At ASAH member schools, partnerships with foundations and donors open the doors to new opportunities for students with complex needs.

One such partnership is happening at North Jersey Elks Developmental Disabilities Agency (NJEDDA) in Clifton. Since 2004, the UPS Foundation has been helping to purchase equipment for the school’s Assistive Technology Lab.

Over the years, the school has been able to purchase Mimio systems, iPads, laptops, and even a Smartboard on wheels. Last year with the Foundation’s generous donation of a portable Tobii eye gaze system with a laptop, Communicator 5 software and games, NJEDDA was able to create a unique training system for its students. The system allows a student to have access to the latest eye-gaze technology to assist with the development of augmentative communication abilities, visual tracking, attention, and perception.

The system converts text and symbols into speech and gives a student computer access. This system uses eye tracking technology which is used to control a computer with eyes in place of a keyboard or mouse.

“This high-level technology empowers those with physical disabilities to enhance their everyday lives and improve their overall ability to lead an independent life, said Dr. William Weiss, the school’s executive director.

Tony Harley began training on the eye gaze system about a year ago. When he began attending NJEDDA, he was unable to attend to therapy situations and keep his head up for learning purposes. His therapy team – physical, speech and occupational therapists - worked hard to improve his ability to be a candidate to utilize a speech-generating device. Using this technology, Tony is now able to learn numbers, spelling skills and participate in conversations by using his eyes to gaze at icons on a grid to answer questions.

“Support from the UPS Foundation has allowed us to achieve our mission and improve outcomes for our students.”

— Dr. William Weiss, NJEDDA Exec. Director
From the Executive Director

Independence and Full Participation...
...That is the Goal!

At each of ASAH’s 135 member schools, educators strive to ensure that students have access to the learning and technology that will allow them to fully participate in school, their homes, their communities, and in life. Our schools provide intensive supports now, so that students can maximize their independence and be less reliant on others later.

For some students, that means intensive therapeutic supports and counseling to overcome social and emotional challenges. For other students, it means access to technology and medical supports to address mobility limitations. For still others, it means access to researched-based behavioral interventions and cutting-edge teaching strategies to address behavioral or brain-based learning disabilities. Whatever a student needs in order to be a fully engaged and participate in the world – that is what our schools work to deliver.

Full participation may seem like a lofty goal, but with the help of community partners, it is happening. Our schools partner with employers, local public schools, community responders, corporate leaders and donors to deliver life-changing special education services.

We are proud of students like Tony, whose success we profile in this issue. We are equally proud of the long-term connections to the supporters and foundations that share our vision for our students.

It is these partnerships that help our students reach for the American dream of independence and full participation.

Gerry Thiers
ASAH Executive Director

ASAH Schools By The Numbers

1883  The year in which New Jersey’s oldest private special education school – The Bancroft School, was founded in Camden County.

135   The number of ASAH-member schools in 2019.

13    The number of founding schools who started ASAH.

11,387 The number of students with disabilities who are placed in state-approved private schools in New Jersey according to Private School Review.

45    The number of years ASAH has been representing and leading the private special education community in New Jersey.

92%   The percentage of graduates from private special education schools who report some form of community engagement after graduation.

News From Trenton

A new bill has been introduced in Trenton (S 1569 and A 1335) that would require middle and high school students in New Jersey to receive instruction in the political, economic and social contributions of people with disabilities.

The bill also requires schools to teach about contributions of those who are gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender. The bill is modeled after a 2012 law passed by the state of California, the Fair, Accurate, Inclusive and Respectful Education (FAIR) Act.
2018 ASAH Award Winners

ASAH Humanitarian of the Year Award is presented to Mary Bentley LaMar, founder and Executive Director of the Sickle Cell Association of New Jersey (left) by Ebony Lattimer, principal of Titusville Academy.

ASAH President’s Award is presented to Vincent Renda, Executive Director of Hawkswood School (left), by Dr. Steven Morse, ASAH President and Superintendent of Garfield Park Academy.

ASAH Legacy of Caring Award is presented to Dr. Dorothy Fauver (left) by Gracanne H. Ryan of HollyDELL School.

Not pictured: Assemblywoman Pamela R. Lampitt (D-6) has been named ASAH’s 2018 Legislator of the Year, but was unable to attend the awards ceremony at the 41st Annual Conference held in Atlantic City.

Award Finalists

**Educator of the Year**
- Sally Curci – Academy360 Upper School
- Rebecca Mercurio – Rock Brook School
- Karis Alongi – Lakeview School

**Related Services Provider of the Year**
- Donna Cataliotti – NJEDDA
- Karen Staats-Bald – Chapel Hill Academy
- JoAnn Sabo – St. John of God Community Services-Archbishop Damiano School

**Paraprofessional of the Year**
- Matthew Clerk – Westbridge Academy
- Michele Shooter – Chapel Hill Academy
- Armanda Rodrigues – Garfield Park Academy

Did You Know...?

For many students who have experienced bullying and harassment in other school settings, ASAH member schools offer a safe haven. New research suggests that incidents of bullying and other harassment targeting kids with disabilities vary depending on what sort of special needs a child has. A study looking at the experiences of 791 young people ages 10 to 20 across the country found that those with learning disabilities were more likely to experience in-person harassment, while those with physical disabilities were more often victimized online.
Statehouse Connections

Essex County Freeholder Leonard Luciano joins leaders at Westbridge Academy, where he talked about the value of the school’s mission.

Leaders at ECLC of New Jersey celebrated the opening of Sorriso Kitchen at its Chatham campus, with (left to right) Kellie Doucette; Rep. Mikie Sherrill’s District Director; Chatham Borough Council members Carolyn Dempsey, Jocelyn Mathiasen, Victoria Fife, and Thaddeus Kobylarz; and Chatham Mayor, Bruce Harris.

Monmouth County Freeholders Pat Iripreveduto and Gerry Scharfenberger (back row, left) join Holmdel High School athletes, LADACIN Executive Director, Patricia Carlesimo, and Denise, a former client and employee at LADACIN Network’s Schroth School carnival.

Senator Vin Gopal met with LADACIN Network Executive Director, Patricia Carlesimo.

Assemblywoman Mila Jasey, (D-27), joined Dr. Bruce Ettinger, Executive Director of Spectrum360 at the 2019 Alliance Conference in Morristown, NJ. Assemblywoman Jasey was the keynote speaker at the event, which drew more than 300 guests.