

# PROMISING FUTURES

A PUBLICATION FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION DECISION-MAKERS IN NEW JERSEY



## PARTNERSHIPS

Do you know that many ASAH schools also offer consultation services directly to districts to support students with disabilities in local schools?

Many of our members provide evaluation, consultation, curriculum design, inclusion supports, staff training and development and so much more. These partnerships bring recognized experts into the local school to help build capacity, allowing more students to return to – or stay in – their home district.

## ASAH 2023 LEGACY OF CARING AWARD

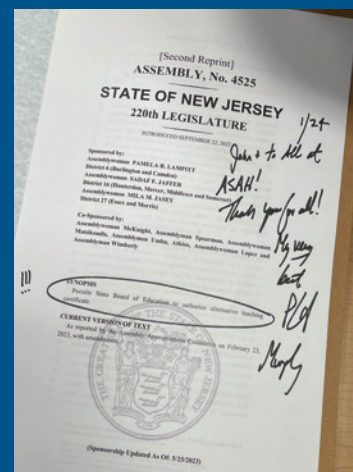


Congratulations to **Carolyn Hayer, Executive Director of SPAN Parent Advocacy Network**, who was selected for ASAH's 2023 Legacy of Caring Award. She is pictured above with Brian Detlefsen, left, ASAH Board President, and ASAH Executive Director, John J. Mulholland, Jr., Esq.

## LEGISLATIVE VICTORY WILL HELP EASE TEACHER SHORTAGE

Governor Phil Murphy penned a special note thanking ASAH for their role in supporting A-4525. The law allows teacher candidates who meet all criteria for a certificate of eligibility to teach, other than the minimum testing thresholds in the Praxis Core, to receive an alternative certificate of eligibility. The teacher shortage is especially critical in special education, so with support from Senator Jim Beach, the bill was amended in committee to specifically include state-approved specialized schools like ASAH member schools.

"A year ago, ASAH presented our report to the Governor with recommendations to address staff shortages. Today, we are celebrating the signing of a bill that implements one of those recommendations," said John J. Mulholland, Jr., Esq. "It is a great example of how collaboration can help to advance a shared agenda."



**Assemblyman William Moen (D-5)**, Deputy Majority Leader, met with John J. Mulholland, Jr., Esq., ASAH Executive Director, in advance of the lame duck legislative session.





## OVER-REGULATION IS STRANGLING NEW JERSEY'S SAFETY NET FOR SERVING MOST COMPLEX SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

Just as federal pandemic money is coming to an end, the pressure on teachers and local public schools has never been greater. At the same time, bureaucrats in Trenton are systematically making it harder for experienced state-approved specialized schools to serve children with complex disabilities, medical conditions, and severe mental health and behavioral challenges.

ASAH schools are an important part of New Jersey's special education system, and a vital safety net for local school districts. Through the IEP process, Child Study Teams refer about 10,000 disabled students each year to state-approved specialized schools (APSSDs) after determining that the child's needs are greater than what they can provide locally. These referrals are now coming at an unprecedented rate. Many of our schools are full – not because they do not have classrooms, but because they cannot hire enough qualified teachers and therapists.

Over-regulation is strangling our schools' ability to offer necessary and expert behavioral services and therapies. Antiquated salary caps and restrictive rules have made it harder to hire, train, and retain qualified, credentialed staff. Even hourly rates for outside vendors, and contracted service providers like physicians, psychiatrists, psychologists, and behavior specialists are capped at impossibly low levels.

For years, ASAH has been sharing its concerns with the DOE. In recent meetings, DOE officials seemed sympathetic, and promised that the revised regulations would have modest changes, some of which might be beneficial. Instead, without warning, the Department proposed a new set of regulations – 72 pages, with more than 200 changes – which are now before the State Board of Education. They reflect a gross lack of understanding of best practice and the level of expertise needed to provide effective special education services. There is even a proposed rule to limit spending on behavior modification for students with autism and other behavioral disabilities. That amount is capped at eleven cents a day.

Our children are worth more than that.

We need leaders in Trenton to do more for our most vulnerable children, and to allow local school districts to easily partner with the private schools they have come to trust.

If these rules are adopted, some schools WILL close. We are not crying wolf. In fact, since 2009-2010 school year, the number of state-approved specialized schools in New Jersey has fallen by nearly 22%. Where will all those children go? What will happen to local classrooms?

With each referral to an ASAH school, districts are asking for help. We are here, with the skills, the staff, and expertise. Leaders at ASAH schools want to remain in partnership with our colleagues in local districts, helping them to serve the most difficult, complex students.

Now, all we need is for Trenton bureaucrats to let districts make the choices, and let us do our job.

*“ASAH schools are an important part of New Jersey's special education system, and a vital safety net for local school districts.”*

John J. Mulholland, Jr., Esq.  
Executive Director





**Congressman Josh Gottheimer** visited ECLC of New Jersey's Ho-Ho-Kus campus for a special back-to-school welcoming ceremony. L-R: Vicki Lindorff (ECLC), Congressman Gottheimer.

**Assemblywoman Carol Murphy** (D-7) was the recipient of ASA-H's 2023 Legislator of the Year Award for her leadership in special education.



**Livingston Mayor Michael Vieira** and **Town Manager Barry Lewis** joined leaders from Spectrum 360 to present a proclamation officially designating December 4, 2023 as "Spectrum360 Day" in honor of the school's 60 years of dedicated service. L-R: Barry Lewis (Town Manager), Ken Berger (S360), Mayor Michael Vieira, Dr. Danielle Taylor, (S360) Megan Maguire (S360).



**Senator Andrew Zwicker** (D-16) visited Midland School in Branchburg to talk with leaders about the challenges of operating a private special education school in New Jersey. L-R: Kayleigh Lavornia (16th Legislative District staff), Kristen Massimo (Midland), Senator Andrew Zwicker, Shawn McNerney (Midland), and Sandy LoPiccolo (Parent/Board member).

## CONGRATULATIONS ASA-H 2023 AWARD WINNERS

- **Amy McCarthy**, Archbishop Damiano School - ASA-H Educator of the Year.
- **Edna Mason**, Harbor School - ASA-H Paraprofessional of the Year.
- **Katherine O'Neill**, New Road School of Somerset - ASA-H Related Services Provider of the Year.



**Amy McCarthy**



**Edna Mason**



**Katherine O'Neill**

Westbridge Academy is celebrating its 50th Anniversary serving students with emotional, behavioral and learning challenges in grades K-12. Ahead of the school's Gala Anniversary event, **Congressman Bill Pascrell, Jr.** drafted a Special Letter of Congressional Recognition, which was hand-delivered to the school offices by a member of the Congressman's staff.





Lexington Square, 2125 Route 33  
Hamilton Square, NJ 08690

Visit our website  
at [www.asah.org](http://www.asah.org)

## ABOUT ASAH

ASAH is a not-for-profit organization of 130 schools and agencies in New Jersey that partner with public schools to provide highly specialized services to more than 10,000 students with severe and complex disabilities whose needs cannot be met locally.

Founded in 1974, ASAH works closely with state leaders to develop policy, promote effective educational practices, and foster productive collaborations between private schools, public school districts, and communities so that the needs of students with significant disabilities are met.



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(609) 890-1400 // [info@asah.org](mailto:info@asah.org) // [www.asah.org](http://www.asah.org)