



The  
**South Bergen  
 Jointure Commission**  
*Quarterly*



[www.njsbjc.org](http://www.njsbjc.org)



@wearethesbjc



The mission of the South Bergen Jointure Commission is to unlock the potential of every student. As a leading educational provider, we will focus on the development of each student's social, emotional, and academic needs. By fostering an environment that is supportive and challenging, we will empower students to maximize their independence and potential in becoming fulfilled and productive members of their community.



*Students, staff, and SBJC friends celebrate the ribbon cutting of our new Ed Center at our October 5 Dedication Ceremony.*

## FROM THE DESK OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

For 30 years the South Bergen Jointure Commission has been providing special education services to the students of southern Bergen County. And for the past 5 years the SBJC has been working to redefine what exactly that means. The commitment this district has to becoming an exemplar model for special education has transformed SBJC into an incredible place for students to grow and learn. What sets this district apart is our ability to recognize our own potential in providing great services—services that will unlock the potential of every student.

As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the SBJC being established, we look toward the future with excitement. Always at the forefront of our vision is enhancing the lives of our students—how they'll develop academically and socially, and how they'll thrive post-scholastically. In alignment with our vision and strategic plan, we are thrilled to introduce a new building dedicated to our 18-21

program. This facility has become a crucial part of our reimagining of the impact we can have in cultivating citizenship and in working toward the independence of the individuals we serve. It is a prime location full of local businesses, with exciting opportunities to build new community partnerships. The purchase of this new facility has allowed us to refocus our energies on ensuring that our students exit our program with the skills required to take care of their essential life needs, to secure gainful employment, and to find happiness.

At the SBJC, we are not just shaping education, we are creating a world that has no barriers for our students. We'll continue to push the needle forward and redefine what the exemplar model of education means, ensuring a greater future for all of our students.

# Welcome to the Ed Weihenmayer Center



“Today is a meaningful day in SBJC history,” said Dr. Michael D. Kuchar, Superintendent, South Bergen Jointure Commission at the October 5th Dedication Ceremony. “Dedicating our newest academic building to Ed Weihenmayer, a man who has contributed so much to our students through his No Barriers’ mindset, is one more step toward honoring his vision. Within this building, we will continue to carry out his legacy with every student who walks through these doors.”

The Ed Center will soon be a new training center for SBJC’s Students Transitioning to Adult Responsibilities program (STARs), designed for students aged 18-21 who have completed high school and are transitioning to adulthood and the workforce. The program blends daily living skills with community-based employment

experiences, fostering students’ independence as they embark on their journey to the next phase of their life. With the Amazon Distribution center as our next door neighbor, Teterboro Airport across the street, multiple businesses and schools nearby, and Teterboro Landing Shopping Mall on the opposite side of Route 46, this new location is perfectly situated to create new learning experiences that can be personalized for all of our students.

**About Ed Weihenmayer**  
Ed Weihenmayer championed the creation of an inclusive world where barriers do not stand in the way of possibilities. While many might be more familiar with his son, Erik (the first blind person to climb Mount Everest), it was Ed’s support that propelled his son to achieve his hopes and dreams. Ed’s passion for



## Students Put in Work on New Building

If you visited our new Ed Center in the past few months, you might have seen students in our STARs program spackling, painting, landscaping, and completing maintenance work around the building. Since September, our 18-21 year olds have played a pivotal role in preparing the facility for future use, gaining hands-on experience while working under the supervision of job coaches as well as experts in the field. Contractor John Wroblewski shared and demonstrated his knowledge with our students, from showing them how to prepare a space for painting to operating a carpet cleaner. This opportunity not only allowed our students to contribute to the construction of this new building, but also equipped them with valuable skills that can transfer into the workplace.

the No Barriers philosophy was instrumental in shaping the direction of SBJC. Having championed the idea that “What’s within you is stronger than what’s in your way,” Ed worked closely with our school district in exploring ways to unlock the potential of every student. His vision inspired the SBJC strategic plan and his commitment to the No Barriers’ principles is

evident in our programming. As a devoted family man, he understood the importance of empowering children with exceptional needs. At the ceremony, his son Erik spoke about how his biggest mentor was his father: “Every one of us needs an ‘Ed’ in our lives—someone to push us, fight for us, open doors for us, and understand we have great potential.”

### Quarter 1 Review



#### Fall Family Night

Students from all campuses showcased their creativity with pumpkin painting while participating in some fantastic fall-themed games.



#### MS/HS Halloween Dance

Hosted by Rutherford Elks Lodge #547, our Lodi Campus enjoyed a great night of food and dancing at this year’s Halloween party.



#### Maywood Campus Students Visit Liberty Science Center

Students experienced hands-on exhibits and interactive programs catering to diverse learning styles, fostering curiosity and an interest in science.



# Unlocking Real-World Skills through Community-Based Instruction (CBI)

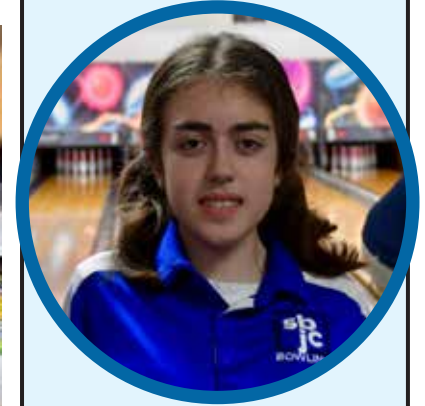


Community-Based Instruction (CBI) harnesses the power of the community as a dynamic learning environment, allowing for the generalization of skills that promote positive post-school outcomes for our students. CBI acts as a bridge, supporting the transition from school to adult life, offering our children authentic opportunities to practice and develop skills that will help them beyond

the classroom walls. One great example of this is our SBJC Maywood Campus's strong community partnership with the Maywood Public Library located across the street. During CBI trips to the library, students delve into practical life skills broken down into incremental steps: from crossing the street safely to interacting with community members, from selecting books to using their library card. It's more

than taking a walk—it's a lesson in independence and a chance to build confidence in our learners. With this community partnership, Maywood Library has since received a grant to establish a weekly Inclusion Hour, using the funding for the purchase of new sensory materials that can now be found in their children's room.

## Meet Brenna



**About Brenna:** Brenna is a 12th grade student at our SBJC Lodi Campus. She is currently SBJC's only three-sport High School athlete, competing in Cross Country, Bowling, and Track & Field. She's participated in every sport since our athletics programs were established in the fall of 2021.

**Favorite Class:** "Art because I love doing projects."

**Future plans:** "To attend the 18-21 program and work."

**Favorite thing about the SBJC:** "All of the friends I've made!"

## Professional Development: Team Training

With 60 classrooms across the county and five different educational programs offered, the SBJC has been working to implement a professional development model to fit the many needs of our district. It was through a year of discussions that a framework for ongoing professional development emerged.

The SBJC Behavioral Health Department—made up of behaviorists, behavior specialists, and counselors—met regularly last school year to identify the skills needed for all of our staff to grow professionally and excel. It became increasingly apparent that a guide already existed that laid the foundation for knowledge of Applied Behavior Analysis: the Registered Behavior Technician (RBT) task list.

Leading this department and this initiative is SBJC Clinical Director Scott Rossig, former principal of our Lodi Campus. "This Team Model Approach allows us to achieve two things," says Rossig. "It allows for a student-centered focus, honing in professional development specific to those



students' needs. And it allows for staff to receive ongoing training and frequent feedback in order to continuously improve."

Using the 40-hour RBT Training (based upon the RBT task list) as the focal point for professional development, the SBJC has designed a Team Model Approach to provide individualized training for each one of our classrooms. Behaviorists lead classroom teams and individuals through instruction, modeling, rehearsal, and feedback on areas that promote proactivity; they review skills that are critical to the daily work of our paraprofessionals. Our paraprofessionals, who make up more than half of our total

personnel, are essential to our students' education. Through the use of this Team Model Approach, our paraprofessionals receive ongoing training on key ABA skills specific to their students' needs; they work towards achieving certification in being a Registered Behavior Technician; and they receive invaluable feedback and support from behaviorists and teachers. Our teachers are the experts in academic instruction, and they too benefit from continuous feedback provided by behaviorists. This collaborative environment empowers every staff member to actively monitor their progress throughout the year via a "Behavioral Skills Checklist" that was designed by our Behavioral Health Department. We are embracing a growth mindset that is essential for professional development.

The ultimate goal of this approach is to elevate the quality of education we provide. By making this shift to a Team Approach Model, the SBJC is creating a comprehensive and targeted framework that ensures all staff are well-prepared.



*Pictured above: A Lodi Campus yoga class in session, led by teacher Kellie Weiss.*

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

# Yoga & Mindfulness

Integrating regular yoga and mindfulness instruction into our programming for the past three years has yielded substantial benefits for our SBJC students. The practice of yoga promotes physical well-being, enhancing flexibility and coordination, while mindfulness exercises contribute to emotional regulation and stress reduction. As part of our No Barriers initiative, Lyzzette Grassi and Kellie Weiss provide instruction throughout the entire district, individualizing the practice for each student. For students facing challenges with their executive functioning, these teachings offer a non-intrusive approach to improving focus, attention, and self-awareness. Yoga and mindfulness also foster a sense of community and acceptance, promoting social skills and communication among students.

## —Upcoming Events—

January 15

### MLK, Jr. Day

SBJC Campuses Closed

January 17

### Parent Committee Meeting

Visit our district website for link to access the meeting.

7:00-8:00PM

VIRTUAL



February 16-19

### Winter Recess

SBJC Campuses Closed

Date to be determined, April 2024

### Parent Information Night

We will keep you updated on the 2024 SBJC Parent Information Night, our spring event for families to learn all about great local opportunities to support our students.



The South Bergen Jointure Commission is a public special education school district with locations spread throughout northern New Jersey. With 350+ students and an average class size of six, the SBJC prepares students with extraordinary abilities to live productive, independent, and meaningful lives.

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#### SBJC Superintendent

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