has also

worked for the Hampton Public School District and Hackettstown Public School District as the interim SBA since November 2024. Jim holds a Bachelor of Science in Accounting and a Master of Education Leadership, is a CPA and has a Lean Six Sigma certification.

Jim considers himself a late-career-changer, after previously working in both public and corporate accounting. Becoming an SBA was an interesting opportunity for him to use his skills and experiences to be more involved on a local level. As the son of two public school teachers, it seemed like the position would be a great fit. Jim loves the challenge of figuring out how to get as much as possible out of their limited funding and finding creative ways to be able to say "yes" when it comes to doing more for the students.

Outside of work you can find Jim playing lacrosse in several tournaments each year and pickup games whenever possible. He also is the director of a youth field hockey league. A former field hockey and lacrosse coach, he now spends his time following and rooting for his kids' teams.



David Oliveira
Middlesex County

Middlesex County ASBO President David Oliveira has been the BA for Piscataway Township Schools for the past decade. Prior to that, he worked as a BA for Clark Township School District. He started working in

continued on page 11



GETTING TO KNOW YOUR COUNTY PRESIDENTS *continued from page 10*

schools by teaching business classes at West Side High School, part of Newark Public Schools, before moving into an Assistant Principal role there and in Clark.

David is a seven-time ASBO International Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting recipient. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in Accounting and Finance and a Master of Arts in Education. He earned his CPA license (California-inactive) and holds an Administrator of School Finance and Operations (SFO) and School Safety Specialist certificates.

David worked for Deloitte in California and Dublin, Ireland for several years before returning to New Jersey. After teaching led to being an Assistant Principal, he was contemplating his next administrative role when he decided the best fit would be combining all of his skills and experience as an SBA. David finds it gratifying to know everything he manages in this role has a critical impact on the learning environment and outcomes for the children and communities he serves.

David is active in his community and has served on town council, as a member of the high school booster club, and as a coach of his daughters' soccer and

basketball teams. He, his wife, and two daughters love traveling throughout the United States and Europe.



Regina Chico
Camden County

Camden County ASBO President Regina Chico has been with the Winslow Township School District for 10 years, starting there as an accountant before becoming the Assistant Business Administrator seven years ago.

Prior to that, she worked for a company that audited schools for twelve years, which piqued her interest in becoming a school business official.

Regina is a licensed Certified Public Accountant, Public School Accountant, Registered Municipal Accountant and holds a School Transportation Supervision certification. She loves that every day there is something new to learn or experience in her current role.

Regina enjoys participating in athletics and was inducted into the Williamstown High School Hall of Fame in 2018. While there, she played field hockey, basketball, and softball. She went on to play field hockey for Monmouth University.

ABSO INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION: USDA URBAN SCHOOL FOOD ALLIANCE PROCUREMENT WORKGROUP

By Sacha Pouliot | Business Administrator, Hillsdale Public Schools



This year, I had the privilege of serving a second year in my role as a representative of ABSO International, advocating for small-urban school districts as part of the USDA Urban School Food Alliance (USFA) Procurement Workgroup. This initiative, funded through a

USDA grant, is focused on tackling the complex challenges school districts face in procuring nutritious, cost-effective meals for students.

Building on Year 1 Findings

In our first year, we identified key procurement challenges, explored preliminary action plans, and discussed training opportunities for stakeholders. Year 2 was all about refining those pain points and making real progress on solutions—especially the development of a national procurement tool designed to standardize and streamline the RFP process. This tool aims to cut through red tape, bring uniformity to procurement, and make it easier for districts—

continued on page 12

ABSO INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATION: USDA URBAN SCHOOL FOOD ALLIANCE PROCUREMENT WORKGROUP

continued from page 11

especially smaller ones—to navigate regulations, vendor limitations, and rising costs.

Key Focus Areas

Beyond the procurement tool, the workgroup also examined the current state of training for those working within the School Nutrition Program (SNP) at both the state and national levels. USFA partnered with Harvard Kennedy School's Government Performance Lab to analyze state SNP websites. Their findings? Many state resources were outdated, lacked clear guidance, and made training unnecessarily complicated for both schools and vendors. One major issue that surfaced repeatedly was the need for **consistent, common language** in procurement documents to reduce misunderstandings and inefficiencies.

Collaboration & Next Steps

This workgroup brought together a diverse mix of stakeholders, all committed to ensuring that school meal programs remain sustainable and effective

despite rising costs and logistical challenges.

Discussions revolved around balancing federal and state regulations, improving supply chain resilience, and ensuring that procurement processes support—not hinder—access to quality meals for students.

Looking ahead to Year 3, we're gearing up to finalize and pilot the procurement tool in select districts, working in collaboration with the USDA and state agencies. Additionally, USFA is preparing a proposal for a **new school food procurement business plan** to present to the USDA and Congress. This proposal will push for meaningful reforms that address many of the issues raised in our workgroup discussions.

As an honored participant in this process, I remain committed—alongside my colleagues—to advocating for procurement practices that are fair, effective, and sustainable for districts of all sizes. The work we're doing is not just about fixing a process—it's about ensuring that every student has access to nutritious meals, no matter where they go to school.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO NJAC 6A:27 STUDENT TRANSPORTATION REGULATIONS

By Sue Young | NJASBO Executive Director



As you may recall, the Governor signed P.L. 2024, C. 81 last October, allowing drivers of certain vehicles to transport students without having a Commercial Driver's License. The Department of Education has proposed several amendments to the NJAC 6A:27 Student

Transportation regulations to align the chapter with this new law. Additionally, another law passed in 2023, P.L. 2023 C.326, allows nonpublic consortiums to transport students who reside in participating school districts but attend member nonpublic schools. This law is reflected in a completely new proposed

subchapter, NJAC 6A:27-14. The revised proposed regulations were issued on March 5, 2025, with a 60-day comment period. While these are not yet formally adopted, they provide good insight into the Department's final intentions. Rarely are significant changes made to proposed regulations.

While I will summarize the elements I believe are most common, relevant, and important to the majority of districts, I encourage you to consult the actual proposed regulations, which can be found [here](#) if you have specific questions.

continued on page 13



PROPOSED CHANGES TO NJAC 6A:27 STUDENT TRANSPORTATION REGULATIONS *continued from page 12*

Law Permitting Certain Persons to Operate Type S School Buses

The law and regulations now permit certain designated school personnel who are not licensed as school bus drivers to transport students between home and school in a private or district-owned vehicle with a capacity of eight or fewer passengers, excluding the driver, provided the designated school personnel meet the criteria and requirements within the new regulations (N.J.A.C. 6A:27-7.6 (c) and (d)).

School personnel means any person employed by the district board of education. The most time-sensitive requirement within these regulations is the July 15 annual deadline for districts to designate those individuals. There is no provision to update that list during the year. (Please note that current existing regulation NJAC 6A:27-7.6 has always allowed “private vehicles with a capacity of eight or fewer passengers (to be) used for the transportation of students to and from school-related activities, in accordance with policies and regulations adopted by the district board of education....”) The distinction here being between home and school versus to/from school-related activities. Each has its own requirements.

While that may tempt districts to list every employee, please note there are costs involved in monitoring those individuals. In particular, there must be a physical, a criminal history background check, and a Child Abuse Record Information (CARI) check within the past year. Driver history abstracts and monthly motor vehicle record checks must be obtained. Documentation of automobile liability insurance must be obtained. Training related to proper procedures for interacting with students with special needs is also required. The vehicles used must meet regular inspection and registration requirements but are not subject to bus inspections. Please note, however, that the regulations also provide for certain vehicle and driver exemptions from existing regulations, which should be reviewed and consulted.

Finally, section NJAC 6A:27.2.1h was amended to clarify that aid in lieu payments SHALL (vs may) be prorated when the nonpublic school transportation application is received after the start of the nonpublic school's year or when the student withdraws from the school before the close of the school year.

Consortium of Nonpublic Schools

As mentioned previously, a brand-new subchapter has been proposed to address the new law allowing the creation of transportation consortiums for the purpose of providing both mandated and subscription transportation services. This subchapter is lengthy and outlines student eligibility requirements, responsibilities of a participating (public) school district, the consortium, the nonpublic school administrators, nonpublic school parents and guardians, the consortium oversight committee, and the executive county superintendent.

This program, as currently in law, expires on January 16, 2027.

Since it is anticipated that this will affect only a select number of districts, we will not go deep into the details here. In general, there is a May 1 deadline for participating school districts to notify the consortium of the determination of each nonpublic school transportation application for the subsequent school year. A school district must also notify the consortium by May 15 if it will no longer participate in the consortium for the following school year. If you anticipate such a consortium may be operating to provide services for the nonpublic school entities within your boundaries, please review this subchapter in its entirety as it contains numerous administrative and financial details.

This article will end where it started with the notation that these regulations are in a proposed form but provide needed insight and direction. If past history is any indication, we would not anticipate many significant changes to these proposals.



NJASBO 63RD ANNUAL CONFERENCE: BUILDING BRIDGES TO SUCCESS

By Matthew Clarke | NJASBO Assistant Executive Director

The New Jersey Association of School Business Officials (NJASBO) will hold its highly anticipated 63rd Annual Conference June 4 to the 6, bringing together business administrators, assistant business administrators, business office staff, and industry experts for a dynamic event aimed at building bridges to success in the business sector for public education. From insightful learning opportunities to engaging evening events, this year's conference will provide attendees with valuable knowledge to navigate the evolving landscape of school business management. We would like to extend our gratitude to the conference chairs, Chandra Coady and Jim Sekelsky, for their excellent efforts in organizing this year's conference, which promises to be an outstanding and unforgettable event.

One of the highlights of the conference will be the diverse range of learning opportunities available to participants. Workshops and sessions will cover a myriad of topics essential for school business officials, including financial management strategies, technology integration in the business office (AI), risk management, human resources, facilities and more. These sessions will provide attendees with actionable insights and best practices to enhance operational efficiencies and support student success. Thanks to the Education Committee, led by Corey Lowell, there will be over 35 educational sessions where members can collect valuable credits towards QPA, CPE, SFO and CEFM certifications.

On Friday, attendees will have the privilege of hearing from keynote speaker Steve Rizzo. A native of Brooklyn, New York, Rizzo is a motivational speaker, author, and former stand-up comedian who is notable for his humorous style of motivational speaking and writing. Attendees can expect to hear insightful stories infused with his unique brand of humor, as he talks about how to shift one's mindset for success. (See article on page 15.)

In addition to the enriching daytime sessions, the conference also features exciting evening events that foster networking and camaraderie among

participants. Attendees will have the opportunity to connect with peers, industry partners, and sponsors during cocktail receptions, dinner banquets, and interactive activities. These events not only facilitate meaningful connections but also provide a platform for sharing ideas and collaborating on innovative solutions for common challenges faced in school business management. Thursday's evening event returns to the Cabanas for dinner and entertainment by the GoodMan Fiske Band! Remember to go to the photo booth with friends and colleagues to capture a fun memory from the 63rd annual conference.

We're excited to continue with "The Hour of Power" yoga sessions at sunrise. This refreshing and invigorating activity allows attendees to start their day with mindfulness and wellness, promoting a holistic approach to professional development. NJASBO thanks Christine Messina, from AllRisk Property Damage Experts, as she provides useful instruction from beginners to experienced yoga practitioners. We hope to see you Wednesday and/or Thursday at 6 a.m. on the Skyview veranda.

Overall, the NJASBO 63rd Annual Conference will offer a blend of educational content, networking opportunities, and wellness activities. This year's event continues a long history of NJASBO's commitment to empowering school business officials with the tools and knowledge needed to thrive in an ever-changing educational landscape.

If you haven't registered for the conference, there's still time to do so. Take a minute and do it today so you can experience the finest professional development for BAs. Go to www.njasbo.com and select the "Annual Conference" tab. When you have registered, you will receive an email about room reservations. **The block of rooms is only available at the discounted rate until May 2, 2025 or when the rooms are filled, whichever comes first.**

Join us – this is time invested in your professional growth! We look forward to seeing everyone at Ocean Resort on June 4.



STEVE RIZZO'S BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS: KEYNOTE SPEAKER FOR THE 63RD NJASBO CONFERENCE



Steve Rizzo is a motivational speaker, author, and former stand-up comedian known for his humorous style of motivational speaking and writing. He is a member of the National Speakers Association and an inductee of the Council of Peers Award for Excellence Speaker Hall of Fame.

At the pinnacle of his stand-up career, Steve walked away from comedy to pursue his true purpose and passion—to show people how to shift their focus and way of thinking, to discover more joy and enthusiasm, increased productivity and greater levels of success.

Steve Rizzo captivates audiences with laughter while revealing the secrets of how to shift their mindset from failure to success, from unhappiness to fulfillment, and from lack to abundance. His presentations focus on common-sense success strategies and shifting habits that empower individuals to take control of every aspect of their lives.

He stresses the importance of enjoying yourself during the process of achieving your goals and building a solid foundation to stand on when all else fails, because he absolutely knows that no matter what circumstances we find ourselves in, attitude is everything.

Steve Rizzo has authored several insightful and motivational books, including his new bestseller, *Conversations With Bob*. This newest book features a dialogue between Bob, representing your Higher Nature, and Bernie, residing in the Negative Zone. The conversations prompt readers to start a dialogue between their own Inner Bob and Inner Bernie, helping them transform their lives from failure to success, unhappiness to fulfillment, and lack of abundance.

Each of Rizzo's books are valuable tools for maximizing personal and professional success and happiness.

You can experience Rizzo's unique brand of humor and insightful stories during his Keynote presentation on Friday, June 6 at 10:15 a.m. in Ovation Hall.

PLEASE JOIN US IN CONGRATULATING OUR RETIREE ON A JOB WELL DONE

Amy Barkman,
SBA, Warren County Vo-Tech

"Nothing is impossible, the word itself says 'I'm possible'"

-Audrey Hepburn