



# ESC NJ Update

The Educational Services Commission of New Jersey

New Jersey's Leader In Shared Services

## Innovations Award: A 'Shining Moment' for BBLC

**B**eing one of only seven programs in New Jersey to receive an "Innovations in Special Education Award" at a ceremony held at the Westin Princeton at Forrestal Village, was a special occasion for Bright Beginnings Learning Center students, faculty and parents.

"It was a great honor for BBLC to receive the award for our Coding and Robotics Club program," said Case Manager Kate Johnson, one of the representatives attending the luncheon.

The awards are given to schools with programs representing "a successful, creative effort that enables special needs students to achieve their potential," according to NJSBA Executive Director Lawrence S. Feinsod, E.D., and ASAH Executive Director Gerard M. Thiers, co-sponsors of the event.

A selection committee considered entries from 57 schools statewide before selecting the seven award recipients.

New Jersey Senate President Stephen Sweeney was impressed as he toured the displays set up by the seven award recipients prior to the ceremony.

"It is a great achievement for students and their teachers," Senator Sweeney said.

Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein said the award was well deserved.

"The BBLC staff has worked extremely hard on this initiative, and their efforts will ultimately help

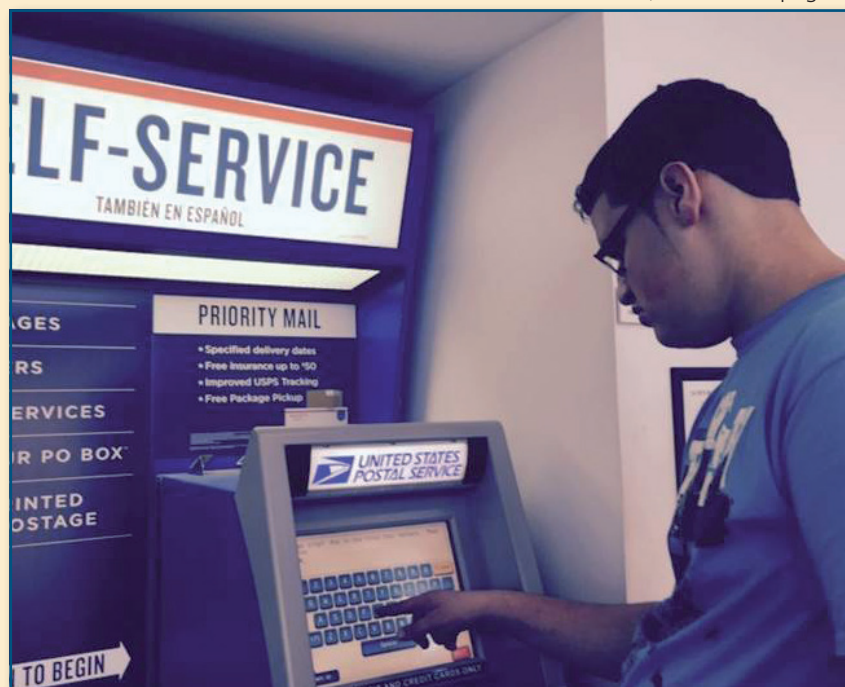
(See **BBLC** on page 4)

## New Transition Program for 18-21 Year-Old Classified Students

**T**he Pathways to Adult Living (PAL) program, designed to ensure a successful transition to independent living for 18-21 year-old classified students who have completed their high school academic requirements, begins in September. Supervised by state certified Structured Learning Experience(s) (SLE) staff, PAL students will meet daily at a renovated storefront at 95 Main Street in downtown Sayreville.

The PAL program will include a strong emphasis on job training, safe and effective use of public transportation, and reinforcement of daily living skills learned in

(See **PAL** on page 7)



*The PAL program is designed to ensure a successful transition to independent living for 18-21 year-old classified students who have completed their high school academic requirements.*

## Congratulations To Our Graduates

See page 5



## Around The ESCNJ



*Community-based Instruction students received t-shirts and a pair of Adidas sneakers for participating in the Achilles Kids Walk, Run, or Roll Program.*



*PRDS students enjoyed their day devoted to Special Olympics activities.*



*With the help of an \$800 grant from Donor's Choose.org, BBLC-Secondary students have created and sold hundreds of professional looking greeting cards through their Greeting Galore & More initiative.*



*Augmentative Alternative Communication approaches allowed nonverbal CLL students to have speaking roles in CLL's production of The Lion King (above) and The Little Mermaid.*



*Transportation Coordinator Chris Zarate shared information with transportation supervisors about implementation of the new Galaxy Enterprise School Software, designed specifically to support school bus route management, billing and related transportation issues.*



*The Piscataway Rotary once again contributed their time and funds to deliver pizza for students at PRDS.*



## Expansion To Support Independent Living Skills

Construction is underway for a 50,000 square foot addition to provide more space so additional higher functioning classified students can be helped preparing for the challenges of independent living. A major influence for the expansion is the trend towards classified students residing in smaller living quarters as opposed to large group homes.

"The approach to smaller living quarters behooves organizations like ours to expand our capacity to help more students strengthen their independent living skills to the fullest extent possible," said Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein.

For years, primarily through its Community-based Instruction (CBI) program, students have gained functional skills for living and working independently.

"Increasing our capacity to offer students training in functional living skills was the logical next step which our Board of Directors and the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders supported," said Mr. Finkelstein.

Business Administrator Patrick M. Moran said ESCNJ facilities are currently filled to 90 percent capacity.

"Once the project was approved, we took advantage of the warm weather and immediately began digging out the 50,000 footprint, and are on track to finish the expansion by 2019," Mr. Moran said.

The addition will include a culinary kitchen, horticultural opportunities, 12 classrooms fully equipped for digital resources,



*Digging out the footprint for the 50,000 square foot addition on the Piscataway Campus is well underway.*

a gymnasium, and fitness area.

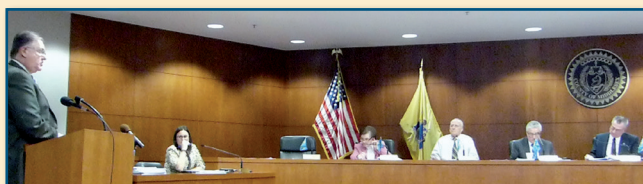
To date, schools have run similar, but independent CBI programs. However, the expansion presented an opportunity to standardize the CBI program for ESCNJ and shared time students.

"The program now warrants uniformity, and our Board agreed by supporting the request to create a CBI supervisor position," said Mr. Finkelstein,

"I am delighted we were able to promote Mrs. Raissa Prus to that position, since she has been instrumental in building the CBI program for over two decades," he said.

Among Mrs. Prus' (M.A., SLE/C) achievements are building dozens of relationships with community employers who offer job sampling opportunities to students, ranging from Rutgers University, ShopRite, Walgreens, and Burger King, to International American Supermarkets, Elijah's Promise, Robert Wood Johnson Hospital and T.J. Maxx.

The expansion also includes training space with a 300-seat capacity that accommodates advanced technology. The space will be available for community use, and enable the ESCNJ to host comprehensive educational programs, and attract notable speakers. •



*Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein outlined the expansion plan to the Middlesex County Board of Chosen Freeholders, which was supportive of the project.*

## NuView Teacher Cited For "Excellence in Personalized Learning"

NuView Academy Teacher Laura Cagle was named the winner in the Hybrid Learning Institute's (HLI) "Legend Award," category for her "ongoing contributions and influence in the field of personalized learning."

The Legend Award is one of several categories in the HLI's annual "Rock Star" awards program, which acknowledges outstanding teachers and administrators who incorporate technology with proven teaching methods to help students succeed. Ms. Cagle earned the Legend Award in competition with over 1,400 educators representing roughly 100 Pennsylvania and New Jersey schools, said Mr. Kevin Dellicker, President and CEO of Dellicker Strategies, the technology company which has sponsored the award the past five years.

"Ms. Cagle has proven to be a most effective teacher with the ability to combine new technologies with proven teaching strategies to engage students and improve their academic

performance," said Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein.

"Ms. Cagle is a true professional, and the award is well deserved," said NuView Academy Principal William Walsh.

The hybrid learning program, offered at three ESCNJ schools, combines digital and face-to-face instruction for more personalized learning. Students also receive a Google Chromebook for use during school hours. •



*NuView Academy Teacher Laura Cagle was named the winner in the Hybrid Learning Institute's (HLI) "Legend Award," category.*



## Thanks To Vendor Expo 2017 Participants



**W**e hope all Vendor Expo attendees learned more about school districts and government agencies saving tax dollars when making purchases through the over 1,100 member

ESCNJ Co-op Pricing System.

Thank you for participating, and we look forward to seeing you at Vendor Expo 2018! •

### **BBLC** (Cont'd from page 1)

our higher functioning students gain exposure to coding in preparation for joining the work force upon graduation," Mr. Finkelstein said.

Mrs. Johnson, a founder of the BBLC Coding and Robotics Club, said the experience also helps students work on their social skills, learn to collaborate with others, and, having been selected award winners, experience what it feels like to be recognized for a major accomplishment.

"Seeing Galuco DaSilva and Jason Raymond walk in front of the crowd independently and accept the award was a shining moment for all of us,"

said Mrs. Johnson.

It was also a thrill for Jason's mother, Antonine Fileus, and Glauco's parents, Genady and Glauco DaSilva, and his stepfather Charles Ross.

BBLC-Secondary Supervisor Sandy Giardino, and Teacher Naomi Glassman were also part of the contingent. Ms. Glassman worked with students in programming a NAO Robot to read a Dr. Seuss book during "Read Across America" week. •



*BBLC representative who received the school's Innovations in Special Education Award were students (L-R) Galuco DaSilva and Jason Raymond, along with (L-R) Teacher Naomi Glassman, Case Manager Kate Johnson and Supervisor Sandy Giardino.*



## Congratulations To Our 2016-2017 Graduates



### ACADEMY LEARNING CENTER

#### GRADUATES

David Barati  
Megan Gross  
Yaamin Khan  
Jonathon Nehila  
Angela Romano  
Aaron Schifter  
Milagros Sori  
Samantha Tang



### BRIGHT BEGINNINGS LEARNING CENTER

#### GRADUATES

Joseph Crater  
David Taborda

#### GRADUATES

(aging out) from BBLC and  
continuing at PRDS

Rachel Cohn  
Kaitlyn Hart  
Najla Namoya  
Hany Patel  
German Daniel Roman  
James Santillan



### CENTER FOR LIFELONG LEARNING

#### GRADUATES

Nicholas Bedrosian  
Cathlene Defabio  
Daniel Fiolek  
John Mac Arthur  
Amir Press  
Isiah Teague



### NUVIEW ACADEMY

#### GRADUATE

Jorge Rmales

#### MOVING UP

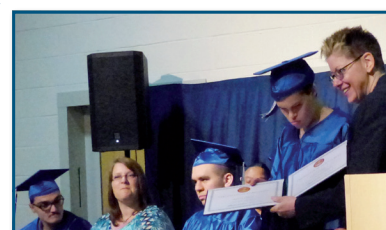
Joseph Briggs  
Jorkis Torres Castillo  
Leonardo Dasilva  
Aidan Gonyou  
Efrem Lerner  
Nadair Lopez  
Anthony Miller  
Brielle Rogers



### NUVIEW ACADEMY ANNEX

#### GRADUATES

Jerry Arias  
Jehmari Copeland  
Chyna Jefferson  
Shanya Robins  
Chereese Small



### PISCATAWAY REGIONAL DAY SCHOOL

#### GRADUATES

Oscar Diaz  
Angeliz Garcia  
Jocelyn Geesaman  
Travis Howell  
Janaise Johnson  
Rana Keefer  
Rachel Mako  
Sarah Matula  
Martin Ogidi  
David Palazzi  
Juan Carlos Rodriguez  
David Zychlinski





## Thank You For Your Commitment To The ESCNJ



Retiring Middlesex County Vocational Technical School District Supt. Brian J. Loughlin (R) was acknowledged for his longstanding service on the ESCNJ Board of Directors by Supt. Mark J. Finkelstein (L) and Board President Dale Caldwell.



South River Public School District Supt. Michael J. Pfister (C) was thanked for his commitment to the ESCNJ Board of Directors by Supt. Mark J. Finkelstein (L) and Board President Dale Caldwell.



Retiring Director of Human Resources Lorraine R. Small received a Proclamation for her years of service to the ESCNJ by Superintendent Mark J. Finkelstein (L) and Board President Dale Caldwell.

## Welcome Aboard!

Look for features in the next issue of the *Update* on the new administrators joining the ESCNJ: Director of Human Resources Nadia Romano, Vice Principal Katie Feiles, and Supervisor Rosaura Bagolie. •

## Board Member Supports CLL Greenhouse Projects



Board Vice President and accomplished gardener Bill Petscavage, met with students, Principal Mary Beth Conley, Vice Principal Michael Kane, and Greenhouse Committee members Shashi Gross, Anne Padmore and Sabine Shloyda recently. Mr. Petscavage shared horticultural tips, and donated a Christmas Cactus and a \$100 to support ongoing projects.

## Special Olympics At BBLC



BBLC students enjoyed their special day participating in a variety of Special Olympics activities.



## Jubilant Prom Night For Students

**A** Night Under The Stars" was a joyous and memorable occasion for BBLC-Secondary/PRDS graduates. The students danced the night away in the cafeteria – transformed into an elegant venue through the efforts of about 25 staff members – and funded through the Steve Weatherford World Champion Foundation. Mr. Weatherford, a professional football player who punted for the New York Giants and Jets also emceed the event.

"Steve loved interacting with students, announcing the prom King and Queen, and was on the dance floor until the very end," said Classroom/SLE Teacher Lindsey Medeiros, a key coordinator of the event, along with Case Manager Alison Berkovits.

Foundation funds were used to: hire a professional photographer and DJ; cater food from Elite Lifestyle Cuisine; purchase battery operated tea light candles; distribute glow sticks and Hawaiian leis to students, and buy swirling stars and 200 black, silver and white balloons to hang



from the ceiling.

"Our staff did an amazing job setting up, dancing with the students, and monitoring the prom," Mrs. Medeiros said.

Parents also benefitted from a

Transition Fair held simultaneously in the BBLC-Secondary Gymnasium. Nearly 20 organizations participated, sharing materials and resource information about independent living with parents. •

### **PAL** (Cont'd from page 1)

previous Community-based Instruction (CBI) programs. The PAL program will be coordinated by CBI Supervisor Raissa Prus, M.A., SLE/C., who has over two decades of experience helping ESCNJ students gain the tools necessary for independent living.

"Many individual and group job-sampling opportunities will be available to PAL students as a result of the the strong ties we have with community employers," said Mrs. Prus.

"The exposure to diverse employment opportunities will help students identify interests and build vocational competence, in conjunction with instructional staff monitoring and assessing their skill levels," Mrs. Prus added.

Among the dozens of employers who have worked with the ESCNJ over the years are: Rutgers University, ShopRite, Walgreens, Burger King, International American Supermarkets, Elijah's Promise, Lowes, Robert Wood Johnson Hospital and T.J. Maxx.

Another key component of the program is gaining experience using public transportation.

"With the Sayreville storefront's close proximity to the New Jersey Transit bus line, there are numerous opportunities for PAL students to gain competence in reading schedules, purchasing



*PAL students will meet daily at a renovated storefront at 95 Main Street in downtown Sayreville.*

tickets, traveling to different locations, and using other public transportation options," Mrs. Prus said.

"We will also instill greater awareness of safe practices when crossing streets, understanding traffic signals and signage, and learning to recognize and avoid potentially unsafe situations," she added.

A life skills day program, PAL students will have daily opportunities to reinforce independent living skills including meal preparation, house cleaning, minor repair work, and safe use of household equipment and appliances. Social skill building, including appropriate public behavior, establishing conflict resolution skills and realistic goal setting, are also included. Students will also have technology infused, functional academic work for a portion of each day.

The ESCNJ will also offer PAL students and their families support when interacting with adult service providers including the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDD), the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS), and the Social Security Administration.

For further information, please contact Mrs. Prus, 732-777-9848 Ext. 6690; [rprus@escnj.k12.nj.us](mailto:rprus@escnj.k12.nj.us), or Assistant Superintendent Gary Molenaar at 732-777-9848, Ext. 5010; [gmolenaar@escnj.k12.nj.us](mailto:gmolenaar@escnj.k12.nj.us). •

## Governor Educator of the Year Recipients



The 2016-2017 Governor Educator of the Year recipients were formally recognized and presented plaques at a recent Board of Directors meeting.

One Board presenter, Dr. Susan Genco, said:

"Teachers play a central role in the lives of students, and your efforts and commitment are appreciated. We are extremely proud of your accomplishments with ESCNJ students."

The ESCNJ's Governor Educator of the Year recipients are:

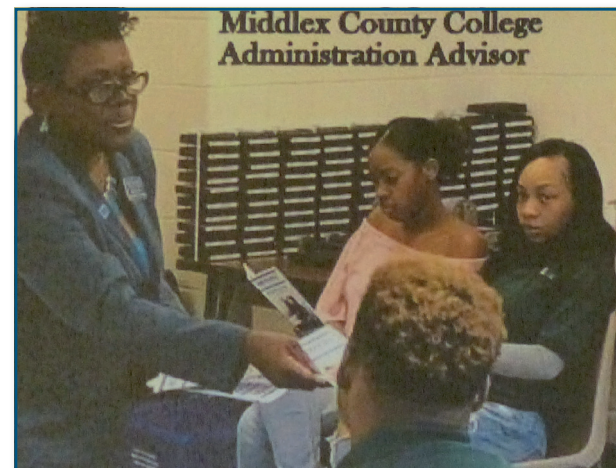
- **Academy Learning Center:**  
*Colleen Patterson*
- **Bright Beginnings Learning Center:**  
*Lindsey Medeiros and Kaitlyn Regan*
- **Center for Lifelong Learning:**  
*Nancy Begarney and Kazumi Tomizawa*
- **Nonpublic Department:**  
*Susan Brennan and Patrick Downes*
- **Piscataway Regional Day School:**  
*Marie Phelan and Marianna Pierce*

## Students Engaged By MCC Admissions Counselor

Students at NuView Academy Annex learned a great deal about Middlesex County College and its support services for students with special needs, as a result of a visit from Admissions Counselor Desiree Brower. In addition to sharing information about the college, Ms. Brower facilitated a productive discussion with students about setting goals for the future.

"The students were engaged and welcomed the opportunity to ask questions of a college admissions counselor," said NAA's Amanda Olexion, LSW Therapist.

The MCC offers many support services for students with disabilities, including adaptive testing services, note taking support, sign language interpreters, adaptive technology, books on tape, and other accommodations based on a student's needs. •



### The Educational Services Commission of New Jersey

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**Dr. Dale Caldwell**, President  
**Mr. Bill Petscavage**, Vice President

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