

**Partnering to Address New Jersey’s Educator Shortages**

**April 11, 2023**

**Montclair State University Conference Center**

**Webinar Link:** <https://montclair.zoom.us/j/84018896752>

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| **8:15-9:00** | **Breakfast & Networking** | |
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| **9:00-9:15** | **Welcome** | Jonathan Koppell, President Montclair State University  Katrina Bulkley, Acting Dean College of Education and Human Services |
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| **9:15-10:00** | **Opening Session: The State’s Role in Supporting & Building Partnerships to Address   Educator Shortages** | |
|  |  | **Moderator:** Jennifer Robinson, Montclair State University |
|  |  | **Panelists:**  Ryan Saunders, Learning Policy Institute  Nellie Pou, New Jersey State Senator  Julie Bunt, Chief of Staff, New Jersey Department of Education  Nick Toth, Deputy Asst. Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Labor  Sean Spiller, NJEA President and Mayor of Montclair |
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| **10:10-11:00** | **Panel 1: Enhancing Recruitment and Retention through Partnership** | |
|  |  | **Moderator:** Mayida Zaal, Montclair State University |
|  |  | **Panelists:**  Jeanne DelColle, The College of New Jersey  *The Center for Future Educators: Going Farther Together*  Rhena Jasey-Goodman, Montclair State University  *Montclair State University New Teacher Induction Program:  Retaining & Sustaining Teachers*  Steve Beatty, NJEA Vice President  *Mentoring & Teacher Retention*  **Respondent:** Brandon Umba, New Jersey Assemblyman |

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| **11:10-12:00** | **Panel 2: Innovative Approaches to Teacher Preparation** | | | |
|  |  | | **Moderator:** Timothy Purnell, New Jersey School Boards Association and   Montclair State University  **Panelists:**  Michael Blatt, State Director United States Department of Labor, ETA Office of Apprenticeship  *Apprenticeships as an Opportunity for Teacher Preparation*  Bree Picower, Montclair State University  *Addressing the Teacher Shortage and Diversity Gap through Residency Partnerships:  The Transformative Education Network at Montclair State University*  Khary Golden, Camden U  *NJ Teacher Pathway: A Homegrown Solution to NJ’s Teacher Talent Needs*  Doug Larkin, Montclair State University  *Partnering with the Noyce Teacher Scholarship Program to Produce New Jersey’s  Science and Mathematics Teachers*  **Respondents:**  Troy Singleton, New Jersey State Senator  Roger León, Superintendent, Newark Board of Education | |
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| **12:00-1:00** | **Lunch & Keynote Address by Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey** | | | |
| **1:15-2:00** | **Round 1: Working and Learning Sessions** | | | |
| **Main Room:  Apprenticeship Program Possibilities and Paraprofessional to Teacher Pipelines** | | **Facilitator:** Fran Stromsland, Montclair State University  **Presenters:**  Michael Blatt and Nicole Field, US DOL  Khary Golden, Camden U  *Partnering to Promote Paraprofessionals*  Delia Maloy Furer & Anthony Grieco, Montclair Public Schools  Heather Kugelmass, CREEHS (Montclair State University) *Program Evaluators as Valuable Partners* | | |
| **Room 1:  High School Teacher Academies and Dual Enrollment** | | **Facilitator:** Danielle Epps, Montclair State University  **Presenters:**  David Fuentes, William Paterson University  *Aspiring Educators at William Paterson: Cultivating Self-efficacy and Interest for Future Educators*  Robin Vitucci, American Federation of Teachers  *The Role of Unions in Educator Recruitment & Retention* | | |
| **Room 2:  Partnering for Retention** | | | | **Facilitator:** Rhena Jasey-Goodman, Montclair State University  **Presenters:**  Steve Beatty, NJEA  Tahina Perez, TFA NJ  *New Teacher Academy: A partnership between Teach For America New Jersey and  Marion P Thomas Charter School in Newark*  Richard Tomko, Belleville Schools  *Retaining and Growing Your Very Best through Teacher Coaching*  Joe Bavazzano, ADP Center at Montclair State University  *Teacher Support through Technology Wellness* |
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| **2:15-3:00** | **Round 2: Working and Learning Sessions** | | | |
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| **Main Room:  NJ State Teachers of the Year Perspectives on Recruitment and Retention** | | **Facilitator:** Jeanne DelColle, TCNJ and 2012 New Jersey State Teacher of the Year  **Panelists:**  Christine Girtain, 2023 NJ State Teacher of the Year, Toms River  Argine Safari, 2017 NJ State Teacher of the Year, Pascack Valley  Theresa Maughan, 2022 NJ State Teacher of the Year, East Orange  Sarah Sherman, 2023 NJ State Teacher of the Year, Burlington County | | |
| **Room 1:  Tutoring as a Path to Teacher Recruitment** | | **Facilitator:** Leslie Wilson, Montclair State University  **Presenters:**  Andy Saunders, TFA NJ  *TFA Ignite Fellowship: Recruiting the next generation of Educators through a Tutoring Corps*  Ashley Bencan, NJ Tutoring Corps  *Earn While You Learn: Tutoring and Teacher Pathways* | | |
| **Room 2:  Recruiting, Preparing, & Retaining Hard-to-Staff Areas: Bilingual and Bicultural, STEM Education** | | **Facilitator:** Sumi Hagiwara, Montclair State University  **Presenters:**  Catherine Michener, Rowan University  *Educadores del Futuro at Rowan (EdFaR) Teacher Pathway Initiative*  Margaret Freedson, Montclair State University  *The Newark Public Schools-Montclair State University Bilingual-Bicultural Teacher Certification Partnership* | | |

**Biographies**

**Joe Bavazzano**

Joe Bavazzano is the Director of The ADP Center for Learning Technologies at Montclair State University. He is an expert on educational technology practices and implementation. His work to enhance teaching and learning through engaging professional development strategies has been featured in the New York Times. Joe is passionate about developing authentic tech-infused learning experiences in and out of the classroom.

**Steve Beatty, NJEA Vice President**

Steve Beatty, a high school social studies teacher in the Bridgewater-Raritan school district, is vice president of the New Jersey Education Association. Beatty was elected to his first two-year term effective September 1, 2021.As Vice President, Beatty passionately advances the fight for racial, social, and economic justice, works on NJEA organizational initiatives like “Undoing Racism,” NJEA’s Members of Color and REAL Movement, as well as LGBTQ+ curriculum implementation with partners Garden State Equality and the Bayard-Rustin Center.

**Jeanne DelColle, Executive Director of the Center for Future Educators at The College of NJ**

Jeanne DelColle is the Executive Director of the Center for Future Educators at The College of NJ, a statewide organization whose goals are to recruit high school and middle school students to become educators and ensure that the pipeline is diverse. An educator for over 25 years, Jeanne is an award-winning social studies teacher who was named NJ Council for the Humanities Teacher of the Year, Gilder Lehrman NJ History Teacher of the Year, and 2012 NJ State Teacher of the Year. Serving at the request of the Commissioner, Jeanne worked as educator in residence at the NJ Department of Education where she created the NJ Teacher Advisory Panel to bring teacher voice to policy making. Before her current role, she served as Strategic Partnerships Specialist at Stockton University where her responsibilities included all field placements, implementing innovative partnerships, and overseeing student teaching. Jeanne holds NJ certifications in K-12 social studies and supervision and completed her Ph.D. in Leadership, Policy, and Change in Education with a focus on mentor teacher growth during a co-teaching model of student teaching.

**Danielle Epps, Director of Teacher Education, Admissions, Recruitment and Diversity at Montclair State University**

Danielle Epps works in the Center of Pedagogy at Montclair State University as the Director of Teacher Education, Admissions, Recruitment and Diversity. There, she oversees the admissions recruitment for the teacher education program with a focus on creating diversity and including pipelines and partnerships to increase interest and enrollment. Prior to her role at MSU, Danielle worked in Enrollment Management for various institutions in New Jersey in the greater New York City area and in Southern Florida where she focused on undergraduate and graduate students for over 15 years.

**Margaret Freedson, Associate Professor, Department of Teaching and Learning, Montclair State University**

Dr. Freedson’s scholarly interests focus on bilingualism, literacy development, and instructional practices that improve school outcomes for English language learners, as well as the preparation of teachers to serve bilingual and immigrant students. A former elementary teacher with the Lost Angeles public schools, she has conducted research on educational policy and the classroom experiences of low-income, language minority children in Mexico, Central America and the United States. She teaches graduate and undergraduate classes on early literacy development and instruction, and has provided professional development for teachers and administrators throughout New Jersey and beyond. She is the lead author of the Classroom Assessment of Supports for Emergent Bilingual Acquisition (CASEBA) - an observational rating scale that assesses preschool classroom quality for dual language learners. A native of Reading, Pennsylvania, she received her doctorate in Language and Literacy from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

**Christine Girtain, 2023 NJ State Teacher of the Year; Director of Authentic Science Research at Toms River High School South & Toms River High School North** Christine is the 2022-2023 NJ State Teacher of the Year, a current NJ finalist for the Presidential Awards for Math & Science Teaching, & the 2022 National Association of Biology Teachers Genetics Educator of the Year. She is the Director of Authentic Science Research at Toms River HS North & Toms River HS South located in Toms River, NJ. She has been a science teacher for 28 years teaching Earth Science, Biology & Research. Christine has a BS in Biology from The College of NJ & an MA in Earth Science Instruction & Curriculum from Kean University. Christine has done work with DNA Barcoding & Metabarcoding of insects & soil microbes. Her students are learning to work in a global society across time zones, language barriers, and cultural differences by partnering with Israeli students to look for the prevalence of a bacterium called Wolbachia in insects which blocks the spread of Dengue and Zika by mosquitoes.

**Khary Golden, Executive Director, Camden U** Khary Golden is proud to serve as Executive Director of Camden U, which is a college and career coaching service created to provide working adults with opportunities for college completion and career advancement. Camden U partners with Southern New Hampshire University to provide fast, flexible, and affordable degree completion pathways. Recently, through the innovative support from Trio New College Network and the Camden Education Fund, Camden U spearheaded the Teacher Pathway initiative, which focuses on supporting aspiring educators from the city of Camden. Khary is a lifelong educator and former college access counselor, and he has now dedicated his efforts to addressing the teacher shortage crisis in the city of Camden and beyond.

**Sumi Hagiwara, Acting Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, College of Education and Human Services, Montclair State University**

Dr. Hagiwara is an Acting Associate Dean and Associate Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Montclair State University. Her research includes computer science/STEM education, teacher preparation and culturally responsive, equity-oriented pedagogy. She is Principal Investigator for a Computer Science for All grant from the NJDOE and co-PI for an NSF The Research Experiences for Teachers (**RET**) in Engineering and Computer Science program. Her work has been published in the *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, *International Journal of Science Education*, and *Education and Urban Society*.

**Mila M. Jasey, New Jersey Assemblywoman**

Assemblywoman Mila M. Jasey, who was first elected in 2007, is a Deputy Speaker currently serving her seventh term representing 14 towns in Essex & Morris Counties.  She is Chair of the Higher Education Committee, Vice-Chair of Education, Co-Chair of the Joint Committee on the Public Schools, and a member of Aging & Senior Services. She previously served as Vice-Chair and member of the Housing & Community Development Committee, where she was lead sponsor of more than one half dozen measures protecting tenants, homeowners facing foreclosure and a landmark Land Banking Bill, all signed into law. Prior to joining the Assembly, Ms. Jasey was a Member of the South Orange/Maplewood Board of Education for three terms, including two years as President.  She also served as a member of the PTA and HSA for many years, including President for two years. Assemblywoman Jasey received her B.A. from Barnard College, Columbia University, and her master’s degree from Pace University School of Nursing.

**Rhena Jasey-Goodman, Induction Coordinator, Montclair State University** Rhena Jasey-Goodman is the Induction Coordinator for the Montclair State University New Teacher Induction Program: Retaining and Sustaining Teachers. Before joining Montclair State University, Rhena worked for the NYC Department of Education as an Instructional Coach, and as the Director of Measures of Student Learning Policy and Implementation for NYC supporting schools with implementing New York’s Teacher Evaluation system. She was a founding teacher at The Equity Project Charter School in NYC, and taught in the South Orange/Maplewood, NJ School District. Rhena earned her BA in Psychology from Harvard, holds an MA in Elementary / Early Childhood Education and an MEd in Educational Leadership from Columbia University.

**Heather Kugelmass, Senior Research Associate at the Center for Research and Evaluation on Education and Human Services (CREEHS)**

Dr. Heather Kugelmass is a Senior Research Associate at the Center for Research and Evaluation on Education and Human Services (CREEHS) at Montclair State University. She is a sociologist of education who oversees several evaluations of teacher preparation programs.

**Douglas B. Larkin, Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Montclair State University**

Prior to entering higher education, Dr. Larkin was a physics and chemistry teacher in the Hamilton Township and Trenton School districts in New Jersey, as well as in Kenya and Papua New Guinea with the U.S. Peace Corps. His research concerns the preparation of science teachers for culturally diverse classrooms, issues of equity and justice in teacher education, and science teacher recruitment, preparation, and retention. His most recent book, “Teaching Science in Diverse Classrooms: Real Science for Real Students,” was published by Routledge in 2020. He is currently the principal investigator on two National Science Foundation Noyce grants: Studying the Retention of Novice Science Teachers by Learning from School District Induction and Mentoring Programs and The Secondary STEM Teacher Education Scholarship Program.

**Roger León, Superintendent, Newark Board of Education**

Roger León is the 21st Superintendent of Newark’s schools, the first Superintendent elected by a locally controlled board of education after more than two decades of state operation, and the first Latino to serve as the Chief Education Officer of the largest school district in the state of New Jersey. Superintendent León was born in the city of Newark, grew up in the city of Newark, remains a proud product of the Newark Board of Education, and dedicated over 30 years of service to the children in the Newark Public Schools, and still lives in Newark today.

**Delia Maloy Furer, Teacher, Montclair Public Schools - Glenfield Middle School**

After 21 years, Delia Maloy Furer continues to serve Montclair Public Schools in a variety of contexts. She develops courses for and teaches in Glenfield Middle School’s STEAM program, operates the Glenfield Planetarium, is the Science Subject Matter Leader in her school, and coaches a Science Olympiad team. She spends her ample free time as a student in the Teacher Education and Teacher Development (TETD) doctoral program at Montclair State University, as a fellow in the Wipro Science Education Fellowship, and as a presenter at various educational conventions. She also has an almost 12-year-old daughter, a husband, two cats, 3 snakes, and a box turtle.

**Theresa Maughan, 2022 NJ State Teacher of the Year & Teacher in the East Orange School District** Theresa Maughan, the 2022 NJ State Teacher of the year, has been a NJ educator for 41 years, and currently teaches high school social studies at East Orange STEM Academy. Maughan earned a BA in history and education from Rutgers University, an MA in administration and supervision from NJCU, and is completing her capstone for the MA in American history from Gettysburg University. Maughan is a curriculum writer for EO, and has presented on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Culturally Relevant Teaching for the Harrison School District, NJEA Early Career and Pre-Service, New Jersey School Boards Association, ETS, Seton Hall University Kappa Delta Pi, William Paterson University, and the 2022 NJEA Convention. Maughan was appointed to the New Jersey Department of Education Diverse and Learner-Ready Teachers Initiative committee, and the State Professional Learning Committee. Maughan is a member of the Morris County Human Relations Commission, the Board of Trustees for the NJ Tutoring Corps, and currently serves as an NEA Foundation Advisor. Theresa is also the recipient of the 2023 NEA Foundation Horace Mann Award for Teaching Excellence.

**Tahina Perez, Executive Director, Teach For America-New Jersey**Tahina Perez is the Executive Director of Teach For America New Jersey (TFANJ) and has dedicated her career to creating more equitable systems for all children across New Jersey. Tahina has worked for TFANJ for over ten years and has worked in the education sector for over 20. After teaching for seven years at Peshine Avenue School and Bronx Lighthouse Charter School, she became an Academic Dean at Achievement First charter school in Brooklyn. Tahina received her Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Emory University, and her Master of Public Administration from Metropolitan College of New York. She is also the mother to four young boys and they keep her grounded daily in what matters most.

**Bree Picower, Professor, Montclair State University** Dr. Bree Picower is a Professor at Montclair State University and the Co-Director of the Transformative Education Network.

**Catherine Michener, Associate Professor, Rowan University**

Dr. Catherine Michener holds a PhD in Curriculum & Instruction from the Lynch School of Education, Boston College, an MAT in TESL from Salem State University, and a BA in International Development from the University of Calgary. She researches language and literacy development in schools and classrooms where cultural and linguistic plurality are the norm. She is interested in how social contexts promote students’ language, literacy, and conceptual development, and how teachers are trained to shape these contexts. Currently, she examines instructional discourse and its effects on student reading comprehension, the influence of language policy on instruction, and the training of teachers to work effectively with dual language learners. She aims to further our understanding of bilingualism and biliteracy, culturally sustaining pedagogies, the support of language minoritized students in schools undergoing demographic shifts, and studying these areas by developing a robust mixed methodology that encompasses both proximal and distal variables at work in language and literacy learning. Her research interests are informed by her work as a bilingual and English language specialist in K12 and tertiary settings in Massachusetts, Taiwan, and Canada.

**Nellie Pou, New Jersey State Senator**

Senator Pou represents the 35th legislative district was elected to the Senate in 2011 and re-elected in 2013, 2017 and 2021. Senator Pou is Chair of the Senate Commerce Committee, Vice-Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee and Chairwoman of the New Jersey Legislative Latino Caucus. Senator Pou worked for the City of Paterson for over three decades, including as business administrator and has served in many leadership positions throughout her years of service to our community.

**Timothy Purnell, New Jersey School Boards Association and Montclair State University Adjunct Professor**

A former alumnus of Montclair, Dr. Timothy Purnell has been an adjunct professor at Montclair State University since 2002. Dr. Purnell is an innovative leader, strategic planner, and inspiring educator. He is an internationally recognized presenter and keynote speaker; speaking at global events in settings both grand and intimate. Throughout his career, Dr. Purnell has received numerous honors and awards. He was one of just 100 educators selected to attend President Obama’s ConnectED Initiative at the White House, selected as a NASS National Superintendent of the Year, appointed as the Highest Rated Professor in the Nation, received a Spirit of Somerset County Award, was honored as a Many Are One recipient, and received a Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation School Leadership Award (for studying education in Italy). Dr. Purnell specializes in mental health, ethics, critical leadership, strategic planning, board governance, crisis management, executive searches, and building a movement (#getoffyourisland). In addition to designing the curriculum and teaching Mental Health, he also served as the legal chair of the New Jersey State Board of Examiners and teaches doctoral students ethics and critical leadership.

**Jennifer Robinson, Executive Director of the Center of Pedagogy at Montclair State University**

Dr. Jennifer J. Robinson is Professor of Teaching and Learning and the Executive Director of the Center of Pedagogy at Montclair State University. She has been Principal Investigator of more than $14 million in externally funded grants to prepare and renew beginning and experienced educators for school districts across New Jersey. Her research and practice focus on recruiting and retaining teachers of color, urban education, and developing and sustaining school/university partnerships.

**Argine Safari, Acting Supervisor of World Language, ESL, Music, and FACS at Pascack Valley Regional High School District, Montvale, NJ**

Argine Safari is a music educator who currently serves as a Supervisor of World Language, FACS, ESL, and Music at Pascack Valley Regional High School District. Argine is active as a speaker, presenter, clinician, and performer, having appeared in major concert halls including Carnegie Hall, NJPAC, and MSG.  An educational consultant at the NJ DOE during her year of recognition as the NJ State Teacher of the Year, Argine helped develop the Title I Arts Integration grants program and initiated the first arts education-focused ECET2 conference in Princeton, sponsored by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. From January-July 2019, Argine conducted research, and presented seminars and masterclasses at Universities in Finland, France, and Germany, as Fulbright Distinguished Teacher. Argine was featured in Dr. Bilha Fish’s book Invincible Women: Conversations with 21 Inspiring and Successful American Immigrants, and is currently a Ph.D. candidate at Walden University, conducting research on innovative and culturally-responsive teaching.

**Andy Saunders, VP, Early Talent for Teach For America** Andy graduated from East Carolina University in 2012 with a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice with a concentration in Alcohol and Drug Studies. Upon graduation Andy served as a patrol and Crisis Intervention officer in Wilson North Carolina alongside New Blue Co-Founder, Brittany Nestor. During his service, Andy spent a large portion of his time supporting police-led youth programs and the local school district. After witnessing the school to prison pipeline firsthand, Andy refocused his leadership on k-12 classrooms. He went on to teach low income students of color with special needs as a Teach For America Corps Member. Today, Andy leads a portion of Teach For America’s national team where he is responsible for recruiting and placing more than 100 diverse college graduates as teachers in low income communities across the nation. Andy is a former elected member of a local Board of Education and holds a Master of Public Administration from Rutgers University.

**Ryan Saunders, Deputy Director of State Policy at the Learning Policy Institute**

Ryan Saunders serves as Deputy Director of State Policy at the Learning Policy Institute. He is also a member of the Educator Quality team and supports the work of the [Teacher Licensure Collaborative](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/node/5070) and the [Educator Preparation Laboratory (EdPrepLab)](https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/node/5064).  Before joining LPI, Saunders worked at the Council of Chief State School Officers, supporting educator preparation policy at the state level through the Network for Transforming Educator Preparation. Earlier in his career, Saunders taught high school social studies and literature in Turkey, the Dominican Republic, and Denver, CO.

**Sarah Sherman, New Jersey State Teacher of the Year, Burlington County**

Sarah Sherman is an English Teacher at Rancocas Valley Regional High School in the Rancocas Valley Regional High School District. Sarah graduated from the University of Virginia with a master’s degree in English before attending the George Washington University to pursue another master’s degree in in Secondary English Education. In her 10 years of teaching, Sarah has been active in several initiatives to support marginalized students across different socioeconomic backgrounds. Starting with her work at Leadership, Education, And Partnership (LEAP) Academy in Camden, and continuing throughout her seven years at Rancocas Valley (RV) Regional High School, Sarah has made validating student voices an integral part of her pedagogy. Her founding of the RV Black Student Union has created a model for other south Jersey high schools that seek to develop their own groups to support and celebrate students of color. A self-described “newspaper geek,” Sarah is also passionate about journalism and advises RV’s student-run newspaper, which continues to grow through her efforts. Teaching writing is what Sarah enjoys most, and her experience as an expository writing instructor at Rutgers University continues to guide her work in the classroom and with college-bound students.

**Troy Singleton, New Jersey State Senator**

Senator Singleton was elected to the Senate in November 2017. He earned a bachelor’s degree in business administration and finance from Rowan University in 2005.

**Sean Spiller, NJEA President and Montclair Mayor**

Sean M. Spiller, a high school science teacher in the Wayne public schools, is president of the New Jersey Education Association. Spiller was elected NJEA president in 2021. Spiller’s focus as a leader, throughout his service for NJEA, has been on helping members become more involved at the community level in confronting the intersection of challenges that affect public education and school employees, students, and their families.

**Richard Tomko, Superintendent, Belleville Board of Education**Dr. Richard Tomko has 24 years of experience in educational administration. He has been a building principal at the middle and secondary levels and responsible for district-wide curriculum, assessment, innovative program initiatives, technology, and professional development as an Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction. He’s earned a Ph.D. in Ph.D. Educational Leadership, Management, and Policy from Seton Hall University; an M.B.A. Johns Hopkins University; and a Master of Jurisprudence from Loyola University of Chicago School of Law. Dr. Tomko sits on numerous Boards and Commissions throughout the state, and he was recently honored as a recipient of the New Jersey Governor’s Jefferson Award, 2018. He was also recognized by the United States Department of Defense with its’ Patriot Award, an honor that reflects the efforts he made in support of citizen warriors and the members of their families.  He is an adjunct professor and has been awarded the Essex County Superintendent of the Year – 2020. He also has served on the 2023 Governor's Taskforce on Teacher Shortages.

**Nick Toth, NJDOL Deputy Assistant Commissioner**

Nicholas Toth currently serves in the Governor Murphy Administration as the Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Workforce Development. Prior to this role, Nicholas served as the first State Director for the New Jersey Office of Apprenticeship, where he has overseen development and implementation of the NJ Apprenticeship Network. Nicholas previously served in the Obama Administration as the Special Assistant to the United States Secretary of Labor, and held Policy Advisor role in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy at the United States Department of Labor.

**Brandon Umba, New Jersey Assemblyman**

Assemblyman Umba was sworn in as an assemblyman in January 2022. He currently sits on the Assembly Education Committee. Umba is the business administrator for Manchester Township in Ocean County, after previously serving as administrator

in West Deptford from 2014 to 2015 and Lumberton Township from 2015 to 2021. He earned a bachelor’s degree in political science from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. While earning his degree, he completed internships in Washington working for Republican U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo and in Dublin, Ireland working for Michael D. Higgins – then a member-of-parliament and now president of Ireland.

**Mayida Zaal, Associate Professor, Department of Teaching and Learning, Montclair State University**

Dr. Zaal serves as Co-Director for the Red Hawks Rising Teacher Academy, a grow-your-own partnership with the Newark Board of Education and the American Federation of Teachers. Informed by her extensive experience as a math and science middle school teacher and curriculum developer in the U.S. and internationally, Dr. Zaal’s research is grounded in community and centers youth, teachers, and families. Dr. Zaal engages decolonizing pedagogies and research methods including critical participatory action research. Her current research aims to identify factors that help recruit and retain racially and ethnically diverse teachers in the profession, especially those from marginalized communities. She is the founder of a critical participatory action research collective – Reclaiming ME: Muslim Educators. The collective is conducting the first national study of Muslim American teachers in K-12 schools. Dr. Zaal is the recipient of many honors including awards from the National Science Foundation (NSF), the Ford Foundation, and the American Association of University Women (AAUW). She serves on the editorial board of the Bank Street Occasional Paper Series. Dr. Zaal earned her B.A. from Rutgers University in Biological Sciences and Spanish, her M.S. in Educational Leadership from Bank Street College of Education, and her Ph.D. in Urban Education from the City University of New York.