



LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THE LINK

DECEMBER 2025

TO THE LAWRENCE COMMUNITY



Three LTPS Teachers Named as 2025 NJ Exemplary Educators

Three Lawrence Township Public Schools educators have been recognized by the New Jersey Department of Education as 2025 Exemplary Educators—an honor given to only 120 teachers statewide!

From Lawrence Middle School, Ms. Jillian Testa, a seventh grade Math teacher, was awarded at the Halloween House Relay games on October 31. Ms. Testa is well known to students and staff alike as she is actively involved in LMS life on a daily basis. She serves as a girls' soccer coach and advisor for class activities, including organizing the eighth grade trip, and she has also taught in the Summer Destinations program for several years.

Joining her from Lawrence High School are History teacher Mr. Mark Rowe, and Health and PE teacher Ms. Dana Verdi Williams. Mr. Rowe has taught in the district for 37 years and his students consistently surpass state and national benchmarks. Beyond his classroom instruction, he is a dedicated mentor within our academic community and fosters a culture of continuous growth and development. In addition to teaching Health and PE, Ms. Williams coaches the girls' basketball and softball teams, teaches the Coaching course, and is a supervisor in the Mentors in Motion program. Currently, she is working with her colleagues in guidance and CST on starting the Hope Squad program at the high school. All of these amazing educators are celebrated for their dedication to student growth, commitment to excellence, and positive influence within the LTPS community. Mr. Rowe and Ms. Williams received their awards at a faculty meeting on November 10.

The NJDOE's Exemplary Educator Recognition Program honors educators "who are valued by their school and community and have exhibited strong knowledge and skills, an inspiring presence, and a clear vision for quality teaching and learning." We are so proud to have Ms. Testa, Mr. Rowe, and Ms. Williams represent LTPS and the outstanding educators who make our district shine.

LTEF Awards \$42,418 to Support 23 Innovative Programs

The Lawrence Township Education Foundation (LTEF) is pleased to announce it has awarded \$42,418 in support of 23 innovative programs throughout the Lawrence Township Public Schools for its Fall 2025 grant cycle.

From new books to flexible seating to technology equipment, the LTEF is committed to supporting excellence in education. On the elementary school level, multiple grants were provided. All four elementary schools will benefit from new decodable books, cardboard safe cutting tools for STEM activities as well as an expansion of the Climate corners with Green thinker signage which will benefit all kindergarten classrooms. Ben Franklin Elementary School will benefit from new bicycles for PE classes, and refresh of equipment for the StreamKeeper program and an expansion of equipment for the outdoor space. Lawrenceville Elementary School will benefit from new sensory support items and Slackwood Elementary will benefit from the funding of a new innovative gardening program called Slackwood SHINES.

At Lawrence Intermediate School, students will benefit from six different grants. There will be flexible seating for ELL students, new sensory items for the sensory lending library, funding for a positivity project for all sixth grade students. There will be funding for off-campus theater events for musical students and audiobooks and e-books in languages other than English that are hard to find in print.

Lawrence Middle School students will benefit from funding for a multi purpose heat press to produce spirit items in school and a curated collection of books about disabilities. Lawrence High School students will benefit from a variety of grants this cycle. There will be additional advancer shelves for the ceramics program, a continuation of a previous grant. There will be funding for the Lawrencian student newspaper and the Tangents student magazine. Funding will also bring a unique assembly program in honor of the 250th anniversary of America. Lastly, there will be funding to support the newly established Robotics Club, a continuation of a grant submitted by a student.





“Challenge Day” Returns to LHS

After more than five years, Challenge Day returned to Lawrence High School on October 29–30, bringing students and staff together for two powerful days focused on empathy, connection, and belonging.

Challenge Day is a nationally recognized program that helps young people and adults learn to connect through powerful, life-changing experiences. The day-long, interactive event provides participants with tools to tear down walls of separation and inspires them to live, study, and work in an environment of acceptance, love, and respect.

During the program, trained Challenge Day leaders guide students through a series of highly interactive and energetic activities designed to break down social barriers and build authentic connections. The day begins with music, games, and team-building exercises that encourage students to step outside their comfort zones. As trust grows, participants engage in deeper conversations about emotions, stereotypes, and the impact of labels and social oppression. By the end of the day, many take a personal stand against bullying and exclusion, pledging to “be the change” they wish to see in their school and community.

Through small-group discussions and honest reflection, students and staff at Lawrence High School discovered how much they share in common and how powerful it can be when everyone feels seen, heard, and valued. The event served as a reminder that school is not just about academics—it’s about creating a community built on compassion and connection.

Challenge Day aligns closely with LTPS’s ongoing commitment to inclusivity, maturing, and emotional well-being. Given its success, the district hopes to bring the program back every few years so that each new generation of Cardinals can experience its impact.

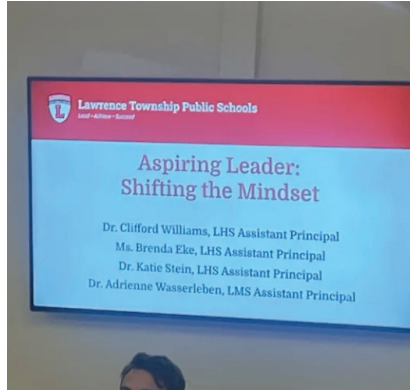
Welcome to the Neighborhood

At the start of the school year, LTPS proudly hosted our first annual “Welcome to the Neighborhood” parent workshop, and we were thrilled to welcome more than 150 attendees—most of them families brand new to our district.

The workshop gave families an opportunity to learn how LTPS communicates with parents and guardians and to ask questions about the supports available to students. One of the highlights of the evening was the chance to meet our community partners, who lined the hallways to share information and resources. From after-school programs and youth services to local nonprofits and family-centered organizations, these partners work side by side with LTPS to ensure our students and families are cared for both in and out of school.

The evening wasn’t just about information—it was about connection. Families left knowing that they are not alone as they begin their journey in Lawrence Township. They now have a network of support, both within the district and throughout the community, committed to working together in the best interest of children.

We are grateful to everyone who attended, and to our community partners who made the evening so meaningful. Together, we are building the strong, welcoming foundation that defines #LTPSThisIsUs.



Aspiring Leaders Program Inspires Future LTPS Leaders

The LTPS Aspiring Leaders Program continues to grow as an exciting opportunity for staff across the district to explore and develop their leadership potential. This unique program is open not only to current teachers, but also to teacher assistants and non-teaching support staff, creating a diverse group of participants who bring a wide range of experiences and perspectives to the table.

A recent session, led by our district’s secondary assistant principals, focused on the skills and mindset needed to take on leadership roles in education. Through engaging discussions and activities, participants reflected on their own strengths, shared personal insights, and considered new ways they can make an impact within our schools.

By connecting staff members from different roles and backgrounds, the Aspiring Leaders Program fosters collaboration, builds confidence, and helps participants envision themselves as future leaders in LTPS. With more than 30 staff members already involved, this initiative is planting the seeds for the next generation of leaders who will continue to carry forward our district’s vision of excellence.



Lawrence Middle School Teacher Receives \$25,000 Milken Educator Award

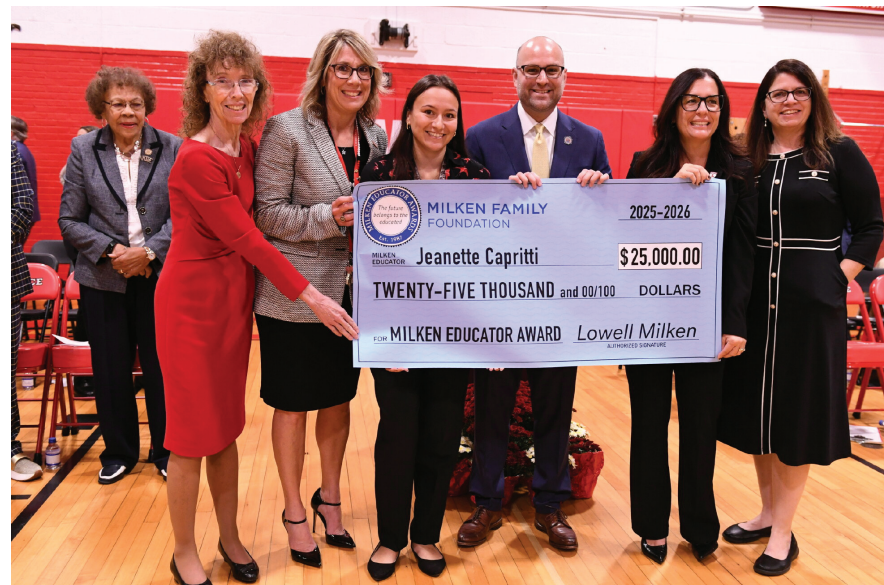
On October 15, Lawrence Middle School's Jeanette Capritti received the surprise of a lifetime—a \$25,000 Milken Educator Award. Surrounded by cheering students, colleagues, and dignitaries, the seventh grade English language arts teacher was honored as New Jersey's only recipient this year and the first in Lawrence Township Public Schools history.

The award was presented by Dr. Jane Foley, Senior Vice President of the Milken Educator Awards, and New Jersey Commissioner of Education Kevin Dehmer. Often called the "Oscars of Teaching," the Milken Award recognizes outstanding educators for their accomplishments and future promise, with no application or nomination process.

Commissioner Dehmer praised Capritti's "innovative teaching and unwavering commitment to student success," while Dr. Foley noted her "instructional creativity and inspiring leadership."

At Lawrence Middle School, Capritti is known for her engaging lessons, such as sci-fi "book tastings," and for fostering student voice and confidence in writing. Beyond her classroom, she tutors students, teaches in the Summer Destinations Program, mentors future educators, and leads professional development across the district.

Capritti earned both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees from The College of New Jersey. Her achievement marks a proud milestone for Lawrence Township Public Schools.



District Launches Data Team for Student achievement

The LTPS District Data Team has officially kicked off its work to strengthen student success and academic achievement across all schools!

As part of Superintendent Dr. Robyn Klim's goal to "establish a district-wide, data-driven instructional framework that systematically utilizes student achievement data to drive instructional decisions," the team is focused on turning data into meaningful action and measurable growth.

Led by Assistant Superintendent Mr. Neel Desai, data consultant (and former interim Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction) Mike Dzwonar, and Director of Student Achievement Jeanne Muzi, the team is made up of principals and building-level data leaders. Each school has a Student Learning and Assessment Coordinator (SLAC) who collaborates with principals and teachers to analyze grade-level reports and identify instructional strategies that best support students' needs.

By empowering schools to use data intentionally and collaboratively, LTPS continues to ensure that every student receives the support they need to grow and thrive.



LMS staff are getting excited for the upcoming groundbreaking of the referendum projects

From Conversation to Construction: LTPS Post-Referendum Update

On October 15, Lawrence Township Public Schools held its first Post-Referendum Community Conversation, giving residents a chance to learn more about the district's upcoming projects following the approved referendum. The event featured information from Superintendent Dr. Robyn Klim, Business Administrator Mr. Eldridge, Lawrence Middle School Principal Dr. Milavsky, and project architect Stephen Schreyer from FVHD Architects-Planners.

Community members were able to ask questions, share feedback, and hear firsthand about the multi-year construction plans. The LTPS website has also been updated with a refreshed FAQ section, now including the questions asked during the fall community meeting.

Construction on Phase 1 of the referendum projects—the new Lawrence Middle School auditorium—is set to begin on December 12. Neighbors and families should expect to see fencing and signage around the construction site a few days prior.

The district will continue to provide updates and opportunities for community input. **The next Community Conversation is scheduled for February 18, 2026, at 6:30 PM.** Additional information will also be shared at the December 10 Board of Education meeting.

Residents are encouraged to mark their calendars and stay engaged as LTPS moves forward on these exciting projects.

Lawrence Township Public Schools Responds to Food Insecurity Crisis

When SNAP benefits were suspended in the beginning of last month, Lawrence Township Public Schools sprang into action to support students and families facing food insecurity. The district quickly convened a meeting with local food banks and community partner organizations to coordinate efforts, share resources, and ensure families in need could receive timely assistance.

All of LTPS's PreK–6 schools maintain food pantries year-round, and these have been especially vital during this time. The district also worked to provide families with information on local food resources and access points. In addition, LTPS students and families joined the effort by preparing and donating meal kits—often including recipe cards and ingredients—to help neighbors in need.

Families seeking support or information about food resources can visit ltps.org/guidance and navigate to the Links and Resources section for up-to-date assistance.



LAWRENCE TOWNSHIP BOARD OF EDUCATION



Michele Bowes
Board President



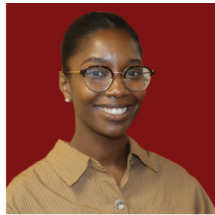
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LTPS Welcomes New Board Member

After the November 4 election, LTPS is proud to welcome Paul Caparotta to the Lawrence Township Board of Education! Caparotta has long been active in the community, serving as Lawrenceville Elementary School PTO president for two years and coaching with the Lawrence Hamnett Soccer Association. He will take the place of Dr. Michelle King, who is stepping down at the end of her term after ten years of dedicated service on the Board. We are deeply grateful for her leadership and commitment to our schools.

"I've always wanted to be involved with children and education," he said. "This feels like a continuation of my volunteer work — a way to give back to the community."

He's especially excited about the Lawrence Middle School expansion, noting that his daughter will attend the school and he looks forward to seeing the impact of the project on students and families.

The Board also welcomes back Makenzie Kelly, who was appointed in July to fill an unexpired term and has now been elected to a full three-year seat. A former teacher and current NJDOE employee, Kelly said, "I want to feel like I earned the right to represent families, students, and teachers by running for a full term."

Also returning to the Board is Pepper Evans, who has served since 2013. Evans chairs the Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment, and Professional Development Committee and also serves on the Finance and Negotiations Committees. She said she has never been more excited about the direction of the district as the Lawrence Middle School expansion moves forward.

With the newly elected and returning members in place, the Board is poised to continue its focus on excellence in education, supporting students and families, and guiding LTPS through exciting growth and initiatives in the coming years.



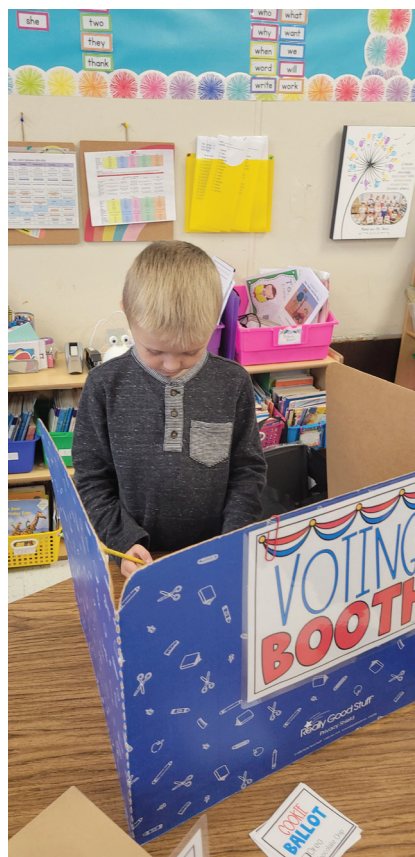
Lawrence Township Students Learn the Power of Their Voice Around Election Day

Around Election Day this November, students across Lawrence Township Public Schools engaged in hands-on lessons about civic responsibility—tailored to their age and abilities. While many may still be too young to cast a real ballot, teachers found creative ways to help children understand the privilege and responsibility of voting.

At the elementary level, students voted on their favorite books, snacks, or classroom activities, turning everyday decisions into lessons about making choices and respecting differing opinions. Even when choosing between chocolate chip and oatmeal raisin cookies, they practiced the same skills adult voters use: thinking critically, listening to others, and making informed decisions.

Middle and high school students took it a step further, exploring the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizens through mock elections, debates on local issues, and discussions about the impact of civic participation in their communities. These activities reinforced both the mechanics and the importance of voting in a democratic society.

From cookies to classroom debates, Lawrence Township students learned that voting is more than just a right; it's a meaningful way to be heard.



Are you interested in becoming a
substitute teacher for Lawrence
Township Public Schools?



Scan the QR code or visit
ltps.org/substitute

