

NJASA Leadership & Diversity Committee Meeting Notes
Tuesday, September 30, 2025

Present at the meeting: *Sandra Diodonet, Nelyda Perez, Sumit Banja, Colleen Butler, Van Cathcart, Brandon Cobb, Gina Coffaro, Charity Comella, Tami Crader, Rosa Diaz, Dan Dooley, Matt Eagleburger, James Earle, Nathan Fisher, Chuck Ford, Carol Kelly, Ted Loeffler, Lee Nittel, Andrea Oates-Parchment, Robert Mungo, Kristin O'Neil, Nathan Parker, Wanda Pichardo, Suzan Radwan, Andrea Romano, Michele Velez Jonte, Cicely Warren, Adele Winter, Rick Spirito, and Judy Rattner.*

- **Welcome – Dr. Sandra Diodonet - Chairperson**
Sandra welcomed everyone and thanked them for representing their counties at the first meeting of 25-26.
- **Welcome on Behalf of the Officers – Nelyda Perez, NJASA Immediate Past President**
Nelyda welcomed everyone to the meeting and shared that she hoped they all enjoyed a smooth start to the school year.
- **NJASA Update – Judy Rattner, NJASA Associate Executive Director**
Judy announced that NJASA is expanding membership benefits by making HR series, legal publications. She also highlighted upcoming regional meetings for non-superintendent members. She highlighted the upcoming programs, listed below on the agenda, at the Atlantic City conference, including sessions on women in leadership, executive coaching, and the mentor update. Judy also mentioned that the association had been hearing ongoing concerns about the NJSLED platform changes and inadequate training.
- **Legislative Update – Judy Rattner, NJASA Associate Executive Director**
Judy mentioned the Certification Committee's work on addressing staffing shortages and upcoming meetings to collaborate with other organizations on legislation. Judy encouraged members to share any additional certification challenges. Nelyda raised a specific issue regarding the certification requirements for a teacher position, highlighting a discrepancy in certification requirements that prevented a qualified candidate from being hired for an ERI class. Judy shared that the governor recently signed bill A1675, which would allow public employees to return to their original pension tiers after a 10-15 year absence. There is another bill pending, A3323, which would add extracurricular activities to pension calculations. Judy also mentioned S3776, which creates a Chronic Absenteeism Task Force, and S2335, which would require instruction on Latino and Hispanic culture. She announced an upcoming mental health summit on December 17th. Finally, she mentioned that Steve Yurchak will present to the Joint Committee on Public Schools on November 12th regarding the counting of special education students in graduation rates.

- **Opening Activity**– Dr. Sandra Diodonet
The opening activity focused on mentorship and leadership, with participants sharing personal experiences and advice from their mentors. Sandra led the discussion, encouraging attendees to think about the impact of mentors in their careers. Participants shared stories of influential mentors who taught them valuable lessons about leadership, problem-solving, and prioritizing student interests. The group discussed the importance of seeking mentorship, being a mentor to others, and the role of diverse perspectives in personal and professional growth.

- **Presentation** – Adele Winter – VP Advancement, Cook Center for Human Connection

Mental Health Resources for Parents, Staff and the Community

Cook Center for Human Connection, a nonprofit foundation currently serving over 6 million families, brings the best programs, services and partnerships to help school communities thrive.

Resources:

[Parentguidance.org](https://parentguidance.org)

staffguidance.org

elizachat.com

Judy introduced Adele Winter, who presented on the work of the Cook Center for Human Connection and invited attendees to connect with her for further information. The Cook Center, a non-profit foundation, was established six years ago by Greg and Julie Cook to address mental health issues in schools. The foundation offers various resources, including ParentGuidance.org, a platform with over 70 on-demand courses for parents and staff, and the Mental Health Series Platform with 384 workshops. They also provide one-to-one parent coaching and staff guidance, as well as professional development on leadership and happiness. The foundation's mission is to support educators, parents, and students by bringing together the best organizations and programs to address mental health needs in schools. Adele presented on mental health and shared her contact information

- **ALAS Report**
Michelle Jontes, President of NJALAS discussed their upcoming events, including a school boards happy hour and annual conference at Kean University featuring Richard Carranza. Judy also congratulated Rosa Diaz for being named the ALAS Superintendent of the Year.
- **New Jersey Alliance of Black Superintendents Report**
Sandra shared that the organization is exploring the possibility of a Spring Conference.
- **National Alliance of Black School Educators**
Carol shared updates about NABSE's first general meeting.
- **School Boards/NJASA Conference –**

Tuesday, October 21, 2025

9:30am – 10:30am – Rm 412

Women in Ed Leadership

Keynote Speaker – Former Assembly Education Chair – Pamela Lampitt

2:45pm – 3:45pm – Rm 412

Hiring for the Now with an Eye on the Future: Creative Solutions & Strategic Partnerships

Wednesday, October 22, 2025

9:00am – 10:30am – Rm 411

NJASA Executive Committee

Open To All NJASA Members Only

11:30am – 12:30pm – Rm 412

Board of Education Support of Executive Coaching, Building Better Teams and Leaders

12:45pm – 1:45pm – Rm 412

Great Schools New Jersey: An Association of High Needs School Districts Beyond the Numbers: Navigating the Future of School Funding in New Jersey

(Open To All Conference Attendees)

2:00pm – 3:00pm – Rm 412

School Administrator Residency Program Mentor Update

(Open to NJASA Certified Mentors Only)

- **Special Event**

***NJASA NJCEE / UPenn GSE Event
Thursday, November 20 @ Forsgate Country Club
Keynote Speaker – John Krownapple
[Registration Link](#)***

- **Topics/Books Currently of Interest**

Sandra mentioned her upcoming bilingual book on chronic absenteeism. The group discussed potential book club topics and explored issues around student and teacher absenteeism, with Carol highlighting the impact of suspensions on chronic absence rates. Other books discussed were: *The Let Them Theory* by Mel Robbins and *Unreasonable Hospitality: The Remarkable Power of Giving People More Than They Expect* by Will Guidara.

- **County/Regional Share**

- **Upcoming Meetings**

- **Monday – 11/24 – Committee Mtg – 9:30 – 11:00**
- **Tuesday – 2/24 – Committee Meeting – 9 :30 - 11:00**
- **Monday – 5/4 – Committee Meeting – 9:30 – 11:00**

- **Final Thoughts/Concerns**

“One Vision – Our Voice”

The mission of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators, the unifying professional association of school leaders, is to ensure a superior statewide system of education by influencing and effecting educational policy, regulations and legislation; and by maximizing the capacity and effectiveness of school leaders through professional development programs and support services.