

SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:

- **NJEA reforms Growing the Garden State for all Students.**
- **Urban Academy registration form now online at [eceaonline.org](http://eceaonline.org)**
- **Bloomfield Education Association in mediation**

INSIDE  
THIS ISSUE:

- NJEA reform 2**
- Merit Pay 2**
- Bloomfield's vigil 2**
- NJN under attack 3**
- Teachers matter 4**
- Contests 4**

# Essex Exchange

JANUARY 2011

## NJEA unveils reform proposals

NJEA President Barbara Keshishian presented a research-based education reform plan – including a proposal to dramatically streamline the tenure dismissal process – designed to spur innovation and excellence in New Jersey’s public schools.

The plan, called “Growing the Garden State for All Students,” contains a number of reform concepts in three key areas:

- **Nurturing Successful Students** – because students must always be the focus of every potential reform;
- **Maintaining a Quality Workforce** – because

quality teachers are the most important in-school contributor to student success; and

- **Ensuring Quality Schools** – because every school should be a quality school.

A key element of the NJEA proposal is [tenure reform](#). NJEA is proposing a significant overhaul of the current system to make it more efficient and less expensive while maintaining a fairness standard that protects both school employees and schools from undue political influence in employment decisions. Under the NJEA proposal – which would require legislative approval – teacher dismissal cases would be removed from lengthy court

proceedings, which can take years to resolve at extremely high cost to all parties.

Other parts of the proposal include commitments to better serve the needs of students in early grades, with a focus on quality preschool, good nutrition, and after-school care; the creation of a cadre of educational technology coaches to expand the use of technology in schools; a program of mentoring and support for newer teachers to stop the exodus of teachers within the first five years of employment; legislation to ensure that the savings from any concessions teachers make in negotiations be directed to the restoration of positions lost to budget cuts; a strong NJEA commitment to lend expertise, resources, and

## Urban Teacher Academy

The Urban Teacher Academy is a program designed to attract students to the field of education through exposure to curriculum and practicum experiences that focus on teaching. Offered to high school juniors interested in becoming urban teachers and/or teachers in high shortage areas,

The College Of New Jersey along with the NJEA offers high school students a hands on experience in education before they enter college. .

The registration form and criteria for admission for the Urban

Teacher Academy are now online at [eceaonline.org](http://eceaonline.org). Please visit the website to find out more information.





Barbara Keshishian

*“Too many so-called reforms are based on politics and sound bites – and not on sound research and proven practice,” said Keshishian*

Bloomfield Education President John Shanagher and BEA/ECEA members.



## Reform plan cont.

staff to help low-performing schools improve; a state-funded program to reward schools that succeed with grants to support teacher-driven reforms; and high standards for and diligent monitoring of public charter schools.

“Too many so-called reforms are based on politics and sound bites – and not on sound research and proven practice,” said Keshishian. “We need to change that dynamic in New

Jersey, and these proposals seek to do just that.”

*Excerpt taken from njea.org*



To read the specific proposals visit [njea.org](http://njea.org) *Growing the Gar-*

*den State for all Students.* Some of the proposals include tenure reform, collective bargaining , and a variety of other measures.

## O’Keefe Strikes Again

This holiday season, James O’Keefe, responsible for the secretly recorded video entitled Teacher’s Union Gone Wild, released another video entitled Happy Holidays from the Teacher’s Union.

The new video was recorded using a concealed camera. Visiting local union offices and speaking to local leaders, a

man with an English accent inquires about becoming a teacher in New Jersey , the role of tenure in our state and the role of the union in the protection of teachers’ accused of inappropriate behavior. Of course, the subjects in the video were unaware of the hidden camera or the leading questions.

In response to the videos, the NJEA has urged all members to be wary of responding to questions about union rights when not familiar with the person asking the questions.

## Bloomfield holds Vigil

On December 20, 2010, the Bloomfield Education Association held a candle light vigil outside of the Bloomfield Board of Education building . With their contract negotiation in mediation, BEA President John Shanagher asked ECEA members from across

the county to join his members in a show of unity to support the BEA’s effort to settle their contract. Essex County Education Association members from surrounding districts attended the demonstration and presidents from each local spoke to the crowd, estimated at approximately 500 people.



## NJN Under Attack

A coalition of New Jersey groups recently announced a campaign to “Keep the NJ in NJN”. The coalition, which includes groups like the New Jersey Outdoor Alliance, South Jersey Cultural Center, and the New Jersey Conservation Foundation, is committed to saving a public interest voice that showcases local history and culture, exposes environmental crises, and provides coverage of issues that matter to New Jersey residents. In addition to a vigorous grassroots lobbying effort, the coalition

launched a new website [www.keepthenjinnjn.com](http://www.keepthenjinnjn.com) and announced an online ad blitz aimed at urging lawmakers to preserve NJN’s rich local programming tradition.

NJN’s fate is currently in the hands of Gov. Christie and New Jersey’s state legislators, who are deciding how to restructure the network and whether to continue funding past December 31.

To learn more and sign a peti-

tion urging legislators and the Governor to keep the NJ in NJN, visit [www.keepthenjinnjn.com](http://www.keepthenjinnjn.com).

Reprinted from [njea.org](http://njea.org)



*“It has become conventional in educational policy discussion to assert that ‘research shows’ that ‘teachers are the most important influence on student achievement,’” wrote Rothstein.*

## How much do teachers matter?

In the education reform debate, is there too much focus on teachers? Richard Rothstein, a research associate for the Economic Policy Institute (EPI), thinks so. In his essay, “An overemphasis on teachers,” Rothstein reminds us that the most accurate predictor of a child’s academic success is their upbringing.

“It has become conventional in educational policy discussion to assert that ‘research shows’ that ‘teachers are the most important influence on student achievement,’” wrote Rothstein. “There is, in fact, no serious research that shows any such thing. The assertion results from a careless glide from ‘teachers being the most important *in-school* influence,’ to teachers being the most important influence overall.”

The former national education columnist for *The New York Times* argues that by focusing only on teachers, education reformers are ignoring other school qualities that may be more significant, such as “the quality of school leadership, the nature of the curriculum, or the collaborative culture of a school’s faculty.” Their singular focus will “not only demoralize good teachers by exaggerating their responsibility for student outcomes, but ignore many other potential areas for intervention that might have bigger impacts.”

Rothstein is not alone in this viewpoint. Just last month, Vanderbilt University professor Richard Milner reviewed “Teacher Evaluation 2.0,” a report of The New Teacher Project (NTP), which calls for the redesign of teacher evaluation

systems.

Milner maintains that we need to put “teacher effect in a meaningful context. If readers [of the NTP report] do not understand the role of additional factors such as parental involvement, student motivation, administrative support, and resources, they may easily accept results of teacher evaluations as the independent reason for student success or failure.”

Reprinted from [njea.org](http://njea.org)

To read Rothstein’s essay visit [njea.org](http://njea.org)



# Stress Alert!

If you or a family member is experiencing "STRESS" or struggling with a behavioral Health and/or substance abuse condition, you can contact your confidential, no cost referral service at 1-888-828-7826



## Contests—for more info visit [njea.org](http://njea.org)

### See the Devils, support Hipp Foundation

Come see the New Jersey Devils take on the Florida Panthers, Sunday, Jan. 23 at 3 p.m. and the San Jose Sharks, Friday, Feb. 11 at 7 p.m. NJEA members and their families save big on tickets with a special NJEA discount. Mezzanine/balcony tickets are only \$32 (\$59 box office value), and lower-level tickets are only \$70 (\$85 Box office value). In addition, the Devils will donate \$2 to the [Frederick L. Hipp Foundation for Excellence in Education](http://www.fredricklhipp.org) for each ticket purchased.



### Win a Radio Disney concert at your school

NJEA and Radio Disney AM 640 present Read Across New Jersey, a reading contest for all Radio Disney 640 AM listeners who attend a public school in New Jersey. The school that reads the most books per student will be selected to win a Radio Disney Road Crew Appearance with a special Disney guest on May 20,



### Nominate Scholar Athletes

NJEA and News 12 New Jersey are seeking high school students who excel both academically and athletically. The NJEA/News 12 Scholar Athlete Recognition Program honors New Jersey high school seniors who are successful not only in the classroom, but on the court or on the field. Thirty students will be selected based on nominations received from high schools around the state

*All information taken from [njea.org](http://njea.org)*