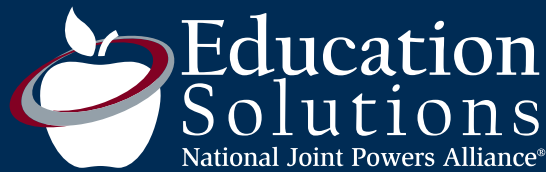


2017

# Educators *of* Excellence





## **Educators of Excellence Awards Banquet**

*NJPA Education Solutions recognizes the profound impact of educators and wants to celebrate this work. We are honored to support this year's Educators of Excellence Awards Program.*

**How the program works:** Applications for the awards were sent to all schools in the Region 5 area. Nominators were asked to select a teacher from their school who has shown leadership and innovation in an area of expertise that has led to student learning. These teachers will receive a Teacher of Excellence Award. In addition, schools could nominate educators for three additional awards: Team of Educational Excellence, Paraprofessional of Educational Excellence and Leader of Educational Excellence. These applications were reviewed by a selection team to identify one team, one paraprofessional, and one leader for these regional awards. Award recipients are honored and celebrated at tonight's banquet.

## **National Joint Powers Alliance®**

Our mission is to build valued relationships, deliver innovative solutions with integrity, and exceed the expectations of our members.

**Here to serve *highly effective* schools!**

**Here to provide *quality programs*!**



**Horace Mann**  
Educated Financial Solutions

This year sponsored in part by:

# Educators of Excellence

## 2017 EDUCATORS OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS BANQUET MAY 1, 2017

5 p.m.	Registration
5:30 p.m.	Welcome Paul Drange, NJPA Director of Regional Programs
5:40 p.m.	Dinner
6:15 p.m.	Keynote Speaker: John Coy
7 p.m.	Awards Kassidy Rice, NJPA Leader of Education Solutions Paul Drange, NJPA Director of Regional Programs Horace Mann Insurance
7:45 p.m.	Closing Remarks Kassidy Rice, NJPA Leader of Education Solutions Dr. Chad Coauette, PhD, NJPA Executive Director

### Keynote Speaker:



John Coy is the author of the picture books *Night Driving*, *Strong to the Hoop*, *Vroomaloom Zoom*, *Two Old Potatoes and Me*, and *Around the World*.

John is a member of the NBA Reading All-Star Team as part of the Read to Achieve program. *Crackback*, his first young adult novel, is about high school football and his second, *Box Out*, is about high school basketball.

He is working on 4 for 4 middle grade series, and the first two books, *Top of the Order* and *Eyes on the Goal*, are now available. He lives in Minneapolis and visits schools nationally and internationally.

# LEADER *of* EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE



**Stephen Jones**



## **Stephen Jones**

Little Falls Community Schools

Nominated by: Little Falls Community Schools  
Administration Team

Stephen believes in 'leader proofing' an organization. This is accomplished by creating a community of leaders. When accomplished, an organizational culture is created. Sustainability becomes a by-product. A current example of a 'cultural shift' Superintendent Jones has been instrumental in creating is the regional Alternative Career Pathways project, a unique initiative providing teachers an opportunity to explore professional interest through meaningful and empowering professional development experiences. Superintendent Jones has created a culture of high expectations, continual growth, and a focus on the individual student. Superintendent Jones has gained respect through his selflessness, passion, and character. Regardless of who is in front of him, Superintendent Jones sees the person first. Race, creed, job title, age, socioeconomic status, or education does not matter. He leads from the heart, treating all with respect and professionalism.

# PARAPROFESSIONAL *of* EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE



**Pam Hart**



## **Pam Hart**

Pequot Lakes School District

Nominated by: Mike O'Neil

Pam has been an employee of the Pequot Lakes School District for nine years working with a variety of students in kindergarten through eighth grade. She always displays a positive attitude and willingness to assist wherever there is a need. Pam has high expectations for her herself and the students she works with each day. She continually works hard to help students become independent and successful by going above and beyond her contract hours to find research-based strategies to try. She also demonstrates high-quality data collection for IEP goals, continually communicates and provides case managers with consistent feedback on students, and has clearly written sub plans.

# TEAM *of* EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE



Front Row:

**Gina Williams**

**Nicosia Danielowski**

**Tiffany Abrams**

**Ben Kinser**

Back Row:

**Jake Hradsky**

**Laure Marquardt**

**Tina Hanneken**

**Steffanie Bristow**

**Jake Mongon**



## **PRB REACH Team**

Pine River-Backus

Nominated by: Andrew Forbort

This team has pioneered an effort that has transferred from a local district initiative to one that is thriving throughout Region 5. The PRB REACH team is dedicated to the framework created by the Search Institute; and, when it comes to increasing student academic motivation, the REACH acronym designates focus on:

Relationships

Effort

Aspirations

Cognition

Heart

The PRB REACH team has not only become invested in the goals and mission of the effort created, they have become pioneers. This team is one that is leading by example in Region 5, one that other districts are turning to with implementation questions. The team is moving into uncharted territory for the region regarding the principles and vision created by the Search Institute.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Michael Bauck**



**Michael Bauck**  
Bertha-Hewitt School

Mike realizes the importance of making and maintaining relationships with students. He works with students in the Business Professionals of America organization, leads a thriving video tech club, and is also in charge of the school store. However, it's truly students who are in charge, as Mike gives them the independence to make important decisions. In addition to these activities, Mike is an extremely professional and patient educator. With a calm, professional demeanor, Mike understands building relationships with students is one of the most important parts of his job.



**Jackie Nornes**



**Jackie Nornes**  
Crosby-Ironton High School

Jackie spends many late nights and weekends at the high school working on Evaluation Reports, Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and preparing her READ 180 materials and lessons so she can be the most effective in her classroom. She always offers helpful suggestions in providing services for various special education students. Many times, this means Jackie has to adjust her schedule or that of her paraprofessionals to make things work. Students always come first. Outside of the classroom, Jackie volunteers at the Cuyuna Range Youth Center, building and strengthening relationships with many C-I students.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Kyle Bendson**



**Kyle Bendson**

Cuyuna Range Elementary School

Kyle has an uncanny knack for making learning relevant to all students, regardless of the content. He possesses compassion for students and a commitment to teaching that helps students make the connections necessary to ignite their curiosity and motivate them to learn. The level of engagement Kyle is able to establish in his classroom helps ensure he is setting up his students for success.



**Ronda Veit**



**Ronda Veit**

Crosslake Community School

Ronda was nominated by a peer as one who has 'exceeded the expectations of a great teacher.' She is creating a new language arts program at the middle school level, has been credited with helping increase MCA scores, and is a great collaborator and study buddy.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Becki Church**



**Becki Church**

Freshwater White Pine Academy

Becki is a teacher for White Pine Academy, a separate site school for students with significant behavioral needs. This year, she agreed to transfer to the high school classroom and has embraced this challenge wholeheartedly. She is able to motivate students who need to look ahead to life beyond high school, and involves them in community service activities including recycling and Adopt-a-Highway. Becki is the leader of the Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program in her school, where she helps coordinate activities for students, encourages the committee toward continuous improvement, and has written several grants for improvements in the school.



**Cindy Casillas**



**Cindy Casillas**

Lindbergh Elementary School

Cindy Casillas is a one-of-a-kind educator. One parent said it best: "Ms. Casillas was the perfect teacher for our daughter. Her charisma, coupled with her superior teaching skills and lovable personality, made our daughter soar in Kindergarten and first grade. As humans, we are not always going to remember what people said, what gifts they gave us, but we are always going to remember how someone made us feel. Ms. Casillas made our daughter feel worthy, valuable and loved! If you are planning for a year, sow rice. If you are planning for a decade, plant trees. If you are planning for a lifetime, educate people. And that is exactly what Ms. Casillas did; she educates her students for a lifetime, not just for a year."

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



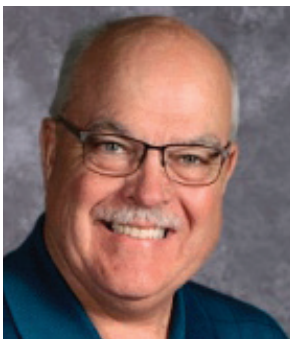
**Kathy Dorn**



**Kathy Dorn**

Dr S.G. Knight Elementary

Kathy is the type of educator who gets others excited about teaching and learning. She encourages the students in her classroom to be independent and critical thinkers. Her soft-spoken personality, teaching style, and high expectations serve to motivate students to work above their abilities. Students leave her classroom proud of who they are and what they have accomplished. Kathy prepares her students not only for middle school, but also for life's challenges in the years to come.



**Kevin Hoskins**



**Kevin Hoskins**

Little Falls Community Middle School

Kevin Hoskins understands the importance of relationships in education. Kevin teaches students first, and language arts second. He takes the time to get to know each and every one of his students personally, and then uses this information to connect with them, inspiring them to grow academically. It is not uncommon to see previously reluctant readers not only reading enthusiastically in his class, but also reading independently outside of class. Kevin does not approach teaching as a job. He does not approach teaching as a career. Kevin approaches teaching as a vocation. In doing so, Kevin has helped many students, and staff, over the past 30 years on their journey to becoming the best versions of themselves.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Reid Bellig**



**Reid Bellig**

Little Falls Community High School

For the past four years, Reid has offered an early morning 'zero hour' college environmental biology class for eager learners – providing personalized learning opportunities for students. This year, he introduced a self-paced biology class for sophomores. Leading by example, Reid believes that the best learning environments are organized on the premise that learners should be supported to become their own best teachers.



**Roxann Ree**



**Roxann Ree**

Lincoln Elementary School

Roxann is an instructional leader at Lincoln Elementary. She is paving the way for staff in the implementation of balanced literacy in the classroom. Her guided reading instruction is a model for all staff to follow. In addition to being an instructional leader, one of Roxann's projects this year has been starting a student council with fourth and fifth grade students at Lincoln Elementary. This student council has been an advocate in promoting Flyer Pride throughout the building.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Jessica Rosenow**



**Jessica Rosenow**

Long Prairie/Grey Eagle School

Jessica developed and implemented PBIS in grades K-6 at Long Prairie Grey Eagle School. Under her leadership, the components of an effective PBIS school were put in place and the professional development was provided for the PBIS Committee and the LPGE instructional staff. She did all this while also being an exceptional educational leader. Staff and students understand what it means to be responsible, respectful, and safe; understand behavioral expectations throughout the building; and look more toward helping each other to make things better for everyone at LPGE Elementary.



**Elise Erickson**



**Elise Erickson**

Menahga Middle School

Elise is a master teacher whose classroom is welcoming, calming, and where students are held to high levels of learning. Elise made the transition from teaching fifth grade to teaching middle school science this year where her hands-on approach engages her students. Elise expertly uses ENVoY to create a classroom where every student is valued. She has implemented many research-based strategies in her teaching, from brain breaks to learning goals and scales. Elise is also the middle school student council advisor. She started the council from scratch this year with 25 students in grades 5-8. Under her guidance, Menahga's middle school students have shown great leadership in building a positive school climate by creating fun contests and activities.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Maria Ness**



**Maria Ness**  
Menahga High School

Maria has not only strengthened, but also enhanced the Menahga Ag Department and FFA chapter since arriving in Menahga. She shows exceptional instructional methods, creativity, and communication with students, parents, and colleagues. She understands the learning process and utilizes different instructional methods to help her students excel. Her natural leadership ability has made her an asset to her district.



**Paula Pearson**



**Paula Pearson**  
Menahga Elementary School

Paula has been a special education teacher for five years in the Menahga School District. She is licensed for SLD, but has worked with students with all disabilities, including the most at-risk kids in her district. She remains positive and has a motto of 'Today is a New Day.' The soft, calm tone she uses with her students, no matter the situation, reduces anxiety and allows students to work through the toughest situations.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Piper Bader-Lampi**



**Piper Bader-Lampi**

Eagle View Elementary School

Piper Bader-Lampi exemplifies the qualities of an exceptional educator. As an ASD/DCD teacher, Piper develops unique personalized learning experiences for her students while prioritizing inclusion in the regular education setting. Her dedication to students also extends into the summer as coordinator of the extended school year program. Piper also demonstrates leadership by being a member of the building leadership team and as a mentor for other teachers. Piper's professionalism and dedication are assets to her school and students.



**Sue Sergent**

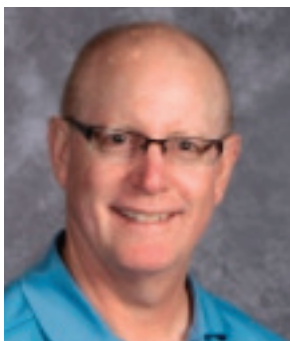


**Sue Sergent**

Pequot Lakes High School

Sue has over 28 years of experience in education. During this time, she has been a classroom teacher, teacher-mentor, curriculum leader, and building administrator. Throughout Sue's tenure, she has given everything to ensure every student's needs were met both in and out of the classroom.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Wade Hoppe**



**Wade Hoppe**

Pequot Lakes Middle School

Wade has helped students broaden their understanding of math for over three decades. In his service to the students of Pequot Lakes, he has helped over 3,000 students broaden their perspectives in math. After 32 years, with retirement well within his grasp, he has continued to strive to align and enhance his instruction. Wade has been a proponent of his building's efforts to guarantee access to grade level math curriculum through Pequot Lakes' efforts in co-taught instruction, and has shown vested interest in continuing to hone his talents by pursuing professional development. Wade is quick to laugh and makes connections with his students. It is also of note that Wade's students have demonstrated their highest level of proficiency on the fifth grade MCA's in the school's history.



**Jessica Rocheleau**



**Jessica Rocheleau**

Pioneer Elementary School

Jessica is dedicated to constant improvement of herself while staying focused on what is best for student learning. She shows a hunger for student growth. She is actively involved in committees in school, as well as involved in many community groups and events. She is also often seen at district athletic and fine arts events. Last summer, she committed a tremendous amount of time to analyze and directly align to Minnesota mathematics standards, the best available digital resources for her second graders to use on their Chromebooks during math centers. Again, she was working for an improved outcome for her students.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Richard Teske**



**Richard Teske**

Pierz-Healy High School

Rich is an inspiring and innovative teacher of science who demonstrates his love for what he does each and every day. He always wears a warm smile and shares his excitement and passion for the topic he is teaching. He lives the true definition of a continuous learner, including leading the charge in bringing Project Lead the Way to his district, as well as making 3D printing a reality for students. Rich is not only a passionate leader for students, but also staff. He is considered a positive leader by his colleagues and at no point is he afraid to ask the difficult questions while taking the time to listen. In his tenure, he has served on a variety of leadership committees and positive things have happened because of his ability to listen, research, and guide. His colleagues validated their trust and appreciation for who he is and what he does by selecting him as Teacher of the Year last year.



**Cortney Kroska**



**Cortney Kroska**

Pillager Middle School

Cortney is a second-year teacher who exemplifies what it means to be a teacher. Her room is inviting and welcoming to students. She is well organized and plans her lessons to meet the needs of all students. Cortney is a certified ENVoY teacher who also has one period a day where she co-teaches. She is great at building relationships with students, as well as staff. Her ability to connect with students and teach content is beyond her years.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Erin Anderson**



**Erin Anderson**  
Pillager High School

Erin is committed to seeing her students grow as learners and as individuals. She does all of this while striving to make herself better every day, as well. From her involvement in a number of district committees and initiatives to her dedication in seeing all students achieve their best, Erin has been instrumental in Pillager High School's success in addition to furthering the positive image of the Pillager School District.



**Wendy Hall**



**Wendy Hall**  
Pillager Elementary School

Wendy has taught at Pillager School for four years, and each year she pushes the standard higher. This year, she was nominated by her peers as Teacher of the Year. She is trained in large and small group use of ENVoy strategies, and serves as a certified coach to staff. Wendy's classroom is filled with examples of innovative teaching and hands-on learning. She is very humble and always willing to share her expertise with others. As a military wife, she has demonstrated a selfless attitude through the years. Her commitment extends outside of the classroom, as she also coaches junior high basketball.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Steffanie Bristow**



**Steffanie Bristow**

Pine River-Backus High School

Steffanie is a math teacher who truly understands all of the variables students face that can impact their ability to succeed. She is passionate about the content, but even more so about creating ways for students to demonstrate learning. She does whatever she can to benefit students, including implementing standards-based grading, creating a self-paced learning environment, as well as taking in a student before holiday break. Steffanie is a teacher, servant leader, community member, and pioneer.



**Tim Ramler**



**Tim Ramler**

Pine River-Backus

Tim exemplifies the professional qualities we desire in all of our educators. He has a high-level ability to build quality relationships with students, differentiate instruction so it meets the levels of all learners, work across content areas while integrating meaningful curriculum, and bring a sense of humor to his classroom. Tim has grown into a highly effective educator through his self-reflection, by asking questions, studying, and by working hard to plan his lessons. Additionally, he has stepped up to both building and district leadership opportunities, which have strengthened district curriculum, test scores, and other continuous improvement initiatives.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Marty Bratsch**



**Marty Bratsch**  
Royalton High School

Marty has been an excellent educator, leader, and mentor to countless students in his three decades at Royalton High School. He led the development of the Project Lead the Way initiative, which has since expanded to five teachers and also includes the elementary. He has been the leader of his school's Tech Club and YES Group, which have both won recognition at the state level for their performances and contributions to Royalton High School and its community.



**Melissa Hammer**



**Melissa Hammer**  
Royalton Elementary School

Melissa Hammer is a dedicated, creative, and caring classroom teacher. Whatever the group of students, she creates a positive environment with challenging and engaging learning activities. Her instructional strategies are differentiated to meet the needs of students at all levels. She has worked to create an exemplary Balanced Literacy program that integrates Daily 5 and features large group, small group, and individual learning. Melissa is also a teacher leader in her building. She serves on the Leadership Team, Opportunity Team, Reading Committee, Social Studies Committee, and Veteran's Day Committee.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Maureen Dragseth**



**Maureen Dragseth**  
Sebeka Elementary School

Maureen Dragseth is a second grade teacher who grows her students into readers. Her work within the classroom has set her as a leader within her building. Because of her leadership and, even more because of her teaching, Sebeka students have been positively and forever impacted by a teacher who not only taught them a love of learning, but a passion for reading for a lifetime. Always the example, Maureen is continually learning and growing by attending and leading professional development. When it comes to looking at the data from her students and putting it to work, she is an expert. When it comes to what's new in education, Maureen sees the value, dives right in, and shares how it has ignited learning and supported her teaching.



**Chris Kappler**



**Chris Kappler**  
Motley-Staples Middle School

Chris Kappler brings a contagious enthusiasm to all he does. Whether it's in the classroom, gymnasium, weight room, or football field—his 'we-got-this' attitude can be heard and expected. Chris' playful demeanor complements his desire to see his students and athletes achieve. They simply feel dedicated to him and themselves once the goals are established. His praise for students is blended with an extension for them to achieve at the next level.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Chris Trout**



**Chris Trout**

Connections High School

Chris Trout has played an incredible role in Connections High School over the past four years. Her calm, 'you-can-do-it' demeanor has served students well with their project-based learning pursuits. She's immediate with her attention when it comes to students' needs and her assistance is constantly met with strong guiding questions, which often lend themselves to higher achievements. She is a student-centered educator who cares deeply about their well-being and growth as young adults.



**Jennifer Pantzke**



**Jennifer Pantzke**

Staples-Motley Elementary School

Jen Pantzke is a second grade teacher and true leader in her school and district. She took on flexible seating this year, which has had a great impact on her students. Allowing children this freedom of choice is creating a successful learning environment where Jen is then able to provide rich reading and math instruction in a differentiated format. Along with a new assignment, Jen is a peer coach, oversight committee member, and a member of the CAT-school leadership/staff development team.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Shawna Poncelet**



**Shawna Poncelet**

Staples-Motley High School

Shawna has embraced her role not only as a caring and passionate educator but colleague as well. She possesses a natural desire to seek and find the great in all we do with and for students and letting them be seen, heard and known. This past fall, she took to the ranks of Special Olympics as a coach. The emotion, care, and love she brings to all of her ventures are a remarkable example to education and educators.



**Diane Schleicher**



**Diane Schleicher**

Swanville Elementary School

Diane has been a consistent leader in the Swanville School District, especially in the area of reading. She has been on many reading teams, including AYP, RTI, and more recently, Alternative Delivery of Specialized Services (ADSIS) and MN Reading Corps. She is currently the MN Reading Corps Internal Coach. Diane has also been instrumental in Swanville Elementary School using AIMSweb and NWEA as assessment tools. She coordinates the ADSIS and MN Reading Corps programs. Districtwide, she has also served on several committees, including negotiations and insurance.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Wyn Pittman**



**Wyn Pittman**

Swanville Junior/Senior High School

As a special education teacher, Wyn works diligently to ensure each student's success. She stays current with new pedagogy for reaching her students. She is willing to try new techniques and search for the right fit for all students. She works closely with staff to implement new techniques that benefit all children. Administration relies on her as a senior member of the staff to bounce ideas off. Wyn is a good listener and provides excellent input on any variety of subjects.



**Courtney Justin**



**Courtney Justin**

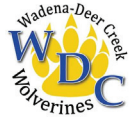
Upsala Area Schools

Courtney Justin is a high school special education teacher at Upsala Schools and has been with the district for nine years. She goes above and beyond to help not only her students but students in need. She has been one of the main architects in the creation of the SIT program, which is designed to help students struggling in the classroom.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Cami Oakes**



**Cami Oakes**

Wadena-Deer Creek High School

As a special education teacher, Cami sets high expectations for her students. She pushes her students to realize their potential, but also provides a caring and positive support system that goes above and beyond her job description. Cami also epitomizes what a colleague should be, always willing to help those around her.



**Dan Savoie**



**Dan Savoie**

Wadena-Deer Creek Elementary School

Dan's excitement for teaching is contagious. He was the catalyst for Wadena-Deer Creek's application to become an ENVoY demonstration site. It began with his desire to get better at managing his students and providing them with the best possible learning environment. After his first ENVoY training, his excitement about what he learned spread like wildfire among his colleagues. He signed up for as many ENVoY coaching sessions as possible and continued his learning by becoming a certified ENVoY coach for his building. Dan was also among the first teachers in Region 5 to become a certified ENVoY demonstration teacher.

# TEACHERS *of* EXCELLENCE



**Melanie Leger**



**Melanie Leger**

Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Elementary School

When Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Elementary was without a principal for a period of time, Melanie served as an administrative assistant for the interim and helped keep the elementary afloat. To this day, three years later, she is still instrumental. She wears multiple hats as an instructional coach and math interventionist, and is always the first person to volunteer to serve on a committee. If it benefits students and the school, you can count on Mel.



**Pat Richter**



**Pat Richter**

Walker-Hackensack-Akeley High School

Pat's willingness to explore new and creative avenues that foster student success in his math classroom; his desire to participate in professional development that looks at what is best practice for himself as well as the students; and his work to develop, pilot, and provide a differentiated math classroom addressing the needs of all students will help to shape the direction of the 6-12 math curriculum for Walker-Hackensack-Akeley Middle and High School.

## WHO IS NJPA?

At its core, National Joint Powers Alliance® (NJPA) is a member-driven service cooperative with a membership now exceeding 50,000. NJPA offers a multitude of programs, contracted products, equipment, and service opportunities to educational, governmental, and other nonprofit entities. Locally in Minnesota, NJPA offers regional programs for counties, cities, and schools that comprise an area known as Region 5. We successfully aid in the planning, development, and provision of services in a vast array of fields, including student academic programs, technology services, curriculum solutions, staffing, health and safety, risk management, and more. At NJPA, our mission is to build valued relationships, deliver innovative solutions with integrity, and exceed the expectations of our members.

## WHAT IS NJPA EDUCATION SOLUTIONS?

Education Solutions delivers high-quality services and professional development for regional schools. The dedicated staff work towards developing characteristics of effective schools, including supporting schools with developing collaborative professional cultures, effective data, assessment, and curriculum practices, highly effective instruction, and family engagement/community partnerships. In addition, Education Solutions seeks to equip systems with strong vision, leadership, and organization. NJPA is committed to building the capacity of leaders and learners through the implementation of professional learning to increase principal and teacher effectiveness, grounded in research-based practices of the profession and applied to daily teaching for results in student learning.

**NJPACoop.org**



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