



# EBEA NEWSLETTER

East Brunswick Education Association

Volume 35, Issue 8

United in Excellence

June 2014

Countdown to ...



**Catherine Adriance**

Lisa Balogh

**Martin Bordak**

**Barbara Brochstein**

**Maria Buffolino**

Laura Burmeister

**Carol Carattini**

**Anna Cenzano**

Linda Chordock

**Dee Contreras**

Ursula Cozzolino

**Thomas Cregge**

Ruth Davitt

**Thomas Doerr**

**Jane Dougherty**

**Irene Duryea**

Thomas Dzierdzicki

**Paulette Fallon**

**Kathleen Hassan**

Nancy Holman

Robert Horn

**Rebecca Hossler**

**Deborah Krauss**

Joyce Lentz

**Jane Look**

**Arthur McAnney**

**Suzanne Naturale**

Shirley Neary

**Barbara Pagano**

**Regina Paganucci**

Gail Rizkalla

Linda Ronchi

**Linda Scalco**

**Anne Schademann**

**Cynthia Scribner**

Nancy Shapiro

**Mala Simon**

Colleen Singer

**Kiron Sinha**

**Elaine Swoboda**

**Joseph Timko**

**Harriet Trenholm**

Joanne Whalen

**Paula Yannazzo**

**Michael Zielinski**

Bolded names appeared in May Issue

## SPECIAL RETIREMENT ISSUE

### From the Desk of the President

This is my 78<sup>th</sup> *-and final message-* from my desk as the President of the East Brunswick Education Association. I have used this space to inform you about many pressing issues facing public school employees and to rally you to action on behalf of public education, national, state and local school board elections, PAC endorsements for friends of public education, a governor's "toolkit" (inclusive of property tax reform, salary caps, vouchers and charter schools) school budgets with diminished state aid, Public Law 2011 Chapter 78 (pension and benefit legislation), TEACHNJ and AchieveNJ (tenure reform for certificated staff, a new teacher evaluation system with SGOs and SGPs to measure students' success), common core curriculum standards and PARCC testing, the corporate reform movement to privatize public education, and now the Governor's decision to forgo \$2.4 billion in state pension payments over the next two years were and are just SOME of the challenges we've encountered. You have never failed to answer the call to take action. So, thank you to all of our members for making your voices heard through visits to legislative offices, campaigning, phoning, rallying and emailing/postal mailings each time you were asked to do so.

The privilege in serving as your president has enabled me to meet, speak and work closely with so many wonderful people. I am grateful for the opportunities to work with individuals whose tireless advocacy serves a vital link to our membership. Therefore, I must say thank you to the members of our - Representative Council, our District Wide and Elementary School Councils, our Faculty Councils, our Grievance Committee and our Health/Member Benefits Committee for being attentive to our members' working conditions, professional needs and personal needs about membership programs. I want to also acknowledge the work of the Chairs of these committees as well those who chair our Government Relations, Membership, Together for Success, Nominations/Elections, Scholarship, Social Affairs Committees and our Newsletter Editor. Your organization – whether it was through memos, planning agendas or events, scheduling meetings or preparing building assignments, providing legislative updates, maintaining accurate records, or preparing our monthly newsletter editions – was always appreciated.

Thank you to our Survey Question, our Contract Proposal and our Bargaining Council Committees - your involvement was critical in eventually producing a proposal for each round of negotiations. And who can forget the work of the Action Team? Thank you for your innovative ideas and activities that helped the bargaining team finally settle the contract! And, of course, a great big thank you to the EBEA Negotiations Team. Memories of countless hours spent together, those all night sessions, salary guide and health benefits analysis, heated discussions and eventually reaching a tentative agreement for our membership will leave me with images that will last forever!

Finally, to the Executive Committee, you have never failed to impress me with your leadership, integrity, energy and dedication. Thank you for your collaborative efforts in ensuring the continued strength and unity within our Association.

Although the next chapter of my life begins on July 1, 2014, I often think about a special memory from my past. My teaching career began in 1975 in Somerset County. Wanting to shorten my commute, I applied for a position nearer to home. I was hired as a 7th grade reading teacher at Hammarskjold Junior HS in 1977. It was there that I learned from the best – my EBEA colleagues! They taught me, guided me, helped me, encouraged me, inspired me and eventually prepared me for the honor of a lifetime serving as the president of a wonderful organization!

With heartfelt thanks,

*Ruth Davitt*

# Congratulations

## RETIREES OF 2014

In appreciation for your lifelong dedication to education...  
 for believing in children, for guiding through example,  
 for inspiring with passion, for living through loving,  
 for leaving an indelible mark on the future,  
 for touching the human soul...  
 You have made all the difference.

~ Anonymous ~

### **Lisa Balogh, Guidance Secretary**

It is without a doubt that Lisa Balogh is one of the most caring, genuine, positive, and hardworking people in East Brunswick High School. She started her 25 year career as a substitute security aide, and the following year, she began her 12 year tenure as a one-to-one student aide working in the classroom. In 1996, Lisa began working with her partner in crime, Shirley Neary, as a secretary in the Guidance Office. Lisa has taken on many roles in our department over the years, but one thing that has stayed consistent, is her vibrant, welcoming smile that all new counselors see the first time they meet her. She takes the time to get to know all of the counselors personally so they feel comfortable working with her. We soon learn that Lisa's caring personality has a much greater scope than just welcoming new counselors. Each and every person who walks into the counseling office encounters the same positive regard, whether it is a teacher, administrator, or, most importantly, a student. Lisa's desk becomes the first stop for many emotional students (often crying, shaking, or extremely angry). She warmly talks about anything to help calm them down at that moment. Many of the students are so comfortable with Lisa that they come to visit our office just to engage in small talk with her. Lisa's work has certainly helped all of the counselors in our office beyond that of the responsibilities of her position.

When we learned that Lisa will be retiring at the end of this school year, we were all stunned, and although happy for her, we are sad for us. We are sad because we are losing our beloved Lisa, our colleague, our friend, and our "Mama Bear."



### **Laura Burmeister, Bowne Munro Special Education Teacher**

Laura began her career in the district in October 1990 at Chittick Elementary School. Eventually she transferred to Lawrence Brook and there she remained through June 2011. She then moved to Bowne Munro in September 2011 where she now ends her successful career.

Laura taught 2nd, 3rd and 5th grade resource room and ICS classes during her tenure at Bowne. Her colleagues remember Laura as one who was never shy about asking questions or asking for input from

colleagues. She was very appreciative of the advice she received and as a veteran, she would share her experiences and knowledge with others. Besides her advocacy for her special needs students, Laura is a long-time enthusiastic animal activist. Much of her time was devoted to animal rescue and awareness. Her own dogs are trained to be used for pet therapy for the many visits they together would make to nursing homes. Of course, teacher first, her students loved listening to her stories of pet therapy as she and her pets enriched the lives of so many!



We wish you the best in retirement. May your years ahead bring you joy and relaxation!

### **Linda Chordock and Gail Rizkalla, Central Teachers**

Linda Chordock and Gail Rizkalla have been a team for more than 15 years. Collectively, they have graced the halls of Central School for 64 years. Therefore, it is almost impossible to talk about one without the other.

Whether it be down in the fourth grade pod guiding instruction, attending evening concerts, plays, and PTA sponsored events, or helping to plan social events for staff, you name it they've done it! So it's not surprising that you'd even find "the blondes" as they are often referred to, sitting together at the middle table in the EBEA office attending rep council meetings.



Gail and Linda both admit they will miss the daily interactions with their students and colleagues. However, they are looking forward to spending quality time with their family and friends and pursuing some of the many hobbies that have taken a back seat over the years.

What started out to be a professional relationship has grown into a lasting friendship. Therefore, it is only fitting that they have chosen to retire at the same time. Our very best to you both in retirement!

### **Ursula Cozzolino, EBHS Secretary**

Ursula has been employed in the East Brunswick district for the past 25 years. During this time, she has developed an outstanding rapport with teachers, support staff, administrators and students. Ursula is professional, conscientious, trustworthy and reliable. She is a kind person to all she meets and always smiling. Her peers respect her for her confidentiality when discussing sensitive issues.

Ursula started her career in the ISS room (in-school-suspension) as a ten month clerical resource aide at EBHS helping with the scheduling of students and teachers for ISS. Ursula also was in charge of the library in the ISS room for the students and worked in the Attendance Office after the ISS room as a ten month clerical resource aide.

In 1994, Ursula was hired as a twelve month secretary in the Main Office at EBHS. Answering phones, assisting students, staff and parents, processing working papers for students, doing state reports, making student ID's and preparing students honor roll certificates and graduation lists were just some of Ursula's duties and responsibilities. She truly helped the Main Office run smoothly.

Ursula is a team player who works well with everyone. As an active EBEA leader, she served as an EBHS building representative. Both support staff and certificated staff respected Ursula's confidentiality, and efforts in helping them with their concerns.

In retirement Ursula will travel and spend time with her family; especially her six "grand-blessings." Ursula is going to be missed by all.



### **Tom Dzedziak, CJHS Math Teacher**

"Mr. Dzedziak" started his career at Hammarskjold Junior High School in 1974 as a 9th grade algebra teacher. This mathematician also spent his early years advising the Student Council. How lucky were the students who attended the semi-formals – it was because of Mr. Dzedziak that the legendary Jersey Shore Band – THE NERDS- performed at two of these dances!

Tom transferred to Churchill during the district's reorganization of Hammarskjold Middle School and Churchill Junior High School. During his tenure at Churchill, he was known as the math department's father figure, mentor, and buddy. He has inspired, motivated, and positively influenced his "harem" each and every day! He has become a wonderful friend to all of us and we will miss him tremendously.

Tom was Churchill's Teacher of the Year in 2011. Most recently, he was the lone employee who was recognized for achieving 40 years of service to the district. Of course, he wasn't shy when he reminded the



audience that since he was a product of the East Brunswick Public Schools (K-12), technically he spent 53 years in the district!!!

Tom's colleagues at Churchill witnessed his advocacy for all in his building. He served as a building representative for 15 years. All reps. who attended monthly Rep. Council meetings knew the back row - 4th seat was Tom's reserved spot! He knew the importance of collective bargaining especially during critical times of unsettled contracts. He had no qualms about serving on the Action Team in support of the Negotiations Team for many bargaining cycles. Eventually, he was asked to join the Negotiations Team and became one of the eleven who bargained the last 4 contracts for the membership. He was the "numbers" man on the team whose strength was scattergram and salary guide analysis.

Additionally, Tom worked as his Together for Success Building Captain and served on the District Recognition Committee. Regardless of the many hats he wore during his employment in the district, he was always respected by his students, colleagues, the administration and Board members. Recently, he was unexpectedly asked to address education majors at Rider College. The audience knew a master teacher stood before them as they applauded him for his service, his stories about his career and his advice to those entering the teaching profession.

In retirement, Tom is looking forward to spending more time with his family, especially his grandsons. It's no surprise that he will continue to serve as a volunteer at his church and a volunteer firefighter for the East Brunswick Independent Fire Company. Just look behind the wheel of Engine 806 - Tom might be the driver!



### ***Nancy Holman, Central Child Nutrition***



Nancy, congratulations on your retirement! We salute you for your many years of service at Central School.

You have dedicated many years ensuring that a variety of nutritious, healthy meals were always provided. Your pleasant personality will be missed by both the children and staff which you cared so deeply for.

Your long, anticipated retirement has finally given you an opportunity to relax and spend quality time with your grandchild. Continue to enjoy your favorite hobbies, such as, quilting and singing in the choir.

We wish you rewards and challenges of retirement and the beginning of a whole, new life.

### ***Robert Horn, Admin. Transportation Driver***

Bob Horn has worked for the East Brunswick Board of Ed for 16 years in the Transportation Department. Bob is a devoted husband. Always the consummate straight man, he has a wry sense of humor. His warm heart and generous nature surpass his dependability and skill set.

Bob is well liked by students and coworkers. He works hard every day and never seems to complain, does his job and does it well. Always wearing a smile, he genuinely cares about his students and colleagues.

Bob's coworkers in the Transportation Department wish him all the best in retirement. We'll miss you, Bob!

### ***Joyce Lentz, EBHS Social Studies Teacher***

Joyce Ann Lentz, social studies teacher at EBHS, is known by many people; but many people do not know how a North Carolina native landed in the East Brunswick School District. Joyce came to East Brunswick in 1973 as an intern from the Duke Masters Program and taught eighth grade US History in Churchill. During this internship, Joyce was mentored by Gerry Maier and through him met her best friend Barbara Maier.

At the end of her internship, Joyce remained teaching World History as Barbara's replacement during her maternity leave in 1974. In 1975, Joyce found herself in quite a predicament because no history positions were available. Yet Joyce was certified to teach not only history, but English as well and taught English that year.

Joyce taught ninth grade history from 1976-1990 and then she decided to make a move to the high school where she taught World and US II. She also was one of the founding teachers of the Unified Studies program. Shortly thereafter, she moved to AP US History with Jim Haney and has remained a staple in this program for nearly two decades. Another program Joyce assisted is the nationally recognized IPLE program. She gave up her plan periods frequently to help the students plan for their competitions, resulting in four national



championships. She also spent dozens of weekends throughout the region on overnight trips with students. The IPLE team, Model Congress and Model UN activities have taken her chaperoning to Washington DC, New York City, Boston, Baltimore, and Philadelphia to name a few destinations. Joyce has taken an active role in other student activities. Joyce was a yearbook advisor at Churchill and has been a Class Advisor, National Honor Society Advisor, and an observer to the Young Democrats.

Joyce has been a key part of the EBEA, serving as secretary of the Association, chairperson of District Wide Council, Survey Committee, Constitution Review Committee, and other crucial roles. Most impressive is Joyce's membership on the Negotiations Team for 10 rounds of bargaining. Joyce acts as unofficial historian of the association because she brings such a wealth of knowledge and historical information about how we came to earn what we have.

In retirement, Joyce plans to enjoy the Silver Needle Cross Stitch shop in Tulsa, Oklahoma, travel to Arizona to visit family, and revisit Europe to immerse herself in the history and culture that she has taught so many students for so many years. The East Brunswick district will feel emptier without her. However, the idea of not having to bring boxes of papers home to grade or worrying if her egg timer is working for presentations sure sounds good for Joyce. We wish her all the best in a retirement filled among good friends and good times with a diet coke and wedge of lemon or even a quality Manhattan!

### ***Shirley Neary, EBHS Guidance Secretary***



What will we do without The General?? Getting to work before the sun, Shirley ensures that the Counseling Office is in "tip top" shape for the start of each day. The backbone of the Counseling Department, she keeps the counselors to their schedules and manages the steady flow of students and staff through the Counseling Office with ease. Her tell-it-like-it-is-with-a-side-of-sugar approach is beloved, and she strives to put a smile on the face of every person she encounters.

Shirley has devoted her professional life to helping children. She began her career with East Brunswick Public Schools in 1980 as a van driver for students with disabilities. Her wonderful stories of leading the van in daily songs warm the heart and epitomize her positive and loving connection to children. In 1994, Shirley began working in the Attendance Office at the high school. The following year she moved to the Guidance Office and has been with us ever since!

Shirley plans to kick off her retirement with a trip Chicago in July to visit family! She will be spending much more time with her grandchildren, and she vows to make it to the shore more often as well. We will all miss you terribly, Shirley!! Best wishes for happy times and great health in your retirement! <3 All Hail The General!

### ***Linda Ronchi, EBHS Athletics Department Secretary***

Linda Ronchi has worked in our district since 1986 starting out as a Secretary II/category 4. Eventually she was promoted to the position of secretary to the Assistant Principal at East Brunswick High School. Again her competence was recognized as she moved to her present position as the Secretary to the Supervisor of Athletics and Physical Education. It was here that she found her niche. Anyone calling the Athletic office was greeted by her pleasant and knowledgeable voice – often humorous, sometimes trying to relieve the tension in the caller's voice. Linda worked feverishly to get things done perfectly even for tight deadlines. At the annual Athletic Banquet, the students manifest their appreciation to Ms. Ronchi for all her love and concern for them through their long and loud standing ovation. And let's not forget all the times throughout the school year when Linda was always seen at so many games cheering on the athletes because they were her kids! Linda leaves the district with yet another accolade – she was named as this year's Administrative Assistant of Central Jersey by the Directors of Athletics of NJ!

As a trusted individual, Linda has also been an active EBEA member since 1986. She has served as an executive officer in the title of Director of Support Staff for five years. She chaired the Child Nutrition Action Committee (and at the time the BOE did not privatize the child nutritionists) and most recently chaired the Nominations/Elections Committee. All reps enjoyed her company at the monthly rep. council meetings during her tenure as a building representative. We'd be remiss if we didn't mention her most critical challenge – being part of the Negotiations Team, not once but twice.

We wish you the best in your retirement as you travel and spend time with your family. You and your family have been the cornerstone for EB Athletics – and your efforts will be hard to replace!



### ***Nancy Shapiro, Lawrence Brook Special Education Teacher***

Nancy Shapiro spent most of her East Brunswick teaching career at Warnsdorfer where I had the pleasure of working with her for 15 years. I then followed her to Lawrence Brook and have been working with her for the last two years. Nancy Shapiro is a great resource for regular and special education teachers. She has so many ideas and ways to get a child to unlock the code and be able to read and write. She is also ready to try new things to supplement what she already does. She gets her students excited about learning with her positive attitude and stickers. She pushes them so they can be the best they can be.



She is a wonderful colleague and friend. At Warnsdorfer she would organize "meals on wheels" for a faculty member who was recovering from illness or injury. She is known to knit many baby blankets for all the staff children. She is always there to listen and offer advice.

Nancy's future plans are to spend more time traveling with her husband Marty. She will also be visiting her three daughters and one son, and many grandchildren. She will play with her beloved dogs. Nancy will have more time to play cards with her girlfriends and go to the opera. We wish her well as she enters this new chapter.

### ***Colleen Singer, CJHS Math Teacher***



Colleen always wanted to be a teacher but couldn't do so after college graduation. So she worked in the telephone research industry for 31 years doing Software Engineering instead. But when she could 11 years ago, she retired from industry and became a teacher. She has been a Math teacher in the East Brunswick school system for 10 years, nine at CJHS and her last year at EBHS. She was a teacher for one year previous to that in another school district. Colleen has taught Algebra I, both academic and honors, Algebra II, Geometry, Pre-Calculus and Math Lab. She is known for her friendly ways and good rapport with the students. She has also been known to break into a song or dance for a short while if it will help the students learn. One advantage she had in her last year was to teach quite a few students for the second time. She also ran into many former students in the high school

hallways. It was fun for her to find out how her former students were doing. Colleen was one of the Math teachers that stayed after school every day for extra Math help for the students. She enjoyed this duty immensely since she could have a more one-on-one relationship with the students. She also got to see many former students she wouldn't normally see.

After retirement, Colleen will spend more time with her four children (Renee, Tracee, Jackie and Todd) and three grandsons (Brandon, Tyler and Brady) especially going to their sporting events. She and her husband will become 'snow birds' to Florida during the winter, since she has several members of her family already there. She enjoys travelling and will head for Europe shortly after retiring. She is looking forward to a more relaxing life but still filled with fun activities. Reading, watching movies, and going to the beach are at the top of her list.

### ***Joanne Whalen, Admin. Transportation Driver***

Joanne Whalen was a long time resident of East Brunswick. She worked for the East Brunswick Board of Education Transportation department for 20 years and was liked by her students and coworkers. Joanne always had a smile, a warm sense of humor as well as an infectious laugh. A longtime friend and coworker remembered the first time she met Joanne. "There was an immediate connection. I felt so blessed to have known such a wonderful person. Joanne was more like a sister than a friend. One could always count on her smile that brightened the darkest days. She will forever leave a footprint in the hearts of those who knew her."

Joanne Whalen passed away a few short months after retiring. She is and will be missed, but not forgotten.

**We'll Miss You**





### **Ruth Davitt, EBEA President**

Eleanor Roosevelt once proclaimed, “A woman is like a tea bag – you can’t tell how strong she is until you put her in hot water”. Well, Ruth Davitt certainly tipped her toes in plenty of hot water during the nine years as the EBEA president. Proudly and strongly, Ruth lead the association through some tough times...a governor who devalued education and pensions, a tough economy, the 2% cap on school budgets, a rally of our members during a tough negotiation, a mandate for staff to pay for a portion of healthcare, and a new teacher evaluation system to name a few. Throughout each struggle Ruth presented herself with poise and devoted herself to strengthening the working conditions of Public School Employees in East Brunswick. Ruth has personally impacted so many EBEA members during her tenure as President, whether through maternity leave consultations, evaluation rebuttals, counseling about personal concerns, or dealing with contract issues. She has been a confidante to so many people providing incredible insight and guidance. However, Ruth’s devotion to the EBEA began long before her presidency as the membership chairperson. She also co-chaired the action team with Ronnie Cerrito and was instrumental in helping the negotiations team achieve a fair settlement. Ruth has always been passionate about improving the working environment of educational professionals.

Being a successful President was not her only role. Thirty-seven years ago Ruth began her career teaching Reading at Hammarskjold Junior High School. In 1980 she became the Reading Specialist at Frost Elementary School. She left teaching for a few years to raise her children, her pride and joy, Danny and Kelly. She then returned once again to Frost before being transferred to Hammarskjold Middle School where she taught Basic Skills ILA for 28 years. The sixth grade students loved their Mrs. Davitt. Her corky sense of humor was appreciated by her sixth grade students, and she used her humor to create a nurturing learning environment and a love for learning. Ruth had a magic about her which enabled her students to become better readers and better citizens. Her 6th grade students, in a sense, became like her own children. When a person visited Mrs. Davitt’s Basic Skills classroom, he/she could be guaranteed to be greeted in the most polite way with a choral response from her kids...those kids knew manners! Mrs. Davitt wouldn’t have it any other way.

Ruth also had a wild side to her! If you knew Ruth, you knew she was always the life of the party! She was the ultimate party planner with outrageous ideas that made people laugh for days! You may remember some of the most outrageous...sausages in her brazier, song parodies that would entertain the crowd and keep the folks laughing, and her famous act-it-outs where she would dress up in full costume!

The word retirement means “the act ending his/her working or professional career.” Officially Ruth will retire from East Brunswick on June 30, 2014 but without a doubt her professional career will still continue. You will find Ruth working in the EBEA office advising the new President, helping with scattergrams, perhaps advising or even working for NJEA, and at the MCREA (Middlesex County Retired Educators Association) meetings as she has eagerly accepted her new role as recording secretary. Ruth’s leadership will continue to impact many as she officially ends her professional career as an educator and union leader. She will be fondly remembered as a wise, honest, devoted, and passionate woman who as Eleanor Roosevelt put it “has become stronger” with each new endeavor she faced. We, the members of the EBEA, wish Ruth endless good fortune, everlasting love, loyal friendships, and continual good health in her retirement. As Ruth has always said, “When one door

closes, another door opens.” May this new passageway be wondrous as you relax, garden, make your famous pierogi, and enjoy the “easy life” with your husband, Big Dan!



*As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them.*

*~John F. Kennedy~*

# CHEERS AND TEARS

## Congratulations to:

**Andrew Steinfeld**, Frost PE teacher, on his marriage (in May)

**Jamie Birckholt**, Frost teacher, on her marriage (in May)

**Sheri Grondski**, EBHS PE teacher, on her marriage (in May)

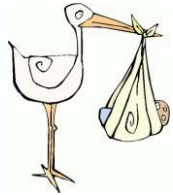
**Catherine Congiusta**, Admin. secretary, on the birth of her grandson Connor Michael (in May)

**Matthew McCarthy**, EBHS art teacher, on the birth of his twins, Stella and Thomas (in May)

**Jean Louis**, Admin. Transportation driver, on the birth of his granddaughter, Aria (in May)

**Mary O'Mara**, HMS music teacher on the birth of daughter, Bryn Regan (in June)

**Carmela Crosby**, HMS English teacher, on the birth of her grandson, Anthony Vincent (in June)



## Condolences to:

The family of **Helene Prysak**, retiree, on her death (in May)

**Jean Martin**, EBHS school aide, on the death of her mother (in June)

## Get Well Wishes to:

**Katherine Becker-Pandit**, HMS social worker

**Marcus Borden**, EBHS teacher

**Elizabeth Caracciolo**, Lawrence Brook Aide

**Nicole Panzarella**, EBHS math teacher

**Laurie Smith**, Admin. vehicle driver

**Jill Ventrice**, Elementary teacher



## Congratulations on their Retirements!

"East Brunswick Administrators"

**Mary Mackenzie**, Supervisor World Language/ESL/Bilingual

**Pamela Mayo**, Principal Memorial School

**Frank Noppenberger**, Supervisor of Athletics/P.E.

### THE EBEA NEWSLETTER

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EAST BRUNSWICK EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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