



Event Catalog



Schedule of Events

9:00–9:50 a.m.

Opening Remarks on YouTube Live

10:00–10:50 a.m.

Session One

11:00–11:40 a.m.

Self-Care Wellness Sessions

11:45–12:15 p.m.

Lunch Break

12:20–1:10 p.m.

Session Two

1:20–2:10 p.m.

Session Three

2:15–2:30 p.m.

Closing on YouTube Live

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Code of Conduct

Purpose

The Equity in Action Unconference is dedicated to providing a harassment-free enriching experience for everyone. As such, we are committed to providing a friendly, safe, and welcoming environment for all, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, disability, home language, race, ethnicity or religion. This code of conduct outlines our expectations for participant behavior as well as the consequences for unacceptable behavior.

We invite all facilitators, proctors, volunteers, attendees, media, and all other participants to help us realize a safe and positive conference experience for everyone.

Expected Behavior

- Be considerate, respectful, and collaborative.
- Refrain from demeaning, discriminatory or harassing behavior and speech.
- Be mindful of your fellow participants. Alert conference organizers if you notice suspicious behavior.
- All engagement should be appropriate for a professional audience.

Unacceptable Behavior

Unacceptable behaviors include intimidating, harassing, abusive, discriminatory, derogatory or demeaning conduct by any attendee.

Harassment includes but is not limited to: offensive verbal comments related to gender, sexual orientation, race, language, religion, disability; inappropriate use of nudity and/or sexual images in public spaces (including presentation slides); deliberate intimidation, stalking or following; harassing photography or unauthorized recording; sustained disruption of talks or other events; inappropriate virtual contact, and unwelcomed attention.

Consequences of Unacceptable Behavior

Unacceptable behavior by anyone in attendance will not be tolerated. Anyone asked to stop unacceptable behavior is expected to comply immediately. The conference organizers, proctors and facilitators may take any action they deem appropriate, including removal from the conference without warning. You will not be permitted to participate in any further conference activities.

What to Do if You Witness or Are Subject to Unacceptable Behavior

If you are subject to unacceptable behavior, notice that someone else is being subject to unacceptable behavior, or have any other concerns, please email statewideconference@doe.nj.gov as soon as possible. You can also report unacceptable behavior to the session's proctor or a conference organizer. All reports will remain completely confidential.

Session Titles and Descriptions

A Strategy for Predominately White School Districts and the Achievement/Opportunity Gap

Rosetta Treece

Session 1: 10:00–10:50 a.m. & Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m.

This session will be centered around equity and culturally responsive teacher initiatives in so-called high-performing districts where there is less diversity in staff and student populations. Through a case study of Hopewell Valley Regional School District’s journey with equity work, we will talk about why this work is paramount.

Access to Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Technology in Schools

Sandra Paul and Remi Christofferson

Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

This session will focus on what members of the professional learning community (PLC) researched and discussed regarding the disparities demonstrated in the data that was reviewed from a couple of districts. It will include the methods that our PLC did in working on the topic of inequity and technology in the state.

This session will:

1. Share data on inequities in high-level STEM courses from several New Jersey districts;
2. Discuss potential plans to change this trajectory in the context of districts planning for greater online/distance learning; and
3. Discuss how the Future Ready Schools and STEM Equity Program Evaluation Rubrics can support districts during this hectic planning process for greater online learning to make equitable decisions.

Act for Anti-Defamation League

Sabrina Capoli

Session 1: 10:00–10:50 a.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

One student leader’s experience working with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the annual youth convention. The goal is to encourage more administrators to implement an ADL work in their school.

Alternative Models of Delivering Instruction & Social/Emotional Support for the Emerging Fragile & Students At-Risk

Jason Sabino and Dana Kurilew

Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

This session will offer real life solutions to the issues faced as school administrators, counselors and teachers. The session will provide opportunity for all attendees to explore and develop approaches to utilize current district resources to deliver support for at-risk students utilizing a tiered system of support. This session will also focus on providing guidance on creating and delivering multi-tiered system of support models (such as “Response to Intervention”) in a traditional public high school setting. This model will address the following student concerns: chronic absenteeism and tardiness; increasing need for home instruction; students in danger of losing credits or dropping out; increases in school refusal; increase in mental health referrals to the Child Study Team (CST); rigidity of current program and 120 credit graduation requirement; tardiness due to work and family responsibilities; and transitioning back to school from hospitalizations or other placements.

Assessing Access to Culturally Responsive Literature in Schools

Equity Based Professional Learning Community – Kean University

Session 1: 10:00–10:50 a.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

As part of a Kean University professional learning community (PLC) project focused on Culturally Responsive Literature in Schools, this team created a modified tool using the Culturally Responsive Scorecard from New York University (NYU) and then gathered information using the tool.

The conversation to follow will provide participants with an opportunity to explore several essential questions foregrounding issues of equity in schools:

1. How do we measure the extent to which our schools’ English Language Arts curricula are (or are not) culturally responsive?
2. How can we re-design schools to utilize thoughtful, culturally responsive pedagogy?
3. How can we get districts to support the implementation of this form of pedagogy with the needed resources, time and money?

This session will provide various stakeholders with an opportunity to explore essential questions focusing on equity in schools and culturally responsive pedagogy.

Building Educational Equity Through Collaboration

Michael Dunlea and Melissa Collins

Session 1: 10:00–10:40 a.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

As teachers, we know that students bring unique qualities to the classroom due to their backgrounds. Therefore, it is imperative that we celebrate their differences and give them opportunities to foster relationships with others. Two educators came together, one from the south and one from the north, to bring their all white and all black classrooms together using innovative methods that allowed their students to interact with each other.

This session will offer some lessons learned from the project, technology used and strategies that were used in the classroom, primary student perspectives regarding race and biases, provide interactive strategies to engage with other participants, and create an action plan for the upcoming school year. These strategies will also include those that were applied during the COVID-19 Distance Learning period. This session will focus on: creation of a classroom culture that focuses on empathy, compassion, and respect; use of technology to overcome segregated classrooms; strategies to foster relationships and connect with diverse student groups; finding platforms to make connections with other classrooms; and creation of an action plan where teachers will commit to a virtual meetup in the coming school year.

Can You Sense Us?

Joy Barnes-Johnson

Session 1: 10:00–10:50 a.m. & Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m.

Problems related to recruit and retention of staff of color will be presented in addition to a framework for racial literacy development among key stakeholders; ideas will be shared that demonstrate equitable practices used in Science, Engineering, Technology and Mathematics (STEM) and racial literacy curricula for students; sample professional development (PD) and student work products will be shared. This session will provide insight with regard to district level recruitment and retention strategies for educators of color; describe framework for racial literacy programs for professional development and student learning; build capacity for equity policy review of professional teaching, staffing and program development.

Classroom Strategies to Promote Acceleration and Equity for Struggling Students

Meg Freeman

Session 1: 10:00–10:40 a.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

In the current pandemic, there will be an emphasis on remediation when students return to a physical school building. Black American and Latinx American students are disproportionately recommended for remedial coursework. How do we create specific strategies that promote equity and rigor? Drawing on the work of Suzy Pepper Rollins, the discussion will be focused around acceleration strategies. As opposed to remediation, which emphasizes mastering everything through passive skills-based work, acceleration focuses students on the concepts that they need to know for this week's lesson in high engagement activities with real-world emphasis. This session will (1) Introduce the concept of acceleration as opposed to remediation, and (2) share strategies as a group that will help students gain needed content knowledge while ensuring that there is equity.

Commemorating the National Day of Racial Healing Throughout the District and Community

Kim Feltre

Session 1: 10:00–10:50 a.m. & Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m.

First, there will be a general description of the National Day of Racial Healing and discussion of racial healing. Then there will be a description of our district and our efforts to engage in courageous conversations, partner with a group called Community Connections, develop student leadership through our Diversity Council, and guide the board/administration in learning. Our board resolution and activities to commemorate the National Day of Racial Healing will be discussed. Resources, classroom lesson examples, and descriptions of community-wide events will be provided. Participants will be challenged with creating a plan for their school/district. Participants will discuss the concept of racial healing and ways to promote it. Participants will create a plan to use resources available in their districts and communities to promote racial healing.

Creating Culturally Responsive Spaces Through the Arts

Courtney Serpone

Session 1: 10:00–10:50 a.m. & Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m.

This session will be focused around how school stakeholders can leverage the performing arts to cultivate honest conversations around social justice. There is a certain safety and trust that comes with being in an arts classroom, and because of the nature of our subject it tends to be incredibly personal to people. This session's participants will discuss: How can the platform of the performing arts in traditional school-based models be expanded to include other stakeholders? What does the educational model look like and how is performance part of it? How can we use this model to create a safe place for all people to unpack identities and ideologies about race and other social locations? Lastly, how will this help build and shape school-based arts programs so they meet the needs of our future world?

Creating Equity Through Student Trainers: Examining Prejudice and Combatting Biases

Tyler Chaudhary, Alyssa Giannini, Dave Knecht, Shane Lovett, and Heilee Mot

Session 1: 10:00–10:50 a.m. & Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m.

In this session, students who were trained by the Anti-Defamation League will provide a brief overview of our school's Peer Training Program. Next, we will engage participants in a lesson on and conversation about microaggressions, followed by several exercises to promote reflection about participants' own identities. Finally, our presentation ends with an opportunity for participants to reflect on what they can take back from the workshop to their own schools. This session will engage participants in several activities to promote self-reflection about their own identities, beliefs, and potential biases, as well as to provide an opportunity for participants to think about and discuss how they can empower students and teachers in their own schools to promote equity.

Disproportionality Among Students with Exceptionalities

David Antunes and Peggy Brown

Session 1: 10:00–10:50 a.m. & Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m.

As part of Kean University’s professional learning committee (PLC) project focusing on disproportionality among students with exceptionalities, we analyzed state testing data to determine the percentage of students with disabilities who are performing at or above grade level in mathematics and English language arts (ELA) and compared that with the performance of their general education peers. We plan to share our work and provide space for participants to engage in dialogue by considering strategies for improving student outcomes through equity-based practices. This session will begin by providing educators with basic information about the nature and causes of disproportionality as we discuss related policy, procedural, and practice issues; offer recommendations to educators, districts, and the New Jersey Department of Education about how to address disproportionality amongst students with disabilities; outline implications of disproportionality and questions to consider.

Empowering Students to Find Their Voice: The Journey of the School of Social Justice

Vincent Muscillo and Nicole Esposito

Session 1: 10:00–10:40 a.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

Long Branch Historic High School was envisioned as a Civics and Social Justice Academy. The classrooms are set up in debating format to discuss national and global topics. The school also has a gymnasium, auditorium with a stage for music and performances, a demonstration science lab to discuss and debate climate sciences, and a cafeteria with a cyber café-style environment. This session will discuss the school in more detail.

Enacting Equity and Protecting the Civil Rights of English Learners and Their Families

Joyce Farr

Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

The basic needs of English learners (ELs) and their education needs should be at the forefront of how ELs are served in New Jersey. Leaders and educators need to ensure meaningful communication with parents and communities who are not proficient in English, establish connections with students that promote asset-based learning and ensure schools fulfill their civil rights obligations especially at a time when those rights are under threat. This session will focus on establishing strong partnership with leaders and educators to foster, bolster and enact equitable outcomes in serving ELs through discussion of the challenges and the solutions to overcome the challenges to equity.

Equity: Above and Beyond Equality

Marietta Williams

Session 1: 10:00–10:40 a.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

This session will include examples of equitable classrooms and Marzano instructional practices. This session will be for school leaders and coaches to assist teachers with creating equitable classrooms and/or instructional practices.

Guiding Students During A Crisis Requires a Resiliency Tap

Camile Earle-Dennis

Session 1: 10:00–10:40 a.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

Teachers rely on their creative banks to provide ways to help navigate through crisis and guide students. Through the support of an social emotional learning (SEL) Consultant, learn ways in which you may model and teach the art of self-regulation and redirect students' mixed emotions into positive change in the classroom, school, and extended school community. Through reflection and interactive exercises, participants will learn the art of tapping into their own resiliency in order to do the same for teachers and students. In break out rooms, participants will activate voice and agency by discussing two proposed prompts. Demonstrating equity and access, participants will share their findings in break out rooms, the virtual chat, and open forum platform. Participants will receive a one-pager reference with links to additional complimentary resources.

Healing as a Site of Educational Equity

George Guy and Adan Alvarez

Session 1: 10:00–10:40 a.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

This session will focus on strategies that mitigate access and opportunity gaps that contribute to inequitable outcomes for historically underserved students and for all students. This session will outline potential solutions to various access and opportunity gaps that can be replicated across our state's approximately 600 school districts.

Lost Einsteins: Looking for Innovators! Finding, Supporting & Advocating for Underserved Gifted Students, While Providing Creative Opportunities for All Students

Jeanne Muzi

Session 1: 10:00–10:50 a.m. & Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m.

Many gifted and enrichment programs currently in place across New Jersey fail to unlock the full innovative capacity of countless creative and talented students. We must learn to design programs that see students through a strengths-based lens instead of a deficit view. Participants in this session will learn about a study from Stanford University called Lost Einsteins, which presented how exposure to problem solving, design thinking and divergent ideation results in enormous growth and positive impact for underserved students. During this session, we will discuss how to intentionally recognize, serve and enfranchise our students of color, English Language Learners (ELLs) and economically disadvantaged students, thus creating more inclusive gifted programs, enrichment opportunities and higher level learning experiences for all. The ultimate goal is developing school-wide cultures of innovation that benefit all students.

Participants will learn about how to strengthen instructional practices, foster engagement through creative learning experiences and ensure access to higher level thinking opportunities so all students have the chance to explore and discover in more equitable classrooms. This session will also enable attendees to learn methods, strategies, activities and ideas for bringing higher order learning and targeted thinking skills to all students. Teachers and administrators will learn a variety of ways to bring equitable learning experiences, designed to open doors to creativity and curiosity, into their building to cultivate a culture of wonder!

Removing the English Language Learners (ELLs) Deficit Lens To Ensure Equity

LeighAnn Matthews

Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

Join to learn and discuss how to remove the ELL deficit lens within your school community to ensure equity for ELLs. The workshop will include a presentation, but also provide ample opportunities for discussion. Please bring your positive attitude, ideas, and experiences - especially experiences from distance learning. ELLs can - let's work together today so that we can shift mindsets tomorrow! In this workshop, participants will learn how to leverage resources in order to remove the ELL deficit lens within their school community. A presentation will occur with tips and strategies, along with ample opportunities to discuss and network with peers. The discussion will focus on inequities exposed during distance learning, and how to use those inequities to actually identify ELL strengths. Participants will leave the presentation with the tools they need to change the ELL/English as a Second Language (ESL) mindset in their school from negative to positive and ensure equity for ELLs.

Restorative Circles for All!

Patricia Smeyers

Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

Students can share their truth compared to their labels, and to solve conflicts without punitive interventions. When done purposefully and with proper guidance, this can lead to better classroom management and ways to conduct lessons with students viewpoint and equity in mind. In restorative circles, students listen to learn not necessarily to respond. Equity is a bridge to equality and understanding one another leads to student-led equitable classrooms.

This session will help participants:

1. Understand the reason for restorative circles and practices in schools;
2. Collaboratively come up with ways this can assist with equitable practices and less punishments in the classroom environment and district level; and
3. Examine how equity leads to equality.

Participants will discuss the ways to use circles in the district, school, and classroom experience and leave with restorative circle examples and guidelines to utilize immediately within the classroom and school environment.

Restoring a School Community

Rabia Nawaz

Session 1: 10:00–10:50 a.m. & Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m.

Restorative practices (RP) help students better understand themselves, allowing them to build stronger connections with their peers and staff. With RP, students learn how to identify and express their emotions, foster a growth mindset, and resolve any conflicts. This results in a positive school climate because students now take ownership of their actions. This session teaches learners to effectively manage conflicts that arise in a classroom with a restorative approach; help teachers acquire skills necessary to resolve conflicts; and identify various strategies to overcome challenges with implementing RP.

Say It Loud!

Toney Jackson

Session 1: 10:00–10:40 a.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

We are currently at a tipping point in education and in society with regard to racism. Silence in these moments is complicity. As educators, we must use our voices to loudly and demonstrably affirm the value of the lives of Black students, Indigenous students, and Students of Color (BISOC), and denounce the systemic racism in schools and society. These messages must reach all students—even our youngest learners. This session will discuss the importance of being actively anti-racist in our educational practice at the elementary level and will describe and demonstrate practical ways to do so.

Teaching the Vocabulary of Anti-Discrimination Through Children’s Literature

Katherine Bassett

Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

In this session, we will examine the vocabulary of anti-discrimination and explore teaching anti-discrimination through the use of children and young adult literature. After an introduction of the vocabulary, we will explore several books that can be used in teaching about discrimination, and how to combat it, and will then hold an open discussion on this topic.

The Achievement/Opportunity Gap in NJ Schools

Donald Leake

Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

New Jersey promises a “thorough and efficient education for all children.” When we consider student achievement, is there a gap between our vision and reality? This session will focus on the fact that disproportionately, the schools in New Jersey, reflect the imbalances that exist in our society and these very same schools tend to buy into the cultural myth that a child’s potential is preset by his zip code or the primary language spoken.

The Cultural Classroom

Fatema Sumrein

Session 1: 10:00–10:40 a.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

This presentation will start off with an interactive form for teachers to list their biggest fears when dealing with culture. We will then discuss ways teachers and administrators can incorporate culture successfully in their schools and classrooms. The session will end with a take away of how they can start to work on resources for the upcoming year. This session will assist teachers and administrators to foster brave spaces inclusive of students' cultures.

The Horton in the Room: Addressing a Conflict in an Established Practice

Edward Stroh

Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

A national, ongoing, conversation exists about systemic racism in the United States. During Read Across America (RAA) week, various schools celebrate the works of Dr. Seuss in a variety of ways. As education professionals, we have a duty to examine the catalog of Dr. Seuss (Theodore Geisel) for racist, stereotypical, and offensive content. As such, we must consider the significance of a school, and or, districtwide Seuss celebration in our diverse community. Through anecdotal evidence, visual aids, and restorative practice, this workshop will seek to provide a forum where discussion and reflective practice might inspire participants to answer the question: How do we reconcile, justify, or change our established RAA traditions as culturally responsive educators? This session will inspire professional educators to consider the hidden curriculum that may exist in RAA events that celebrate Dr. Seuss and challenge professional educators to reflect on current and traditional practice as culturally responsive classroom leaders, especially considering the current social backdrop of our nation.

Un-standardized Learning in a Standardized System

Adam Zygmunt

Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m. & Session 3: 1:20–2:10 p.m.

This session explores the barriers and challenges that exist in shifting classrooms to be student-centered and student-driven while also expanding teachers' repertoires to meet students' learning needs and standards mastery. Through the implementation of equitable teaching practices/strategies, routines, and mindsets, the diverse learners in our classrooms will be more engaged in deeper, more meaningful learning ensuring all students are moving toward mastering state standards guided by their individual learning needs.

This session will focus on:

1. Understanding how implicit and explicit rules/biases could be barriers toward implementing equity;
2. Exploring tangible examples and definitions of equity and equality; and
3. Exploring teaching strategies, routines, and mindsets for learning in student-driven classrooms with a focus on equitable practices.

Yo También Puedo

Angello Villarreal

Session 1: 10:00–10:50 a.m. & Session 2: 12:20–1:10 p.m.

This presentation will share the benefits and challenges of creating a peer-mentorship among English Language Learners. Also, the presentation will showcase the “why” of creating such a program. Furthermore, the necessity of embracing students' native languages in our schools, and how such a program can empower it. The presentation will utilize an approach of how the combination of Social Justice, Social Emotional Learning, Mentoring with a Culturally Responsive approach can help the environment for our English Learners.

Self-Care Wellness Sessions

11:00–11:40 a.m.

Building Capacity Through Self-Care

Shalonda Archibald

Teaching is truly a work of heart. This collaborative session aims to inspire and empower educators to care for themselves. Participants will partake in a self-care journey reflecting on ways that they can incorporate sustainable self-care practices into their daily routine. Participants in this session can look forward to developing an understanding of self-care's impact on their wellbeing and performance. They will also create a daily self-care plan based on strategies shared in the session.

Finding Peace Within the Classroom

Thomas Belasco

This session provides practices you can do between classes or during a prep period to ground yourself. Furthermore, these are practices you can expand on your own to develop your own practice. We will close with how this can be applied to your personal reactions to local, national, and global issues. Attendees will leave with brief and focused practices they can utilize at the start of the school year.

Healthy You, Healthy Me

Hoa Ly

Participants will be able to follow along with a short information exchange session and then we will focus on deep-breathing techniques and low impact stretching. Participants will be able to enhance and maintain their physical, emotional, and spiritual healthy at anytime and anywhere.

Kindful Mindful Yoga Tools for Self-Care

Amy Zambrano

Self-care isn't selfish! When you take care of yourself, you can take care of your students and families better. Learn simple tools and techniques to tap into Self Care by using your greatest tool: you. Participants will learn a variety of breathing techniques, movements and mindfulness practices using their body, mind and breath that can be used for self-care Brain Breaks. When your brain can rest, you can do your best! Participants will learn simple self-care techniques using movement and mindfulness that connect to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) Framework's Five Core Competencies. No materials needed. Participants will learn how to practice self-care no matter where they are. This will support educators to reach their full potential to best serve their students and communities. Taking the time to practice self-care, not only makes a difference for you personally, but makes a significant difference for your students!

Mindfulness for Stressed Out Teachers and Students

Rebecca McLelland-Crawley

We will learn more about the neuroscience of stress reactions and how mindfulness allows our brain to create a pause for a better self-regulation. We will practice strategies that we all can use to focus on the here and now and what is within our control. Students who run a mindfulness club will join and teach strategies for everyone to incorporate in daily living. Participants will be able to identify three to five mindful strategies that increase self-regulation; and incorporate daily emotional check-ins with students and self.

Notes to Me: The Balancing Act

Tammy Jenkins and Kimberley Giles

This relevant and interactive session will provide participants with practical tips and strategies that will allow them to live (and lead) less distracted, soul-filled and hands free! Participants will: understand the importance of self-care; begin to develop self-care plan; and gain tools and strategies to put a self-care plan into action.

Nourish to Flourish: Wellness for Educators

Kelly Cerbone

Come and experience different ways we, as educators, can nourish our mind and body so we can flourish to best serve ourselves, our students and our families.

Well-Being: A Matter of Balance

Curtis Aubry

Participants will be able to look at their wellness through many lenses. They will identify their strengths (strong, just right, lacking) and tell the truth about them without shame. They will learn to appreciate their strengths and figure out how they can use them to balance their wellness. In addition, participants will begin a comprehensive examination of their six pillars of wellness. By the end of the session participants will have the tools they need as they begin their journey to balance and wellness.

Wellness Toolbox

Lindsay Thein

Participants will learn how to create their own virtual wellness toolbox and will discuss and implement the wellness skills they learn. The skills they will learn can be used for personal and professional use. Participants will leave with a bag of tricks to help cope with anxiety, sadness, anger and behavioral difficulties. Learn coping skills, de-escalation of behavioral issues and learn ways to improve your wellness.