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MESSAGE FROM NJASBO PRESIDENT PHILIP H. NISONOFF, ED.D.

The BA's Role In Facilitating Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

"Freedom is the continuous action we all must take, and each generation must do its part to create an even more fair, more just society." – John Lewis

School Business Administrators are not passengers on the journey to creating a more just society, we are in a valuable and unique driver's seat. Along with our superintendents, administrators, board trustees, and fellow NJASBO members, we have the ability to help shape the direction of our schools and communities in ways that facilitate diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI).

We are proud New Jersey has one of the highest performing school systems in the nation. Credit for that success should be shared with all of our business

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HOORAY FOR OUR DSA RECIPIENTS!

Congratulations to NJASBO's 2021 Distinguished Service Award recipients. We honor your long-term, continuous, and exemplary service to our profession and to the staff and students in your school districts and the communities they serve.

Northern Region
Frank Ceurvels
Ramapo Indian Hills

Peter Daquila
School District of the Chathams

Central Region
Maria Parry
Monmouth Regional

Laura Gingerelli
Berkeley Township

Southern Region
Donna Contrevo
Gateway Regional/ National Park

Paula Smith
Cape May County Technical School

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officials as we guided the fiscal resources needed through complex legal and regulatory bureaucracies. New Jersey should be proud of improvements it has made to ensure more equitable distribution of educational funding.

However, for decades, New Jersey has been in the top ten racially segregated school systems in the country[1]. As the remedy for this system of segregation may be several years away and decided by others, there is plenty of work for us *NOW* to improve the lives of our students, communities, and our own members through a sustained focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

DEI In our Schools

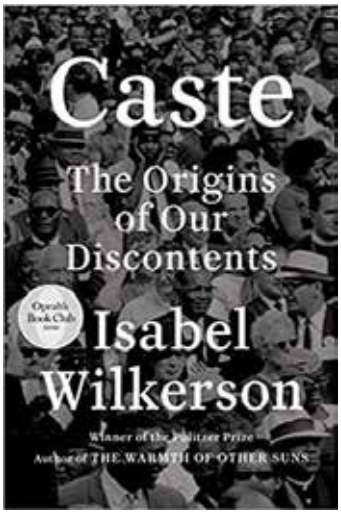
Tamara Mitchell, Assistant Superintendent for Business for Joliet Public Schools District 86 in Illinois, wrote an excellent article in January's issue of *School Business Affairs* titled, "Social Injustice and Equity in Schools". In the article, she eloquently discussed how, as business administrators, we can take a leadership role with our own districts to help foster DEI. Ms. Mitchell discussed making data-driven budgetary decisions, working with district administrators to ensure equitable distribution of funds, and leading discussions on examining school mascot names.

The administration at Pascack Regional High School district, for example, successfully removed the "Cowboy" and "Indian" as their high school mascots, although not without controversy. The administration accomplished this with courage and determination, despite fervent opposition from sentimental students, alumni, and community members.

Many of our districts and communities have undertaken DEI initiatives recently. We encourage all of our members to be at the table for these initiatives, take a leadership role, or simply be there to listen, learn, and support.

DEI Outside of Our Schools

Racially motivated business practices, governmental policymaking and implementation,



and administrative action each contributed to racial and ethnic economic inequalities in our society today[2].

Business Administrators distribute millions of taxpayer dollars that are returned into the economy. Is it possible that some of our boards' practices have contributed to the inequity? What effort do we make to ensure minority-owned businesses are bidding on our contracts? What barriers exist that prevent minority-owned businesses from bidding on public school work? These are some questions we might ask ourselves as we consider our role in addressing DEI, not only within our schools, but in society as well.

DEI and NJASBO

We also must think of DEI as it relates to our own organization, NJASBO. We are an amazing, forward-thinking and professional organization representing all School Business Officials in New Jersey. As an organization, we have a duty to uphold the highest standard of ethics and an obligation to support all of our members. Is it possible our institution has barriers to advancement for minority members? Is it possible the voices for some of our members are not being heard? Is it possible our institution has discriminatory and biased practices?

Recently, we created a focus group of minority school business administrators from across the state to help answer these questions and more. We met virtually over two sessions facilitated by Dr. Aaron Graham of New Jersey Consortia for Excellence Through Equity. Through these sessions, in which our colleagues shared their

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stories, struggles and perspectives, we confirmed there is much work to be completed as an organization to break down barriers, examine our own organizational structure, and find ways to ensure our disenfranchised members are heard and supported.

Although we are but one organization in this nation, we have a duty to do our part in achieving the common goal of a more just society by making NJASBO as Diverse, Inclusive, and Equitable as humanly possible with, as Newark Board of Education Business Administrator Valerie Wilson implored, “speed and urgency”.

To this end, NJASBO will take an approach that goes beyond checking off a list of boxes. We wish to take a sustained, thoughtful approach to this extremely important initiative.

The executive committee has proposed, among our goals for next year, to develop opportunities to create a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive association. Specific actions include creating a working group dedicated to this issue to study, research, and advise the association. We hope to refine our data collection to support that research and inform recommendations. Lastly, we desire to prioritize DEI in our publications, public relations, and professional development.

We ask every member of our organization to join and support these efforts. Be in the driver’s seat as we do our part as business officials to continue to build great schools, a better association, and a better world for the next generation.

[1]The Civil Rights Project, Orfield & Jarvie, 2020

[2]Wilkerson’s Caste: The Origin of Our Discontents; Richard Rothstein’s The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of how Our Government Segregated America; New York Time’s 1619 project; (one article from NYT Magazine on the origins of racial economic inequality that was included)

A PERFORMANCE OF EMPOWERMENT



Fort Lee High School (FLHS) senior Maritina Sardis’ amazing performance of Andra Day’s grammy-nominated song “Rise Up” will give you goosebumps. Her solo vocal performance was showcased in FLHS' African American Club’s Black History Month Program.

Thank you Haqquisha Taylor, Fort Lee Public Schools Business Administrator/Board Secretary, for sharing.

Listen and be inspired!

DID YOU KNOW?

The Associate Business Member Group was formed in 1965.

BEHIND THE SCENES

By Susan Young, Executive Director

As a change of pace, I'm going to try NOT to even mention the word COVID past this initial sentence. NJASBO has been busy this past year with a number of routine and *NEW* initiatives we would like to share with you. We hope you like this peek behind the scenes.

Certification

There are approximately 70 individuals enrolled in our Certification Courses at any point in time, with 60 of them also participating in the associated mentorship program. NJASBO took over the administration of this program several years ago, except for awarding the initial Certificate of Eligibility. The success of this program is due to the dedication, expertise and selflessness of our instructors and mentors. Thank you!

Now, for the Initiative

Although a deep dive into the curricula of these courses had been a planned long-term goal, certain recent "events" moved that initiative forward dramatically. Recognizing that most business administrators are not experts at designing curriculum, NJASBO partnered with NJPSA (New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association) to utilize its Canvas platform and professional development personnel to convert the course to a hybrid delivery method.



Several of our active members, associate business members, an Executive County BA, our SBA of the Year, NJPSA professionals, and even a recent retiree, volunteered to create 17 videos for our School Finance course. The videos ranged from 20 minutes to 2+ hours and covered topics such as Reading the Board Secretary Report, the Chart of Accounts, Homeroom & EWEG, Preparing for an Audit, Purchasing, Bank Reconciliations, and the Hiring Process, just to name a few. Additionally, scores of resources and assessments also were incorporated into the platform.

The students will have access to these webinars and resources for an entire year. All of these tools were complimented by the lectures provided by our instructors. Based on feedback from the students and instructors, NJASBO has the intention of continuing to work with instructors from our other courses to consider this approach for additional curricula.

Advocacy

As mentioned in previous issues of *KeyPost*, NJASBO hired Michael Vrancik in September to serve as a legislative advocate consultant. Mike retired from NJSBA as the Director of Government Relations. Although he spent many years there, his career experience also encompassed several roles within the Office of Budget and Management and the Treasury Department.

Mike has been instrumental in making contacts for NJASBO with regard to the myriad bills, laws, and regulations encompassing everything from CAFR/Audsum deadlines, subcontracting, transportation regulation revisions, Chapter44, Surplus, coaching, QSAC delays, A3904, consolidation, etc.

Please be assured that NJASBO continues to make our voices heard. It has been quite an active legislative year for schools!

Tools/Resources/Communications

While our members were heroically bailing the proverbial water out of their district boats as new and unique holes kept springing up this past year, our mission was to provide timely updates and resources for our membership. I suppose this is where I should apologize for the issuance of a

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multitude of *Key Alerts*, however, as soon as we became aware of information, we wanted you to have it.

The gamut ran from federal leaves and prototypes, to federal and state grant guidance, to survey compilations for advocacy, FEMA, HVAC, meal service, etc. If you haven't become familiar with the Resources section of our website, please take a moment to explore it. A shout out is appropriate here for our Legislative and Purchasing committees who have been busy vetting many bills and creating new specifications which are populating our website.



Committees/Task Force Meetings/Zoom Meetings/Go To Meetings…. Oh My!

NJASBO was due to coordinate LEE (Leaders of Educational Excellence) meetings in 2020-2021. Typically, this group, which comprises the Executive Directors of NJEA, NJASA, NJPSA, NJSBA, NJPTA and NJASBO, meets four times a year. Due to this year's "events", the group has been meeting every other week throughout the year with the Department of Education to discuss common concerns and recommendations for moving forward.

The pandemic spurred the development of several other task forces, including one in which NJASBO participated, held by Senator Teresa Ruiz.

Professional Development

Although many of you probably are missing your morning bagel and a nice sit-down luncheon with your colleagues, we hope you were able to join us for our monthly virtual professional development. The intent was to bring you topics that were relevant and timely to the issues being dealt with in your districts.



The Fun & Pretty Stuff

While we were in discussions with our NJASBO office Condominium Association regarding needed repairs and upgrades on our building, the pandemic provided an opportunity to expedite some of the projects. The 20-year-old rooftop HVAC units not only were replaced because of their age, but also were upgraded to meet new ventilation standards. Building and parking lot lighting was replaced with LED fixtures using significant rebates. Finally, our office was repainted, and our technology equipment and Internet service were upgraded.

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Next Up…. Conferences

Unfortunately, we had to announce that the annual NJASBO conference in June 2021, will be held virtually, again. Our contract with the Borgata expires with the June 2021 conference. We have been busy visiting and negotiating with additional Atlantic City venues for our 2022 conference and our 2023 100th Anniversary conference. Stay tuned for future updates.

It Takes a Village

These have been sometimes exhausting and trying times, but they also have been exciting and exhilarating. Many opportunities appeared which otherwise may have taken years to advance. Additionally, I want to thank our members. Many of you have reached out and volunteered expertise or shared ideas and aspirations for our association, which helps to keep NJASBO current and responsive. Thank you for all that you do!

DID YOU KNOW?

A May 1955 Resolution from the Bergen County Association of Public School Business Officials urged the establishment of a minimum salary of $550 per year for full time Secretaries of Boards of Education in New Jersey.

In 1970, Wanaque Board of Education was seeking a Board Secretary — typing and stenography skills were necessary in addition to maintaining the district's financial records.

2021-2022 SLATE OF OFFICERS

The Slate of Officers for the 2021-2022 school year has been approved by the NJASBO Board of Trustees.



Robert Colavita, *President*

NJASBO's new President for the 2021-2022 school year is Robert (Bob) Colavita, Assistant Superintendent for Finance/Board Secretary for the Hopewell Valley Regional School District.

Bob joined Hopewell Valley in 2002 as Assistant Business Administrator, but he was a fourth-grade teacher in the Bernards Township School District and a second-grade teacher for the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District, previously. He also worked in the private sector for the Amerada Hess Corporation as a corporate accountant, and for the Haagen-Dazs Corporation as plant controller.

Bob is a seven-time recipient of ASBO International's Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting. He has served on both the Conference and the Budget Committees for NJASBO. He is a past President of the Mercer County Association of School Business Officials.

Bob lives in Yardley, PA with his family and in his off hours, he helps his father in managing the family's Christmas tree farm.

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Richard Kaz, *President-Elect*

Richard Kaz, who will serve as President-Elect for the 2021-2022 school year, has been the Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the Northern Burlington County Regional School District since 2002. Before joining Northern Burlington, he was the Assistant to the Superintendent in the Moorestown Township Public School District.

Rich has served on several NJASBO committees and was the NJSIAA representative for two years. He is a three-time recipient of ASBO International's Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting. Rich is a past President of the Burlington County Association of School Business Officials, and is a member of the board of trustees for both the Burlington County Insurance Pool Joint Insurance Fund and the School Pool for Excess Liability Limits (SPELL) Joint Insurance Fund.

Before joining the education field, Rich worked in private industry as the Chief Financial Officer for The Association of Independent Growth, Inc. (TAIG).

Rich and wife Sarah have been married for 35 years and raised three boys.



Gail Libby, *First Vice President*

Gail Libby will serve as First Vice President for NJASBO for the 2021-2022 school year. She has been the Business Administrator for the Mount Olive Township School District since 2019. Previously, Gail served as Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the Hackettstown School District, the Lopatcong Township School District, and the High Bridge School District. She began her school business career as the Business Manager and Assistant Principal at the Stepping Stone School.

An active member of NJASBO, Gail has served on various committees including Legislative, Conference, and Budget, among others, and currently is the co-chair of the Public Relations Committee. She is a member of the Morris County ASBO and previously was a member of the Hunterdon-Warren County ASBO, where she had served as Treasurer and as Warren County President. Gail is a member of ASBO International.

Gail is Board Chairperson of the School Alliance Insurance Fund (SAIF) and has served as its Vice Chair and Secretary. She also chairs the Claims Committee, is the SEL representative, and a past Chair of the Safety Committee.

In private industry, Gail served as a junior accountant at Ricoh Corporation, a senior accountant for Dun & Bradstreet, and was a financial manager for AT&T.

Having moved last fall, Annandale is now home for Gail and her collie Gabriel.

Katherine Attwood, *Second Vice President*



Katherine (Katie) Attwood, School Business Administrator/Board Secretary in the Hamilton Township School District, is new to the NJASBO Slate of Officers. She will be serving as the Second Vice President for the 2021-2022 school year.

Before joining Hamilton Township in 2014, Katie served as the Business Administrator/Board Secretary for four years with the Branchburg

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2021-2022 SLATE OF OFFICERS *continued from page 7*

Township Public School District. Among other accomplishments in Hamilton, Katie is managing a $55 million referendum and implemented an $18 million Energy Savings Improvement program. She also invested $8 million over the past five years through lease purchase financing to support the innovation and upgrade of the district's internal technology infrastructure. This effort laid the foundation for the recent upgrade to one-to-one devices for all staff and students. At Branchburg, she implemented efficiencies in operations and conducted a facility/capacity analysis that resulted in closing a school and reallocating $1 million that saved programs and reduced taxes.

Katie is in her third year as President of the Mercer County ASBO, after having served as Vice President. 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. Major accomplishments with the New Jersey Department of Education included playing a key role in the development and implementation of the $8 billion School Funding and Reform Act of 2008, the 2008 Fiscal Accountability regulations, the School District Accountability Act of 2006, and the $8.6 billion Educational Facilities Construction and Financing Act of 2000.

Katie has a bachelor of arts degree in mathematical economics from Brown University and a masters of government administration from the Fels Center of Government at the University of Pennsylvania.

Her public service career began while in graduate school at the Fels Center. She applied to and was accepted into the U.S. Presidential Management Program, which is a two-year program enabling participants to intern in federal agencies of their choice. She worked for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, starting in policy in Washington, DC, and then moved to the regional office in Philadelphia, where she worked in the water protection division managing state grants and programs.

She also worked at the economic forecasting firm, Chase Econometrics, and was a senior economic analyst at the WEFA Group (economic consulting and forecasting firm). Before moving to the government sector, Katie also was the manager of financial project support for the investment services firm, SEI Corporation.

While working at the NJDOE, Katie met her husband, Frank. They have "two wonderful daughters" and live in Cream Ridge.

Philip H. Nisonoff, Ed.D., *Immediate Past President*



Philip H. Nisonoff, Ed.D., Assistant Superintendent of Schools and Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the Emerson Board of Education, will serve as the NJASBO Immediate Past President. He also is a past Chairman of NJASBO's Legislative Committee and a certified School Business Administrator Mentor.

A past President of the Bergen County Association of School Business Officials, Phil also is a former Executive Director of the Bergen County Banking Consortium. He has been a member of the Board of Directors of the South Bergen Workers' Compensation Pool since 1998. He is a past recipient of the Bergen County ASBO's Meritorious Service Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Profession, and the Distinguished Service Award in Recognition of Outstanding Leadership and Contributions to Education. Phil also has received NJASBO's Meritorious Service Award for Outstanding Contributions to the Profession, and the Distinguished Service Award.

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Before joining Emerson in 1994, Phil was a mathematics and computer science teacher, serving with the Galloway Township Board of Education and South River High School. He also has been the Treasurer of School Moneys for the Demarest Board of Education since September 2001, and the Treasurer of the South Bergen Workers' Compensation Pool since July 2015.

Phil lives in Emerson with his wife Jennifer and four children.

ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL BUSINESS OFFICIALS INTERNATIONAL

ASBO INTERNATIONAL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

ASBO International, in addition to sharing information and resources to support its members during this difficult time, is working with its Legislative Advisory Committee, education coalition partners, and federal officials to advocate on the federal level for flexibilities and assistance for schools impacted by COVID-19.

HERE ARE JUST A FEW EXAMPLES OF ADVOCACY ACTIVITIES ON BEHALF OF MEMBERS:

- Asking the United States Department of Education (USED) for guidance to states, districts, and schools on responding to COVID-19 in support of students, staff, and communities during school closures.
- Advocating for E-Rate flexibilities and extra funding to ensure students affected by school closures have adequate Internet access while learning from home, i.e. addressing digital equity concerns such as the "homework gap."
- Advocating for nationwide USDA waivers/flexibilities and extra funding to help school districts serve students healthy and nutritious meals during school closures.
- Advocating for targeted, narrow IDEA flexibilities to help districts provide for all students during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Maintaining ongoing conversations with federal agencies and officials, including USED and White House staff, to discuss additional federal supports needed for states and schools.
- Sharing ASBO International's policy brief with the Biden Administration, highlighting ways district leaders and lawmakers can partner to address the many challenges facing schools during COVID-19 and beyond.
- Use these resources to advocate for your schools:
  - ASBO International's K-12 Policy Recommendations for A New Administration
  - ASBO International's COVID-19 Survey Report: How Are School Districts Investing Federal Emergency Relief Funds to Address COVID-19?

Note: For anyone interested in joining ASBO International, a new District Membership option is available.
Contact membership@asbointl.org for more information

TAKING CARE OF YOU

Although the number of those vaccinated is growing every day, and some restrictions are being loosened, the coronavirus is still a part of our every day life. A Google search on “stress busting tips during COVID” yielded 284 million results! Yes, it’s a “hot” topic – there’s the understatement of the century!

You have a multitude of things stressing you out – personally and professionally – and we are sure you can identify them. But do you know how to take care of yourself in the midst of all of the stress-inducing chaos?

Self-Care is Not Selfish

According to Christine Carter, PhD, a sociologist and senior fellow at the Greater Good Science Center at the University of California in Berkeley, taking care of yourself is essential to your emotional health and well-being.

"Self-care is not selfish," noted Dr. Carter. "This is a time of incredible anxiety and stress. Focusing on what makes us feel nourished, on what gives us meaning, is part of easing those feelings and giving us a more solid foundation."



The definition of self-care, according to the World Health Organization (WHO), are those behaviors that enable you to take care of your own health and can include hygiene, nutrition, leisure activities, sports, and exercise, as well as seeking professional healthcare services when you need them.

A December 2020 article in *Everyday Health* offers more than 60 tips for “taking care of you” during the pandemic. The article covers everything from making sure you get enough sleep, to DIY mani-pedis, finding your crayons and coloring books for an artistic outlet, and listening to an uplifting podcast, to starting a new garden, trying your hand at creative writing, and practicing positive self-talk.



The folks at Kaiser Permanente Health Plans have seven tips they propose for helping manage coronavirus anxiety and stress. One of them echoes a suggestion found in the Everyday Health article: kindness and gratitude. According to Kaiser Permanente, people who regularly write down the things for which they are grateful say they have better well-being, physical health, and greater optimism about the future. They also say there is a proven link between kindness and happiness, and that “helping others just feels good.”

Perception is Everything

Reducing stress can play a big part in your self-care. Or does it?

The New York Times reported on a seminal study conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2012. The study suggests that managing your perceptions of stress may be more important than managing stress itself.

According to the study, having a lot of stress in your life did not lead to premature death.

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However, having a lot of stress in your life and thinking it was adversely impacting your health, well that increased the risk of premature death by 43 percent!

The New York Times article suggests this exercise:

Think about your reaction to the statement below and how you react in times of stress: When I'm stressed, my body releases adrenaline and cortisol. My heart is beating faster. This means:

- **Common View:** Stress is increasing my risk for cardiovascular disease and heart attack.
- **Alternative View:** My heart is working harder and my body is mobilizing its energy to get ready for this challenge.

Seems like the "alternative view" is the better way to react. A team of researchers at Harvard conducted a test, too, and found similar results.

The Harvard team paid 50 people $25 each to participate in a stress-inducing test – giving a talk in front of hostile evaluators that was followed by a "tricky" word test. One group played video games before the "test", a second group was instructed to ignore the "stressful feelings" during the test. The third group was given advice similar to that in the University of Wisconsin study – told that fast breathing, higher heart rate, etc., were tools to "make you strong" for a stressful event.

You probably have guessed the result. The last group was more successful. Their speeches were better, they were more confident, smiled more and their body language was more positive. According to the study, their physiological indicators showed they managed stress better than the other groups.

Dr. Kelly McGonigal, a Stanford University psychologist, believes that rethinking stress can help you be smarter and stronger. You might want to check out her popular TED talk "How to Make Stress Your Friend" – it has been viewed more than 14 million times.

Be Mindful



Sometimes, all you need to do is breathe! Next time things are getting a bit tense or you are feeling a bit anxious, try this mindfulness exercise:

- Get comfortable. Relax your jaw and drop your shoulders.
- Breathe deeply and count your breaths. Inhale on 1, exhale on 2, inhale on 3. When you get to 10, start over.
- When your mind wanders, bring your focus back to your breathing.

So there you have it. We hope these are some helpful hints and some ideas to help you keep going. But remember what the Peanuts cartoon creator Charles M. Shultz said, "All you need is love. But a little chocolate now and then doesn't hurt."

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1957, NJASBO's membership fee was $5.00.