

SPECIAL SERVICES MONTHLY

908.436.5200



DIVISION OF SPECIAL SERVICES



EPSNJ.ORG

Professional Spotlight

MEET MS. BERRY, TEACHER: HOME INSTRUCTION



Ms. Mary Beth Berry is a dedicated educator with over 43 years of experience, including 35 years serving the Elizabeth community. Throughout her career, she has held multiple roles and certifications, reflecting her versatility and deep commitment to her craft. In her current role as a Home Instruction teacher, she provides individualized instruction to students whose needs prevent them from attending a traditional school setting. Her expertise, compassion, and steady presence make her an invaluable support to students and families, and she is known for going above and beyond—including helping families access essentials when needed.

Her colleagues describe her as knowledgeable, hardworking, and exceptionally caring—someone whose professionalism and dedication set her apart. Outside the school day, Ms. Berry enjoys spending time with her grandchildren and volunteers actively with the American Legion. We proudly recognize and congratulate her for her outstanding service to our community.

Featured Community Resource

THE ELIZABETH PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Elizabeth Public Library is a valuable community hub offering programs and services for families across the city. With four convenient locations, the library provides access to books, technology, homework help, early literacy programs, job and career resources, and a wide range of events for children and adults. Families are encouraged to explore all the opportunities the library offers to support learning, enrichment, and community connections. Visit elizpl.org to learn more.



MAIN LIBRARY:



ELMORA BRANCH LIBRARY:



LACORTE BRANCH LIBRARY:



ABETHPORT BRANCH LIBRARY:



KNOW YOUR IEP

Accommodations vs. Modifications

Understanding the difference between accommodations and modifications helps you know exactly how your child is being supported. Both accommodations and modifications support students with special needs, but they serve different purposes.

Accommodations change how a student learns the material—not what they are expected to learn without changing the curriculum. These supports help level the playing field by removing barriers so students can show what they know. They may include supports like extra time on tests, preferred seating, assistive technology, or quiet spaces for work.

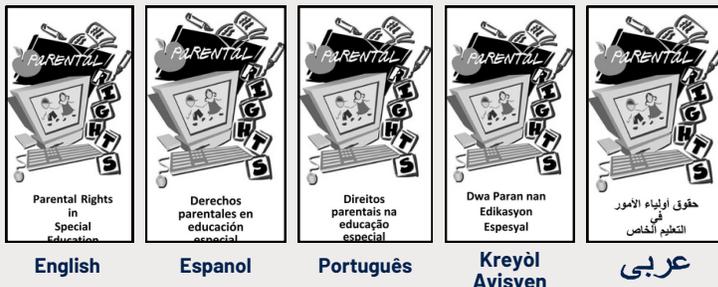
Modifications in an IEP support students with special needs, in several areas. Curriculum changes help match lessons to a child’s abilities and learning style. Instructional strategies may include visual aids, hands-on activities, or assistive technology. Assessments can be adapted with extra time or fewer questions to measure progress accurately. The classroom environment might be modified to reduce distractions, such as providing a quiet space or special seating. Behavioral supports like intervention plans encourage positive behaviors.

Overall, modifications are more significant than accommodations and are designed for students who may be working below grade level or have substantial learning or cognitive challenges. Modifications help ensure that students can still participate meaningfully in their education, even if their learning goals differ from those of their peers.

We love keeping you informed with content that matters most – and we want our newsletter to be as helpful, inspiring, and relevant as possible. To make that happen, we’re inviting you to take a quick survey focused on the upcoming holiday season. We’ll feature the results and relevant content in December’s newsletter. Thank you for your participation.



PARENTAL RIGHTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION



A MESSAGE FROM YOUR DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL SERVICES

Stakeholders of Students with Special Needs,

As we prepare for the Thanksgiving season, I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to our entire educational community, including our dedicated special education teachers, CST members, service providers, support staff, our incredible students, and the families who partner with us every day. Your commitment and collaboration make our work meaningful and ensure that every child has the opportunity to thrive.

Thanksgiving is a time to reflect on the importance of relationships. Beyond academics, one of the greatest gifts we can give our children is the ability to build strong, positive connections with others. These connections foster empathy, resilience, and a sense of belonging. Together, we can create an environment where every child feels valued and connected.

Wishing you and your loved ones a peaceful Thanksgiving,

N. Morales-Frigioletto



Nancy Morales-Frigioletto
 Director
Thelusma Cadet, Scott Cohen, Myraida Conceicao, Cheryl Ferry, Maria Dolores Garcia, Julia Lehman, Ali Abdul Malik
 Supervisors



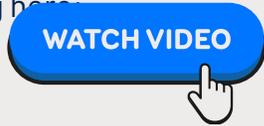
ESEPAC

ESEPAC Executive Officers

President: Emily Gonzalez
 Vice President: Gilda Rodriguez
 Secretary: Denise Olivera



The ESEPAC committee hosted a public meeting on November 14 to introduce members and review recent parent survey findings. Respondents identified priority topics for future meetings, and we'll use this input to plan and facilitate upcoming workshops. If you missed it, you can watch the recording here.



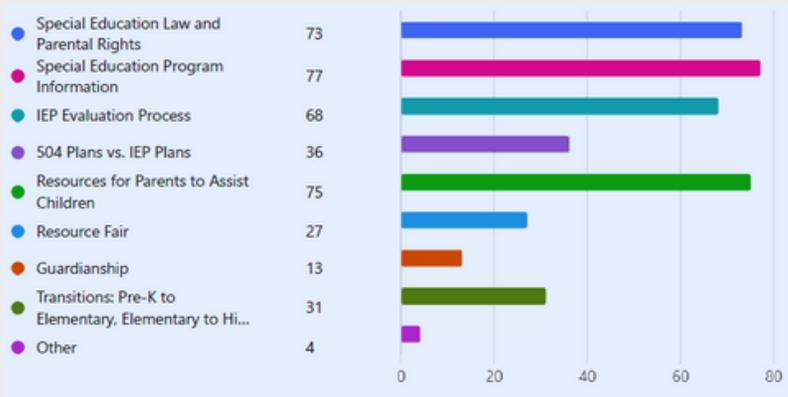
Thank you to the over 100 families who participated in our recent survey about special education sessions. Your feedback helps us better support you and your children. We learned that most families prefer sessions in Spanish, with English as the next most requested language. The top topics you want to learn more about include special education program information, resources to help your child at home, understanding your rights, and the IEP evaluation process.



When it comes to how and when you'd like to attend sessions, your responses were clear: many of you prefer evening sessions (6-8PM), followed by mornings. Virtual and in-person formats were equally popular, and some families also expressed interest in pre-recorded videos they can watch anytime. We're working to offer flexible options that fit your schedules.

JANUARY 15, 2026
 NEXT ESEPAC MEETING

You also shared ways we can make it easier for you to attend. These include offering virtual access, providing clear agendas ahead of time, and scheduling sessions early. We hear you—and we're committed to making our sessions more accessible, informative, and supportive for every family.



FAMILY TIPS FOR BUILDING CONNECTIONS

Ways families can help children strengthen connections during the holiday season:

- Share family traditions and invite children to participate in meaningful activities.
- Encourage gratitude practices like writing thank-you notes or sharing what they're thankful for.
- Plan time with friends and loved ones, whether in person or virtually.
- Model kindness and inclusion in everyday interactions.

To Contact ESEPAC, please email: ESEPAC@epsnj.org

SUPPORT STAFF SPOTLIGHT

THE OUT-OF-DISTRICT CHILD STUDY TEAM



Our district is proud to have a dedicated Out-of-District Child Study Team that supports students who attend specialized programs outside of our schools. This team works closely with families and more than 70 specialized programs across New Jersey to ensure every student receives the individualized services and supports they need to thrive.

Our team includes:

- School Psychologists: Dr. Jan Grayson, Dr. Wendy Lopez, and Cristine Ribaudó
- Learning Consultants: Robyn Mack, Carla Valente, and Yao-Hsuan Huang
- Social Worker: Rosa Faria-Flosa
- Supervisor: Maria Dolores Garcia

These professionals collaborate to manage cases for students with a wide range of needs, including learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, emotional and behavioral regulation challenges, cognitive impairments, and other complex disabilities.

The Out-of-District CST ensures strong communication between families, schools, and programs; monitors student progress; and helps guide important decisions related to placements and services. Their commitment ensures that every student has access to the specialized instruction and support necessary for success.



SCHOOL SPOTLIGHTS

TCR SCHOOL NO. 7'S "WONDER WALL"



This month, the Tiger Family came together to create something truly special. Their very own "Wonder Wall." Designed as a schoolwide initiative, the Wonder Wall provides all learners with opportunities for sensory exploration through a vibrant, interactive touch and feel experience. From our custodial staff to teachers, students, administrators, support staff and social workers, everyone played a role in bringing this inclusive space to life.

The Wonder Wall stands as a symbol of acceptance, collaboration, and inclusion, reflecting our shared belief that every student deserves to learn, explore, and thrive in their own way. At Terence C. Reilly School No. 7, we continue to live our motto every day- "Together, we can!"

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK AT SCHOOL NO. 30



IEP BUZZ WORDS

Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): Every student with a disability has the right to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). This means that eligible students receive the special education and related services they need to succeed in school. These supports are provided at no cost to families and are designed to help each child benefit fully from their educational program.

Impact of Disability: Describes how a child's unique needs affect their participation and progress in the general education curriculum. Understanding this impact helps teachers and support staff provide the right accommodations and strategies so every student can learn and succeed.

To celebrate Fire Prevention Week, students in grades K-7 at Chessie Dentley Roberts School #30 participated in an exciting and educational assembly with the Elizabeth Fire Department's Engine 8 crew. Students had the opportunity to watch firefighters gear up, explore the inside of a real fire truck, and even try using the fire hose! It was a memorable, hands-on experience that both students and teachers enjoyed while learning valuable fire safety tips. Thank you to Ms. Valerio-Acosta, Ms. Carter, Mr. Beaty, Mr. Salazar, Ms. Parrell, and Ms. Gibson

SCHOOL SPOTLIGHTS

JVJ/STEM ACADEMY VISITS LIFETOWN



Students in Mrs. Christodoulou's Transition Program at JVJ STEM Academy recently enjoyed an engaging visit to LifeTown, a 53,000-square-foot, fully inclusive and accessible center where children and adults with special abilities can practice life skills, gain confidence, and build friendships.

During their Community-Based Instruction outing, students explored the "Shoppes" – a simulated town environment with shops, sidewalks, crosswalks, and traffic lights – where they practiced real-world tasks such as visiting a bank, navigating stores, and interacting with volunteer "shopkeepers" in a safe and supportive space.

It was a valuable learning experience and lots of fun for everyone!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Elizabeth Public Library

FORMAL WEAR DONATION

We will be collecting gently used formal wear for our teens to wear to their Prom! The giveaway will happen in March 2026.

Items we are looking for include prom dresses, bridesmaid dresses, wedding guest attire, men's suits, & formal wear accessories.
Items will be returned if they are not in good/clean condition

Collection begins on November 3, 2025, & ends on February 20, 2026

Please bring items to the Third Floor Teen Department at the Main Library (11 South Broad St.)

THE MILLS AT JERSEY GARDENS

Caring Santa

Sunday, December 7th 9am - 10:30am

Caring Santa® is a special, sensory-friendly experience - exclusively for children with special needs and their families

Photos will be available for purchase. **RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED.** To reserve your spot, [click here!](#)

ESSEX COUNTY TURTLE BACK ZOO

HOLIDAY LIGHTS

5pm To 9pm

Friday to Sunday, November 21 - 23
Daily Friday, November 28 to Saturday, January 3
(Closed December 24, December 25 & January 1)

FREE ADMISSION turtlebackzoo.com

Donations of non-perishable food items, unopened toys, and new or gently-used winter coats for the less fortunate are appreciated.

OTHER EVENTS

Essex County Historic Holiday House Tour
Saturday, December 6 & Sunday, December 7, 2025
10am-5pm. Visit www.essexcountypark.org for participating locations. Times may vary by location.

Story Time at Turtle Back Zoo
This is a family-friendly event for families with children ages 8 and younger. \$10/participant, zoo admission not included. Story Time dates available. Visit turtlebackzoo.com for more information and to register.

Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.
Essex County Executive,
and the Board of County Commissioners

ESSEX COUNTY TURTLE BACK ZOO
turtlebackzoo.com
560 Northfield Avenue
West Orange, NJ 07052
973.731.5800

Save the dates:

12/2: Annual Holiday Tree Lighting
5-7pm
Union Square Plaza

12/20: Skating with Santa
Warinanco Skating Rink

THE UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ANNOUNCES A

Holiday Toy Distribution

PRE-REGISTRATION
NOVEMBER 12TH - DECEMBER 3RD

REGISTER ONLINE AT UCNJ.ORG/TOY-DRIVE/

YOU MUST HAVE AN ACTIVE CASE, BE A UNION COUNTY RESIDENT AND PRE-REGISTER TO RECEIVE TOYS

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE
UNION COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Councilwoman At-Large Patricia Perkins-Augusta
Department of Health and Human Services
Department of Recreation
Office of Youth Services

CITYWIDE WINTER FEST TOY GIVEAWAY

Saturday, December 13th
AMC Loews Jersey Gardens
651 Kapkowski Rd, Elizabeth, NJ
9:00 am - 12:00 pm

ELIZABETH RESIDENTS ONLY
(PROOF OF RESIDENCY REQUIRED)

Enjoy a **Holiday Movie** for children 14 and under!

Meet Santa & Mrs. Claus!



Qualified, Competent Translators

Our schools provide language assistance to limited-English proficient families effectively with appropriate, competent staff-or appropriate and competent outside resources.

Important Document Notice

If a situation arises when the district or schools are unable to translate a document immediately, please note that translation is available upon request.

- Elizabeth Public Schools offers translation accessibility of district communication and materials. For further assistance, please contact 908-436-5200.
- Las Escuelas Públicas de Elizabeth ofrecen accesibilidad de traducción de comunicación y materiales del distrito. Para obtener más ayuda, comuníquese con 908-436-5200.
- As Escolas Públicas de Elizabeth oferecem acessibilidade à tradução de materiais e comunicação do distrito. Para obter mais assistência, entre em contato com 908-436-5200.
- Lekòl Piblik Elizabeth yo ofri tradiksyon aksè nan kominikasyon distri a ak materyèl yo. Pou plis asistans tanpri kontakte 908-436-5200.
- المدارس بمنطقة اليزابيث التعليميه تقدم خدمه الترجمة لجميع اللغات في حاله الحاجه لهذه الخدمة المقدمة اتصل برقم 908-436-5200



We value the thoughts of our community members.

Have a great idea for an upcoming issue or information that you think would be beneficial to others in our community?

Send to: dssnewsletter@epsnj.org