



**MORRIS OUT
AS BOE PRES**

**TRUMP PICKS
FORMER WWE EXEC
TO HEAD DOE**

DOE - DOA

**NEW CELL
PHONE POLICY
AHEAD**

**PENSION
JUSTICE**

JCEACOMMUNICATOR FEBRUARY 2025 MID-YEAR

Word of the Month

oligarchy

noun

a small group of people having control of a country, organization, or institution.



Linda McMahon
to Head
Department of Education
formerly with WWE

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2025
The JERSEY JOURNAL
NJ.COM/HUDSON
AFFILIATED WITH NJ.COM

The Journal's
time is up, but
1st-century
Hudson is just
getting started

ONWA

INSIDE: OUR FINAL

Special Education

Biden Administration Scraps Medicaid Change for Special Ed. Services

By Brooke Schultz — January 02, 2025, EDUCATION WEEK

Chelsea Rasmussen has fought for more than a year for her daughter, Scarlett, to attend full days at school after starting with a three-day school week. She says school employees told her the district lacked the staff to tend to Scarlett's medical and educational needs, which the district denies. Scarlett is nonverbal and uses an electronic device and online videos to communicate but reads at her grade level. She was born with a genetic condition that causes her to have seizures and makes it hard for her to eat and digest food, requiring her to need a resident nurse at school.

The Education Department has scrapped a proposal that would have changed the process for how schools bill Medicaid for the services they provide to students.

The Department of Education is withdrawing a proposal that sought to streamline how schools bill Medicaid for the mental health and medical services they provide to students, partially with the goal of giving schools new resources to tackle students' worsening mental health.

The department withdrew the proposed regulation late last month, along with two others that were intended to expand protections for transgender student-athletes and cancel student loans for more than 38 million Americans. Scrapping unfinished proposals prevents President-elect Donald Trump from being able to rewrite them to better support his priorities and finalize his version more quickly. Now, if Trump wants to pursue policies on the same issues, he will have to start from scratch in the regulatory process, which can take months or years to complete.

The department's withdrawal of the Medicaid proposal is a blow to school administrators, who have long criticized the lengthy bureaucratic process that makes it more difficult for schools to use available funds to help students with mental health and medical needs and receive services to address them at school.

'The pressure worked': Lawmakers change bill to allow public unions to collectively bargain

One of the most controversial and debated bills this legislative session got a facelift Friday morning, softening some of the opposition from the state's unionized public employees.

Sponsored by Rep. Jordan Teuscher, R-South Jordan, HB267 would have prohibited collective bargaining for unions in the public sector, which represent teachers, firefighters, police officers and municipal workers.

But on Friday morning, a new version of the bill was unveiled that does away with the ban on collective bargaining — the process where a school district, city, county or other entity with public employees meets with a union to negotiate a contract for those employees.

Instead, the bill now requires public unions to conduct a recertification election every five years.

As long as a majority of the employees in an organization votes for a union to represent them, the union can engage public employers in collective bargaining. If the union doesn't get a majority vote, "the class remains unrepresented," according to the bill.

"While we are still reviewing the details, one thing is already clear. The pressure worked. Lawmakers heard us. They heard you. And while this fight is not over, it's a testament to what's possible when public workers stand in solidarity," said Renée Pinkney, a Park City social studies teacher who serves as the president of the Utah Education Association, which represents more than 18,000 teachers in the state.

The compromise was revealed even as hundreds of union members, including those from the private sector, descended on the Capitol to protest the bill they accused of union busting.

Jersey City BOE will Revise Policy on Students' Cell Phone Use

The Board of Education voted to approve a resolution that allows JCPS and the Board counsel to revise or draft a new policy on banning or limiting the use of cell phones and other electronic devices.

However, Board President Dejon Morris noted that "this will not be an expedited process."

"We still have to put together a policy, then have a first and second reading, then take it to the Board for approval. It will take well into next year before a new policy is approved or implemented," he said.

Of the 3,257 students that responded to the survey, 79% found cell phones distracting and only 25% said they had no negative effects associated with cell phone usage.

JCPS's current policy states that students are not permitted to turn on or use cell phones while on school grounds, during the school day, or while the student is participating in sponsored curriculum activity.

Despite this policy, students, parents, and teachers still view cell phones as a distraction that affects school life.

According to the results of the parent survey, just 12% of the 977 parents surveyed said they didn't find a negative effect of phone usage on their child. Looking at education, 27% said that cell phone usage positively impacted their student's academic performance. Meanwhile, only 5% said that they didn't find the use of phones distracting for their children.

Students agreed with their parents on this one. Of the 3,257 students that responded to the survey, 79% found cell phones distracting and only 25% said they had no negative effects associated with cell phone usage.

Teachers who spoke at the town hall shared similar sentiments—that cell phones have changed how kids engage in the classroom and with their peers at school. Generally, they said they would support the district in creating a new policy further limiting the use of phones in schools.

Excerpted from by Alexis McDonnell December 11, 2024 Jersey City Times

Morris ousted as Jersey City school board president; Velazquez takes helm.

By Ron Zeitlinger | The Jersey Journal

Controversial Jersey City school board President Dejon Morris was ousted from the position Tuesday night, replaced by a board member he forced out of a leadership position last year.

Noemi Velazquez, in her second term on the board and a vice president until she and then-President Natalia Ioffe were replaced last February, was elected in a 5-2 vote with two abstentions.

Morris was nominated to retain the presidency, but “no” votes by new board members Matthew Schneider and Tia Rezabala tipped the scale against him in a 5-4 vote.

Board Vice President George Blount was replaced by Christopher Tisdale, whose nomination garnered “yes” votes from six of the nine board members.

Ironically, Tisdale nominated Morris for the position. Like the vote for president, Morris could gain only four votes for VP. Alpa Patel was also nominated for vice president, but she also fell in a 5-4 vote.

“I want to start by thanking everyone that gave me their vote of confidence,” Velazquez told the board. “And those who didn’t vote (for me), I respect you, too. “I want everyone to know I am here for everyone. I am not a dictator, I am a facilitator. I intend to work with everyone. ... I do have my personal ways, but I never will stop listening to all of you.”

She thanked Morris for “a fabulous job bringing change to this board. I must say that some of your changes will remain. Some, I will let the board decide if they’d like to remain.”

“While I remain undecided about this potential next step, I truly believe my tenure on the board has prepared me well should I choose to embark on that path,” he said. “For now, my focus remains on my role as a board member and ensuring that every decision we make is in the best interest of our children and their future.”

Tisdale appeared genuinely surprised by the vote. “This is not what I expected,” he said. “... Hopefully we can all move forward in a positive direction. We have all had our differences in the past, but one thing about us is we have always come together for the common good.”

Those key votes by Schneider and Rezabala came moments after they were sworn in as new members, along with the former board President Ioffe.

The narrow votes for president and vice president revealed the board remains highly divided.

“It is the mark of an educated mind to be able to entertain a thought without accepting it.”

Aristotle

Trump’s Pledge to Ax the Education Department: Can He Do That?

Trump would need approval from Congress to dismantle the Education Department or change federal education policy. President-elect Donald Trump ran on a pledge to abolish the U.S. Department of Education. After his election victory, a flood of educators and activists have asked the same question: Can he really do that?

The short answer: It’s possible, but he couldn’t do it alone. Members of Congress would have to approve a plan to reorganize federal agencies, and Trump would face a lot of hurdles in winning their support.

And even if the agency closed, its responsibilities—like administering Title I funding, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and student loans—would be transferred to other federal agencies.



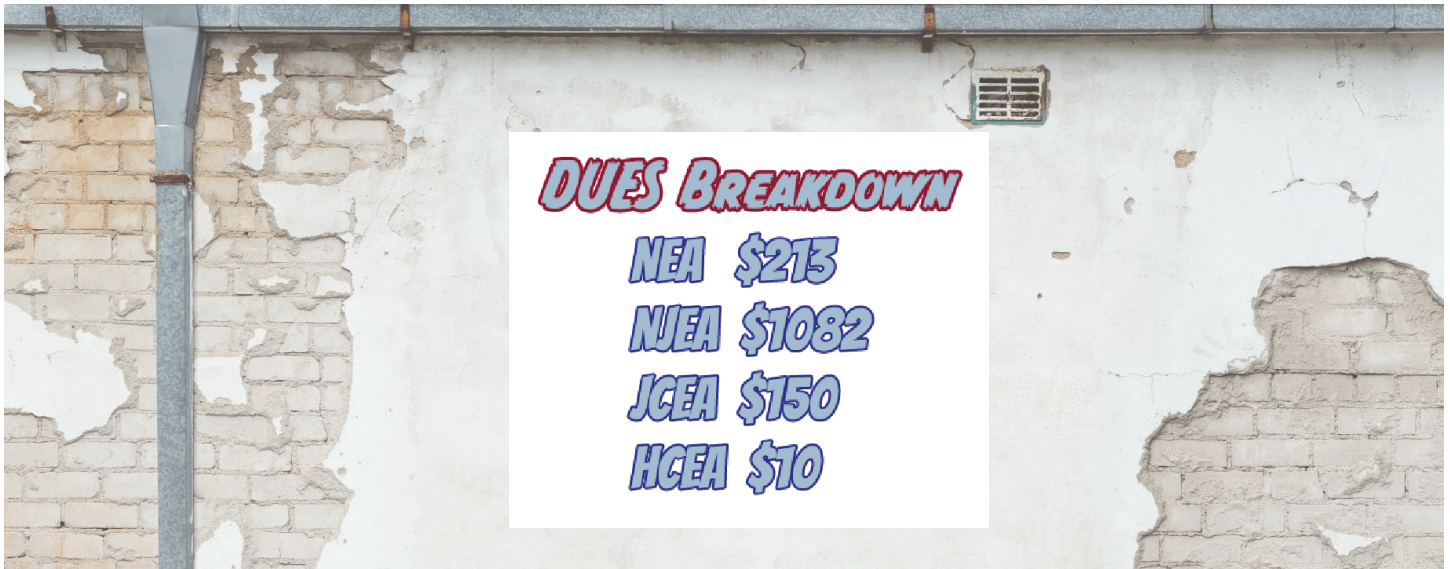
COME MEET OLD FRIENDS AND SOME NEW ONES TOO!

Thursday, March 20 from 3:30-7:30 at The View
 201 Lincoln Park Drive, Jersey City, NJ 07304
 (the former Casino in-the- Park, Lincoln Park)

Our NJEA President Sean Spiller will be there to speak with you about his Gubernatorial Run. *Trump Just announced the plan will be rolling out to formerly disband the Department of Education, so let's get to this party and learn about Sean's platform.*

You must scan the QR code on the flier that your building Director will place in your mailbox.

The Avon Lady made a surprise visit almost prompting a walk out of the staff. Old Navy in the Heights is selling Valentine's bears, treats and, who knows, maybe "toys" > I saw Van Halen in the late 80s/early 90s yet they still look like they just left a show at the Garden State Arts Center; who takes them seriously? LOL. I've seen Tina, Patti and Diana in A.C. and Dionne in both A.C. and New York but how did she sneak over to London for two weeks and I didn't get comp'd a ticket? We need to bring back Roosevelt Stadium, since Fulop shuttered the Loew's Theatre, because Barry Manilow is doing a residency up on the Boulevard. Fly in Elton John, I'll call Gladys up and we can do a Dionne & Friends Reunion Tour, after all, That's What Friends are For.....Oh, Oh, OH Keep Shining... Sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, have said Trump is considering The Academy of Saint Stegman as a Northeast office for his Dept. of Education nominee, billionaire pro wrestling magnate Linda McMahon. She'll be wrestling current Kim Jong-un's right-hand person who is over there now. Again, one simple question, is that a school or a brothel? The UPS man doesn't even stop anymore. The ink ran out of the printer at Kean U. Get the mimeograph outta the basement of Lincoln as we have many more Doctorates to "run off"



Pension Justice: Equity, Security, Dignity!

Pension Justice: Equity, Security, Dignity!

Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson (Mercer/Hunterdon) and Senator Linda Greenstein (Mercer/Hunterdon) introduced S-3997 (Greenstein, Turner)/A-5160 (Reynolds-Jackson, Verrelli, Carter) and S-3998 (Greenstein, Turner)/A-5158 (Reynolds-Jackson, Verrelli, Carter), which will collapse the 5 tier pension system of TPAF and PERS into a single tier.

In 2007, the State started to “tier” the pension system creating Tier 2 and Tier 3 (2008). The most damage was done when Chris Christie was elected Governor and created Tier 4 (2010) and Tier 5 (2011). Anyone hired after 2011 is in Tier 5. As a result, roughly half of all public school employees are forced to take a major reduction in pension and lifetime earnings. It’s not right nor fair, and it’s time for a change. It’s time for pension justice.

As an example of the inequity, some Tier 5 employees pay nearly 94% of the cost of their pensions, or \$15 for every \$1 the state contributes. By contrast, their colleagues in Tier 1 contribute \$1 for every \$1 the state contributes. Making matters worse, the “normal retirement age” is extended for Tier 5 employees. Those in PERS who work less than 32 hours a week are forced into a retirement savings account like a 401 (k) or a 403 (b) instead of a pension. Tier 5 is structured to provide no incentive for school employees to remain in education for their entire careers.

It is time to fix the problem! Our schools are facing a severe staffing crisis and too many of our experienced educators are leaving mid-career rather than suffer under Tier 5 in retirement. This has a detrimental impact on educators, and in doing so, it has a negative impact on our schools and children.

Contact your representatives in the NJ Assembly and Senate today. Urge them to support Pension Justice by signing on as a co-sponsor to A5158/A5160 and S-3997/S-3998!

TAKE ACTION: <https://actioncenter.njea.org/pension-justice-equity-security-dignity/>