

# Journal

of the South Bergen Jointure Commission

## We are the SBJC

A public school district serving 350+ students with special needs throughout Bergen and neighboring counties.



## Find us on Social Media

Visit [fb.me/wearethesbjc](https://fb.me/wearethesbjc) to like us on Facebook! Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) for regular updates of all the happenings occurring throughout the SBJC: @wearetheSBJC.



## Empowering every child to live independent lives

**Dr. Michael D. Kuchar** • *Superintendent of Schools*

What an exciting time to be part of the South Bergen Jointure Commission. We are certainly a district on the move with a laser-like focus to empower each and every child to live independent and successful lives. Though this is a very ambitious goal, the SBJC has partnered with Felician University and No Barriers USA to help make our vision a reality. We opened our new school year convocation with Erik Weihenmayer, co-founder of No Barriers USA and the first blind person to climb Mount Everest. Erik challenged our teachers and staff to see the art of possibilities and to always remember, “**What’s within you is stronger than what’s in your way.**”

To this end, we know that this goal of least restrictive environment cannot happen without you. The SBJC leadership team is currently planning a Parent Academy that we will be introducing in March. We will be notifying you of dates by February 28th. Your participation is essential for us to be successful. On the following page, I have listed a number of initiatives that we have implemented since my arrival in July 2018. It is our sincere desire to add a worthwhile and supportive Parent Academy to that list. Feel free to contact me with suggestions, questions, or concerns at [mkuchar@njsbjc.org](mailto:mkuchar@njsbjc.org) or 201-393-0475, ext. 236.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Kuchar



Mark your calendar and join us for our first annual **SBJC No Barriers Day** to be held on **June 2, 2020** at Overpeck County Park. SBJC with No Barriers USA, Felician University, and Bergen County Parks have collaborated to hold the first known Summit for special needs children in Bergen County.

**Upcoming Events.** Refer to the District Calendar on our website for up-to-date information.

**2/17/2020-2/21/20:** Winter Recess  
**2/26/2020:** Board Meeting, 9:30AM, at the SBJC Board Office  
**3/2/2020:** Read Across America Day  
**3/13/2020:** School Closed for Students  
**3/25/2020:** Board Meeting, 9:30AM, at the SBJC Board Office

**SBJC's Strategic Plan Objectives.** The district's Middle States Accreditation Planning Team analyzed the results of parent and staff surveys and used the data to identify these four key areas:

Our **Least Restrictive Environment** Objective will be the driving force behind our entire district vision, with our goal being to develop a formalized system that ensures the federal mandate of Least Restrictive Environment is being best achieved.

The South Bergen Jointure Commission will implement a strategic system of **Professional Development**. This objective will focus on all aspects of professional development, from hiring staff, to training new staff, to using data to drive professional developing offerings.

We will be improving our **Communication** processes, defining the district's internal and external audiences and putting strategies into place that will enhance the two-way process of giving and receiving information.

Our district's mission is to unlock the potential of every student. The SBJC's **Functional Independent Living Skills** objective will look at improving programming for Social/Emotional Skills, Functional Communication Skills, Community-Based Living Skills, and Independent Living Skills

# Initiatives and Achievements



SBJC partners with **No Barriers USA**, a non-profit organization founded by **Erik Weihenmayer** (pictured above), the first blind person to climb Mount Everest. Our partnership includes: Weihenmayer charges up SBJC staff at 2019 New School Year Convocation; Faculty and staff receive training on No Barriers Life Elements and Mindset; SBJC leadership team goes on two-day No Barriers retreat to define district vision; SBJC and No Barriers collaborate in the organization of a No Barriers Day.

SBJC has been accepted as **Candidate Institution for Middle States Accreditation**. With a MSA visit in the works for Fall 2020, the SBJC will establish a mission, core values, and profile of a graduate with input from all groups of stakeholders. SBJC will also establish its first-ever district strategic plan, guided by the district vision: establishing a formalized system that best ensures the federal mandate of Least Restrictive environment is being achieved.

Creation of a **District Evaluation Advisory Committee** to create stronger connection and line of communication across the district in terms of: improving staff evaluation system and process; using evaluation data to guide professional development offerings; and using district professional development goals to guide development of individual PDPs.

SBJC partners with **Felician University's International Center for Autism and Disabilities Research & Education**. In 2018-19, John Burke of Felician University led district-wide professional development in using ABA/PRT strategies. In 2019-20, SBJC opens three classrooms at Felician University to accommodate for growing preschool program, and SBJC and Felician form a Veteran Mentorship Program between our students and Felician veteran students.

**Rutgers Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center** evaluates the educational programming of all three main SBJC campuses, providing the district with data to use for strategic planning and improvement.

With our **Mindfulness Initiative**, in 2018-19 we introduced our district to Yoga/Meditation Programs through an outside service. This current school year, the SBJC hired a teacher to develop and implement a district Yoga and Mindfulness Course (pictured below).



**Four parent workshops** were held last school year for SBJC parents in partnership with **POAC**. Thank you Primetime Parent, Lauren Bergner, for organizing these wonderful events. Keep posted for Spring 2020 Parent workshops.

District expands **CPI Instructor Training** to teachers and paraprofessionals

SBJC co-sponsors **2019 Bergen County Transition Fair**, providing information on transitioning students with all levels of disabilities into the next phase of their life.

The district increases **accessibility to safety equipment** throughout district for the safety of both students and staff.

Lodi Campus increases **Community Based Instruction** to two days a week to boost student access to the community.



First-ever district **pet therapy visits** (pictured above) occur at our three SBJC campuses.

SBJC develops a model for paraprofessional supervision in order to evaluate our largest group of staff.

District and the **leadership team** are now utilizing Twitter and Instagram to share the successes of our students with the community. Follow us!

SBJC students place third in **South Bergen County Bridge Building Competition**.

District names its first-ever Valedictorian, **Richard Conti**, who attended the 2019 County Luncheon with his parents, Superintendent and Principal.

SBJC receives **two grants** for Lodi Campus Garden promoting sustainability and preserving the earth's natural resources.

Dr. Marlene Zakierski of Russell Sage College evaluates our **literacy program**.

**Little Ferry School District** joins the Jointure Commission as 15th member.

## Winter Health Precautions from the Nurse's Office

Laura Sgalia RN, CSN

Nurse, Prime Time East Rutherford Campus

Here are some precautions to take this season for yourself and your child(ren):

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid close contact with those who are already sick.
- Get plenty of sleep, exercise and manage stress.
- Eat healthy foods and drink plenty of fluids.
- Cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing with a tissue or the crook of arm.
- Get a flu shot - it's not too late to be protected!

## Rebecca Holland SBJC Alumni Spotlight

Reji George

Supervisor of Outreach

Rebecca Holland is a recent graduate from the South Bergen Jointure Commission and has made a smooth transition from her educational setting to the workforce in her local community. Rebecca attended the SBJC for eighteen years and graduated from the Lodi MS/HS in 2018. Since then Rebecca has maintained an active social life and stays engaged with her hobbies. When asked what has she been up to since graduation, Rebecca responded: "I enjoy doing many things with my family and friends. I really like technology, video games, and I spend time walking my dogs."

Rebecca is employed at the ShopRite of Lyndhurst three days a week with responsibilities including bagging and customer support. In addition to her hobbies and working life, Rebecca maintains membership at the Elks Club in Wayne and attends different events at the Rutherford Civic Club. She enjoys these community events that have increased her role in the participation of planned activities. I asked Rebecca, "What do you remember most about the South Bergen Jointure Commission?" She stated, "I loved all of my teachers and especially the job training program. It gave me the confidence to meet people in the public."

Special thanks to Rebecca Holland, Mike Holland, and ShopRite of Lyndhurst for participating in our Alumni Spotlight.

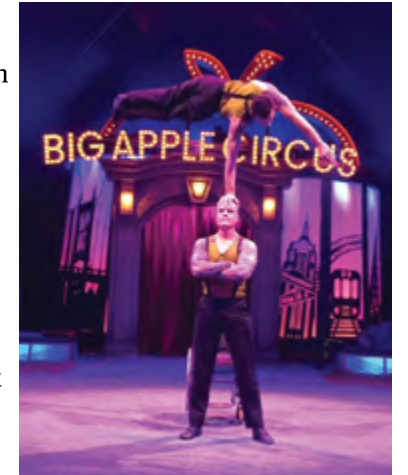


## Maywood Campus Students Attend Big Apple Circus

Sean Voorhis

Teacher, Maywood Campus

Six classes of the Maywood Campus Autism department attended the Big Apple Circus in New York City. This performance was developed specifically to be an Autism-friendly sensory event. The staff from the Big Apple Circus were not only helpful but extremely patient, kind, and accommodating to our students. They provided a sensory area for individuals that needed a break during the show as well as modified their performance to suit the audience needs.



## Introduction to the SBJC Curriculum

Ashley Vaughan

Director of Curriculum and Assessment

At SBJC, ensuring that our students receive instruction which reflects their individual needs and challenges them appropriately is of utmost importance. By combining IEP-driven instruction with exposure to the content and skills outlined in the state's academic standards, SBJC students are provided with a comprehensive educational experience focused on increasing their academic success and overall independence.

Outlining the use of both grade-level and intervention resources, the SBJC has developed and offers curricula in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, Technology, Comprehensive Health/Physical Education, and Visual/Performing Arts. Additionally, SBJC also implements a district-developed Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) curriculum that is utilized across all grade levels.

## Seasonal Tips from Outreach

Brynn Baumann

Occupational Therapist

- With the colder weather here, try using mittens rather than gloves. Gloves can be difficult and frustrating when putting them on, and mittens can help avoid this frustration.
- As school breaks occur, help prepare your child by creating visual schedules and lists to ease the changes in routine.



# Journal

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**News**

## SBJC STARs practice volunteerism

Students have been performing volunteerism and community service at the Bergen County Housing, Health, and Human Services Center in Hackensack this past winter. From cooking to organizing to serving and cleaning up, students prepare meals and provide lunch for Bergen County residents.

“Our students are learning that volunteerism is an important component of life,” says Dr. Hughes, SBJC Director of Special Projects, Outreach, and Related Services. “They are learning important life skills while also understanding the significance of serving others in our community.”



Located in Hackensack, **Marble Jam Kids** a center for creative arts therapy provides options for children, youth, individuals and their families through therapeutically supported arts programs. Visit [www.marblejamkids.org](http://www.marblejamkids.org)

**A Day in our Shoes** is a site dedicated to helping parents navigate the overwhelming IEP process. They provide resources on everything IEP, from what should be in the document, to having effective IEP meetings, and even ideas for IEP goals. Visit [www adayinourshoes.com](http://www adayinourshoes.com)

**Parent Resources**

Author and professional speaker, **Kerry Magro** is an individual on the Autism Spectrum who has used adversity to his advantage. He hosts a Facebook page called “A Special Community,” giving a platform for those impacted by a diagnosis to share their stories: [www.fb.me/aspecialcommunity](http://www.fb.me/aspecialcommunity).



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