



SPECIAL SERVICES MONTHLY

908.436.5200



DIVISION OF SPECIAL SERVICES



EPSNJ.ORG

Professional Spotlight

MEET THE IN-CLASS SUPPORT TEAM AT SCHOOL NO. 14



Elena Rabinowitz, Kilsys Almonte, Magaly Rodriguez, & Karin Navas

We are thrilled to honor the In-Class Support (ICS) special education teachers at Abraham Lincoln School No. 14! These dedicated professionals work side by side with general education teachers, ESL educators, and child study team members to name a few, ensuring every student receives the individualized support they need—right in the classroom. Their collaboration creates inclusive learning environments where all students can succeed.

Together, this outstanding team brings an impressive 63 years of service to Elizabeth Public Schools, a testament to their experience, commitment, and passion for education. Thank you for making a difference every single day and for helping our students reach their fullest potential!

Featured Community Resource

Big Brothers Big Sisters is a nationwide program that pairs caring adult volunteers (“Bigs”) with children (“Littles”) ages 5 and up to provide positive role models and guidance. These one-to-one mentoring relationships help kids build confidence, improve academic performance, and develop strong social skills. Parents play an important role by supporting the match, staying engaged, and communicating openly with both the mentor and program staff. Learn more or enroll your child at <https://www.bbbs.org>.





KNOW YOUR IEP

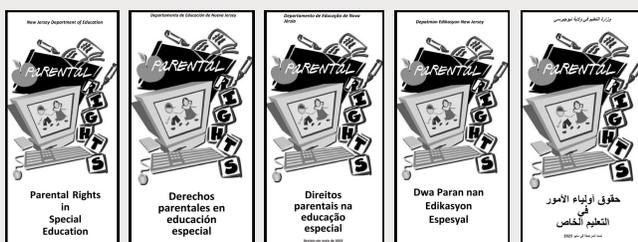
Parent Concerns

The Parent Concerns section of the IEP is your opportunity to share what matters most to you about your child’s education. This is where you can note any worries, questions, or priorities—such as academic progress, social skills, behavior, or future goals. Even if you have no concerns, that will be documented. Providing clear input ensures your voice is part of the planning process and helps the team create a plan that reflects your child’s needs and your expectations.

IEP BUZZ Words

- **Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)** – A written plan that outlines strategies and supports to address challenging behaviors. It includes proactive approaches, teaching replacement behaviors, and steps for responding to behaviors when they occur.
- **Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)** – An evaluation process used to understand why a student exhibits certain behaviors. It identifies triggers, patterns, and the purpose of the behavior, which helps in creating an effective BIP.

PARENTAL RIGHTS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION



English

Espanol

Português

Kreyòl
Ayisyen

عربي

A MESSAGE FROM YOUR DIRECTOR OF SPECIAL SERVICES

Stakeholders of Students with Special Needs,

As we approach the holiday season, I want to take a moment to recognize the remarkable progress our community has made, as well as the important work that lies ahead. Your unwavering support, creativity, and resilience are the foundation of our shared success.

The ongoing pursuit of social development and meaningful integration for students with special needs is a collective responsibility. Your partnership is essential in creating environments where every student is empowered to thrive and reach their fullest potential.

Inclusion is not a single event, but a continuous commitment. I am deeply grateful to every parent, advocate, and stakeholder who champions the cause of our students with passion and determination. Our students, through their unique perspectives and strengths, enrich our entire community.

Let us continue to work together, fostering growth and opening new opportunities for all. Thank you for your dedication and for being an integral part of our journey.



Nancy Morales-Frigoletto
Director

Thelusma Cadet, Scott Cohen, Myraida Conceicao, Cheryl Ferry, Maria Dolores Garcia, Julia Krisanits Lehman, Ali Abdul Malik
Supervisors



SUPPORT STAFF SPOTLIGHT

THE SPECIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT TEAM



*Luz Aliaga, Yolanda Dieguez, Brianna Hoffner, Ileana Perez, Monica Celi, Beatriz Villa-Agudelo
Maria Giannetta, Amalfi Mancera, Yvette Maseda,
Kissairis Bello, Marlena Fajardo & Carmel Paternostro*

The Division of Special Services proudly recognizes the 12 administrative secretaries who play an essential role in achieving our mission: ensuring every child reaches excellence. Their work touches every aspect of school operations—from arranging services and coordinating contracts with providers to managing transportation, supplies, and registration. They are often the first point of contact for parents, answering questions and providing guidance with care and professionalism. Simply put, there is no area of our work they don't support, and their dedication keeps our programs running smoothly every day.



ESEPAC

ESEPAC Executive Officers

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



Contact Information:
ESEPAC@epsnj.org

SAVE THE DATE

Join us for our next ESEPAC meeting on **Wednesday, January 15 at 6:00 PM** at Donald Stewart School No. 51, 544 Pennsylvania Avenue, Elizabeth, NJ 07201. This session will feature First Children’s presentation: “Navigating Your Child’s IEP – A Guide to Collaboration and Advocacy.” Parents will gain valuable insights on working together to support their child’s educational journey. We encourage all families to complete the brief IEP questionnaire to share your thoughts and help us better serve your needs. Your voice matters—don’t miss this opportunity to learn and connect!



First Children Services provides educational, therapeutic, and behavioral health programs for children and families in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Their services include school-based support, autism programs, mental health resources, and parent training, all aimed at helping children succeed at home and in school. Learn more at firstchildrenservices.com.

Questions for ESEPAC Meeting – January 15



Family Tips for Building Connections

DECEMBER IS NATIONAL “WRITE A LETTER TO A FRIEND” MONTH!

December is not only about holidays and celebrations. It is also National Write to a Friend Month! Writing to a friend is wonderful way to connect with people who matter most, and it is a great activity to do with your child.

Fun Ways to Celebrate with Your Child

There are many ways you can celebrate together! You can create holiday cards together and have your child add decorations and a personal message in the card. You can also write a “year in review” letter and have your child add something special like a photo or drawing from an event that you mention. You can also celebrate by creating a friendly thank you note for your child’s friend together. Enjoy making memories, one letter at a time!

FAMILY CONNECTIONS



Winter Break Tips for Families

Winter break can be a wonderful opportunity for children to spend time with their friends and family, but it may also feel overwhelming. Bright lights, loud music, and changes in routine can make things stressful. Here are some quick tips to help your family enjoy the season:



1. Strategies for Sensory Overload

Holiday lights and noise can create sensory overload. Offer headphones, sunglasses, or a favorite sensory toy and plan for quiet space breaks to help with sensory overload when attending events away from home.

2. Keep Routines Predictable

Winter break means that children are usually out of their typical routine. Use a visual schedule or calendar, communicate with your child about changes in schedule beforehand, and balance busy events with calm downtime.



3. Prepare for Social Situations

Social situations can create an overstimulating environment. Communicate to your child with pictures and conversation about who will be there and what to expect, let your child join activities at their comfort level, and share helpful strategies with family and friends.

4. Encourage Calming Strategies

Practice deep-breathing strategies, use fidget tools, and praise and reassure your child often.



Division of Special Services

SCHOOL SPOTLIGHTS

THANKSGIVING BREAKFAST CELEBRATION AT SCHOOL NO. 30, CDR



On November 19, the Autism Program at Chessie Dentley Roberts Academy School 30 hosted a heartwarming Thanksgiving celebration for students and their families. The event highlighted the program's commitment to fostering family engagement and creating an inclusive environment where every student feels valued and supported.

This gathering served as a reminder of the strength of the school community and the importance of sharing meaningful moments together. Through events like these, the Division of Special Services continues to promote connection, empowerment, and opportunities for students to thrive both inside and outside the classroom.

SCHOOL SPOTLIGHTS

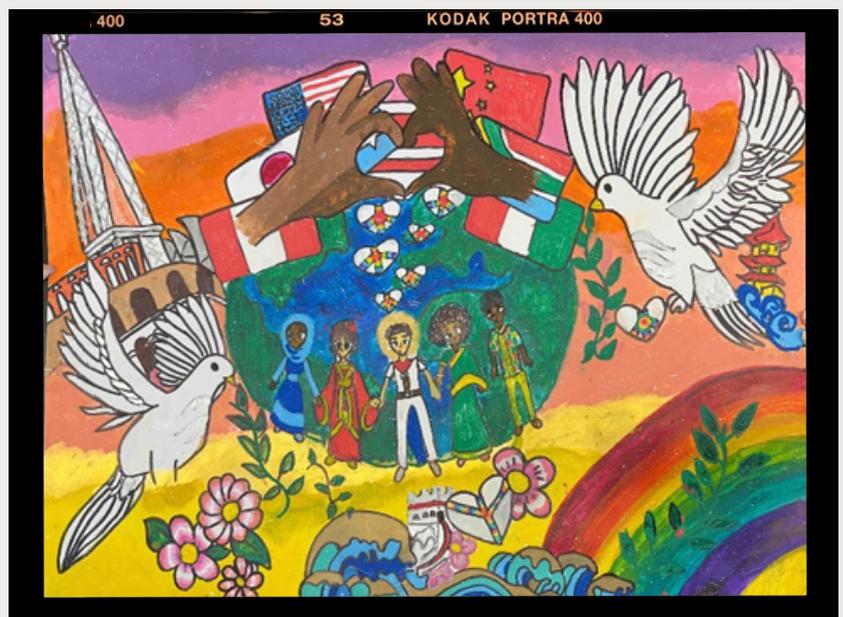
CDRA STUDENT'S ARTWORK SELECTED FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE POSTER CONTEST

Chessie Dentley Roberts Academy seventh-grade student Obdiel Acevedo Lopez has been honored by the Portuguese Lion's Club of Elizabeth, which selected his artwork as the award-winning poster from the submissions received through the Elizabeth Board of Education, according to EPLC Treasurer Lion Christine Grova.



The competition was open exclusively to middle school art students between the ages of 11 and 13. Obdiel's piece was chosen to represent the Elizabeth District in the international contest, where he will now join more than 600,000 students from around the world in sharing their vision of global peace. The 2025 theme, "Together as One," challenged students to visually express unity from a child's perspective—an objective Obdiel successfully captured in his work. The international grand prize includes a \$5,000 award and a formal awards ceremony, while local winners are also eligible for a \$500 prize.

Chessie Dentley Roberts Academy art teacher Ms. Jana Ortiz, along with the entire CDRA community, expressed great pride in Obdiel's accomplishment and congratulated him on his dedication and talent in the visual arts.





UPCOMING EVENTS

ELIZABETH PUBLIC LIBRARY
STRENGTHENING CONNECTIONS | BUILDING COMMUNITY | ENRICHING LIVES

DECEMBER 2025

Winter Wonderland at the Library

Enjoy a magical walk-through at the library with winter lights, festive crafts, hot chocolate, and more!
This event is for all ages.

December 19th
6:30-7:30 pm
At Main Library Parking lot

The Union County Board of County Commissioners & The Department of Human Services present:

Skating with SANTA

for Residents with Disabilities and Special Needs

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2025 • 2PM - 4PM
WARINANCO SPORTS CENTER • 1 PARK DRIVE, ROSELLE

Open to Union County residents with special needs and their loved ones!
Presents provided for children 12 & under by The Sergio Granados Civic Association

HOT COCOA • SWEET TREAT + GIFT FROM SANTA!

**For safety, participants 13 and under are strongly recommended to bring a helmet*

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE **UNION COUNTY** Department of Human Services

THE **SERGIO GRANADOS CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

FREE EVENT!
REGISTRATION REQUIRED
Scan QR code or visit ucnj.org/opdsn-reg to register

THE UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ANNOUNCES

CODE BLUE

SHELTERING DUE TO PREDICTED SEVERE WEATHER CONDITIONS

December 15-17, 2025

Individuals and families seeking shelter **MUST** go to the Union County Division of Social Services for Code Blue placement during business hours (Mon-Fri, 8:30am-3:00pm) to be screened and placed. The office addresses are:

342 WESTMINSTER AVENUE, ELIZABETH
200 WEST SECOND STREET, PLAINFIELD

After hours (after 3:00pm) and when County offices are closed (weekends and holidays), referrals and persons seeking Code Blue placement should dial the NJ Homeless Hotline at 2-1-1 or 1 (877) 652-1148.

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE **UNION COUNTY** Department of Human Services

THE UNION COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ANNOUNCES A

Holiday Toy Drive

NOVEMBER 17TH - DECEMBER 23RD

Shop our toy lists at:
UCNJ.ORG/TOY-DRIVE-LIST
or ship an item of your choosing to:

The County of Union
Attn: Samantha Perez, 6th Fl
10 Elizabethtown Plaza
Elizabeth, NJ 07207

DROP-OFF AT ANY OF OUR UNION COUNTY BUILDINGS:

Elizabeth	Administration Bldg, 10 Elizabethtown Plaza Court House, 2 Broad Street Prosecutors' Office, 32 Rahway Avenue
Roselle	Warinanco Sports Center, 1 Park Drive
Westfield	Passport Building, 300 North Avenue East Public Safety Building, 400 North Avenue East
Scotch Plains	Engineering Building, 2325 South Avenue

For more info, please email [Samantha](mailto:Samantha@samantha.perez@ucnj.org) at samantha.perez@ucnj.org
For more drop-off locations, please visit: ucnj.org/UCLOvesSmallBiz

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE **UNION COUNTY** BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

The Elizabeth Avenue Partnership Presents

HOLIDAY ON THE SQUARE

Elizabeth Avenue & High Street

THREE SATURDAYS
12PM - 3PM
December 6
December 13
December 20

Pony Rides, Petting Zoo, Hot Chocolate, Vendors, Breakfast with Santa & more!

More Information: 908-965-0660

UC PAC UNION COUNTY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Sensory Friendly Theatre Series

Events will be scheduled for **2026!**



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