

NEW JERSEY EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

NOVEMBER 2015  
NJEA.ORG

# REVIEW

*an education resource*

## TEACHER LEADER LAW

STRENGTHENS THE  
PROFESSION, SCHOOLS

WHO IS BEHIND  
FRIEDRICHS v. CTA?

PARENTS AND  
SOCIAL MEDIA

## TEACHER OF THE YEAR

CHELSEA COLLINS

7 QUESTIONS  
EVERY NEW ESP  
SHOULD ASK

## FEATURES



**18**  
**A RECIPE FOR READING**  
*Salem County educator Chelsea Collins is the 2015-16 New Jersey Teacher of the Year*  
BY LISA A. GALLEY



**22**  
**WHO IS BEHIND THE FRIEDRICHS V. CTA CASE?**  
*A handful of powerful organizations are supporting the plaintiffs in Friedrichs v. CTA hoping to weaken unions by eliminating Fair Share*  
BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



**26**  
**SEVEN QUESTIONS EVERY NEW ESP SHOULD ASK**  
*How can educational support professionals make a difference with students and increase their job security?*  
BY HEATHER SORGE



**30**  
**DIGITAL DIALOGUES**  
*Educators and students in Hillsborough hold a parent night about social media*  
BY ANGELA CLEVELAND

## COLUMNS

**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE 7**  
*Advocating for all who work for a living*

**THE ADVOCATE 11**  
*Know. Lead. Act.*

**THE BULLETIN BOARD 13**  
*Cool stuff to check out*

**THE NJEA REPORT 14**  
*Education in the news*

**HEALTH AND SAFETY 32**  
*Safeguarding custodians promotes school safety and health*  
BY ADRIENNE MARKOWITZ AND EILEEN SENN

**EVALUATION 35**  
*Evaluation, professional development and the collective good*  
BY MIKE RITZIUS

**SPEAK OUT 37**  
*Special education's existential threat; A plea for empathetic collaboration*

**THE TOOLBOX 41**  
*Podcasts expand classroom walls*  
BY JEFF BRADBURY

**PROUD MOMENTS 43**  
*Locals show their PRIDE*

**CLASSROOM CLOSE-UP, NJ 45**  
*Highlights of NJEA's Emmy-award winning show*

**SUSSEX TO CAPE MAY 46**  
*Workshops, field trips, grants, and more*

**RETIRED MEMBERS 50**  
*News and events*

**MEMBER BENEFITS 53**  
*Get your money's worth*

**STAFF NEWS 55**  
*Promotions and recognition*

**COMING UP 56**  
*What's next at NJEA*

**FINAL EXAM 58**  
*Teacher leader law an important step toward taking back the profession*

**17**  
**TEACHER LEADER LAW STRENGTHENS THE PROFESSION, SCHOOLS**



**ON THE COVER:**  
*2015-16 Teacher of the Year, Chelsea Collins*  
PHOTO BY KATHRYN COULIBALY



# DIGITAL DIALOGUES: COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA

BY ANGELA CLEVELAND

“You can wipe away the tears but not the posts.”

“Stone Age to Media Age: moms and pops drowning in an ocean of apps.”

“It’s all about keeping your eyes open to the benefits and risks of social media.”

*These are just a few of the insightful headlines that families wrote to summarize what they learned at “Digital Dialogues: A Parent’s Guide to Social Media,” an event held in our district last fall. Looking at the audience of over 200 community and family members who came out that night, it was clear that the emphasis on understanding social media and our digital footprints resonated with all who attended. Based on the success of the program, it might come as a surprise to learn that the event was held to combat a significant problem in the community.*

## WHY WAS A PARENT NIGHT ON SOCIAL MEDIA NECESSARY?

As part of our effort to meet the requirements of New Jersey’s “Anti-Bullying Bill of Rights Act,” the district’s anti-bullying specialists and the School Safety and Climate Team meet routinely to review harassment, intimidation, and bullying (HIB) incidents to identify patterns or trends and develop ways to address the concerns. We also create strategies to establish and maintain a positive school climate.

In March 2014, Anna Mahler, counselor and the anti-bullying specialist at the grade 7-8 school, and I, a counselor and the anti-bullying specialist at the grade 5-6 school, were engaged in such a discussion. We determined that many HIB incidents involved some element of social media, and that we found ourselves repeatedly in a position of explaining to parents the most popular apps students are using. Anna and I began to talk about how to educate families

about social media.

At the same time, Beth Moran, high school counselor and PRIDE advisor, and I were working on a collaborative digital citizenship project in which the peer leaders from a high school group called PRIDE (Peers Respecting Individual Difference Everyday) visit fifth graders to discuss how to use social media responsibly. It wasn’t long before Anna, Beth and I were working together to harness the power of students, community members and data to inform families. With the rapid evolution of technology, many school districts struggle to balance embracing new technologies and keeping the community informed of the benefits and dangers of social media. In Hillsborough Township, we’ve learned that the ultimate goal is to empower parents with knowledge rather than to frighten them.

## PLANNING THE EVENING

We agreed to discuss the problem as a group, inviting key stakeholders such as administrators, technology integration specialists, the district technology director, parents, and other community members. The group decided that the most effective and efficient way to address the issue was to host one of the district’s Parent Technology Nights and feature an informational presentation by the middle school and high student PRIDE students.

The students were asked to create a customized Google presentations identifying the most popular apps that Hillsborough students are using. But we didn’t want audience members to simply be passive recipients of information. There needed to be a way to engage families fully and have them reflect on their own values and beliefs surrounding social media. That’s when we decided to model the evening’s agenda after an already established and successful program.

Anna also advises another peer group known as the Student Leadership Corps (SLC) at the middle school. SLC has facilitated an annual evening parent program on drug and alcohol awareness for the past 15 years. The format of this Family Night consists of several key elements, including an opening skit performed by the students in which information about alcohol and other drugs is presented in an entertaining but informative way. Following the skit, participants are divided into mixed parent/student break-out groups to discuss alcohol and drug use among youth in the community. This dialogue is facilitated by pairs of SLC students and is really the highlight of the evening. Finally, all the break-out groups reunite for a wrap up discussion with each group creating a “headline” to summarize the essence of their dialogue. Because it is a familiar layout for the students, staff and parents, we decided this format would work perfectly for the Digital Dialogues event.

## HOSTING THE EVENT

Beth’s high school PRIDE students created a list of 13 social media applications (apps) to be presented to attendees. It included some commonly known apps, such as Facebook, Instagram and

Twitter, along with lesser known ones, such as Vine, Oovoo and Kik. The students divided themselves into smaller groups that were responsible for researching facts about the app and creating a one-page Google Presentation slide to explain the purpose and use of each app. During the preparation of the program, Yik Yak became a source of cyberbullying in the district, so Yik Yak was added to the presentation. One benefit of having students prepare this part of the program is they can customize it to include the apps that are popular among their peers in the community. Let's face it — they know which apps are hot before the adults do.

The actual Digital Dialogues event was predominantly run by high school and middle school PRIDE students, with the exception of an introduction and a wrap up from the district's director of technology. Following the app presentation, parents were divided into small groups in which PRIDE members facilitated a discussion. First they asked some specific prepared questions, but then they let the conversation focus on what was most important to the parents in each group. The questions included:

- What's the hardest part about being a parent in the digital age?
- What's the best part?
- How easy do you think it is for kids to make poor decisions online because they haven't considered or were unaware of the consequences?
- What makes you think that?

Each small group created a "headline" to encapsulate their discussions. Shared technology was used to capture the headlines in one Google Form. When the audience came back together, students presented the headlines. In order for the audience to choose its favorite headline, Poll Everywhere (an SMS text polling program that allows participants to respond to a poll and see results in real time) was used as parents voted on their cell phones. Prizes were awarded to the members of the small group whose headline received the most votes.

## LESSONS LEARNED

One unexpected yet positive aspect of the Digital Dialogues program was how much everyone involved — from students to adults — utilized technology to collaborate and gather information. A shared Google folder made the planning process transparent and collaborative, and we could see the progress made on presentations and other chores. A Google Form was available for registration, and Google Sheets sorted respondents into small groups. Also, the demographics of the attendees were readily available, and we could see

that families of children in all grade levels were fairly evenly represented.

Poll Everywhere was used to collect pre- and post-program data so we could determine if Digital Dialogues had a positive impact. Polls assessed participants' knowledge of apps, their comfort with social media, how regularly they spoke with their children about the responsible use of social media, and more.

Another key to success was the participation of the students in planning and presenting the program. While Hillsborough has a very active PRIDE group, every district can identify a club or group that could assist on a project like Digital Dialogues. The students benefitted from their involvement as well. According to PRIDE student Sheryl Jacobs, who spearheaded the student presentation, "Digital Dialogues was a rewarding experience, as the parents were very responsive to the presentation that we put together. It felt nice to know I led our club to educate members of the community."

Junior Michael DeLorenzo noted, "The parents became active in the small-group discussion and by the end of the night had the confidence to talk to their child about the dangers of social media."

One of the benefits of having gone through this process is that it is easy to replicate for future events. With the assistance of the students, it is easy to keep the program current, which is critical with regard to social media. The foundation has been laid for future collaborative efforts with staff members, community members, families and the most important stakeholders: our students. 🏠

*Angela Cleveland is a school counselor/anti-bullying specialist at Auten Road Intermediate School in Hillsborough Township. Contact her at [acleveland@https.us](mailto:acleveland@https.us).*

With the rapid evolution of technology, many school districts struggle to balance embracing new technologies and keeping the community informed of the benefits and dangers of social media.

