

NJAEOP HORIZONS

Newsletter

Fall 2025 Edition



The New Jersey Association Of
Educational Office Professionals

EXECUTIVE BOARD 2025-2026

Melissa Cruz
President

TBD
Vice President

Joanne Duncan
Interim Treasurer

Joanne Duncan
PDP Registrar

Helaine Spitzer
Secretary and
Horizons Newsletter

Denise Lambert
Membership
Chairperson

“Our greatest
weakness lies
in giving up.
The most certain
way to succeed
is always to
try just one
more time.”

Thomas A. Edison

A Message from the NJAEOP President

Dear Members,

I would like to take a moment to introduce myself as the President of NJAEOP. My name is Melissa Cruz, and I joined this wonderful organization in 2018. That same year, I became a member of the Executive Committee, first serving as Recording Secretary and then as Webmaster after attending my very first annual convention.

When I joined the executive board, I had little to no experience and, quite honestly, I was nervous. Thankfully, NJAEOP is made up of incredibly knowledgeable and generous members who were willing to share their time, expertise, and encouragement. I learned so much and felt truly fortunate to have joined this great association when I did.

As we move forward, the executive team and I are committed to continuing to provide valuable services such as professional development. We are also exploring new opportunities to expand these offerings—including workshops and additional training sessions—to better serve our members. We are here for you and encourage you to get involved by joining our team.

It is truly an honor to serve as the NJAEOP President for the 2024–2026 term. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me or any board member with your questions, ideas, or concerns. We look forward to connecting with you and hearing your thoughts.

Warm regards,
Melissa Cruz
President, NJAEOP

MEET THE BOARD

Joanne Duncan, PDP Registrar

Joanne Duncan serves as the Registrar for the New Jersey Association of Educational Office Professionals (NJAEOP), where she oversees the Professional Development Program. A dedicated member of NJAEOP for over five years and Registrar for the past three, Joanne is passionate about empowering office professionals across the state through education, growth, and connection.

Joanne brings more than seven years of experience in education and currently works as an Administrative Assistant at West Orange High School in West Orange, NJ. Prior to her career in education, she spent over two decades in Human Resources Management within the corporate legal and sports entertainment industries.

Committed to rebuilding and rebranding NJAEOP while honoring its legacy, Joanne is driven by a mission to provide valuable resources and opportunities that help New Jersey office professionals thrive—enhancing their skills, adding value to their roles, and supporting their personal and professional development.

Denise Lambert, Membership Chairperson

Denise serves as the Membership Chairperson for the New Jersey Association of Educational Office Professionals (NJAEOP), where she oversees the membership of all persons engaged in clerical, business office, and/or secretarial office work in any educational system in the State of New Jersey or in organizations concerned with public education in the State, shall be eligible for active membership.

Denise is a dedicated member of NJAEOP for over five years and Membership Chair for the past two and a half years. Denise is the kind of individual who consistently demonstrates reliability, adaptability, and is passionate about encouraging old and new members to grow and stay connected with the (NJAEOP) through education.

Denise brings more than seven years of experience in education and currently works as an Administrative Assistant at the Early Childhood Learning Center in West Orange, NJ.

Denise is committed to maintaining membership of active and new members continue to afford the opportunity of achieving professional growth through the Professional Development Program (PDP).

Helaine Spitzer – Secretary, Horizons Newsletter Editor

Helaine Spitzer began her journey with the West Orange Board of Education in 2002 as a lunch aide at one of the district's elementary schools. Her dedication and commitment to education led her to a clerical aide position in 2011, and she advanced to become an administrative assistant at West Orange High School in 2013.

In 2019, Helaine became a proud member of the New Jersey Association of Educational Office Professionals (NJAEOP). Her passion for creativity and communication found a new outlet when she joined the Horizons Newsletter team in 2022.

Helaine enjoys bringing ideas to life and values the connections she builds through her work. Her creativity, collaborative spirit, and years of experience make her a valued member of both her school community and the NJAEOP.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM (PDP)

The Value of Professional Development

Participants in the **NJAEOP Professional Development Program (PDP)** dedicate many hours in the classroom to earn their certificates. The PDP is a **voluntary program** designed to encourage office professionals to pursue **college-level courses** in areas relevant to their work and is driven by two primary goals: **personal satisfaction** and a **strong commitment to ongoing professional improvement**.

Several New Jersey school districts have recognized this commitment by offering **tuition reimbursement** and/or **stipends** for employees who complete PDP certificates. **NJAEOP greatly appreciates their support and encouragement.**

Since its founding, **NJAEOP** has promoted professional growth and development across the state. The organization's educational journey began in **1965**, when adult education courses were launched in public schools statewide. In **November 1976**, NJAEOP awarded the first PDP certificates, marking a significant milestone in professional education for office personnel.

Employers value professionals who take initiative to learn independently and embrace new challenges. Earning PDP certificates or other development credentials demonstrates **dedication, expertise**, and a **proactive mindset**—qualities that can make a difference when pursuing promotions or new career opportunities.

For more information about the NJAEOP Professional Development Program and how it can benefit your career, please contact:

Joanne Duncan | PDP Registrar | jodeeduncan3@gmail.com

DID YOU KNOW?..

NEA Travel Program – \$500 Travel Dollars for NJEA Members!

As an NJEA member, you have access to the **NEA Travel Program**, a **complimentary member benefit** that includes **\$500 in travel dollars** automatically credited to your account.

This exclusive benefit provides access to **special member-only rates** — up to **60% off** the best available prices — on: Hotels & Resorts, Car Rentals, Cruises, Guided Tours, etc.

Your **\$500 in travel dollars** can be applied directly to your bookings, helping you save even more on your next getaway!

Start planning your trip today and take advantage of this incredible NJEA Member Benefit through the NEA Travel Program.

PDP Awards

Each year, NJAEOP hosts our Annual Business Meeting/Convention/Luncheon on the first Thursday in November.

We apologize to our members as we were not able to have our event in 2024 and would like to recognize individuals who participated in the Professional Development Program and completed one or more of the three options since our last annual meeting on Thursday, November 9, 2023.

- ***Alison Briant-Burley / Title I Curriculum Secretary / Galloway Township School District***
Option I - January 2025
- ***Darlene Derry / Administrative Assistant - Office of the Principal / Galloway Township Middle School***
Option 1 - February 2024 | Options II and III - May 2024
- ***Noura Estrada / Administrative Assistant / Liberty Middle School / West Orange School District***
Options I, II, and III - October 2024
- ***Sinetra Gandy / Secretary / Roland Rogers Elementary School / Galloway Township School District***
Options I, II, and III - August 2024
- ***Audrey Irby / Administrative Assistant / Hackensack High School / Hackensack School District***
Options I, II, and III - March 2025

Congratulations on a job well done!

If you have any questions or if your name was not mentioned above, please contact Joanne Duncan, PDP Registrar at jodeeduncan3@gmail.com.

DID YOU KNOW?...

We want to ensure that everyone is aware of any available **professional development opportunities** outlined in your employment contract or bargaining agreement.

If you haven't already, please take a moment to **review your contract** to see if there are any **benefits related to professional development** — such as reimbursements, paid workshop days, credits for continuing education, or stipends offered for completing classes/NJAEOP's Professional Development Program. **DON'T MISS OUT!!**

Free Online Training Courses & Skill Building For Administrative Assistants

“In a fast-paced working environment, staying up to date with skills and knowledge is crucial. However, many Administrative Assistants neglect their professional development and miss opportunities for growth and advancement”

Free Classes



- Linked In Learning
https://www.linkedin.com/learning/?trk=lynda_redirect_learning
- Office Dynamics Online
<https://officedynamics.com/online-training-for-administrative-assistants/>
- Alison
<https://alison.com/course/administrative-support>

Free Webinars



- ASAP.org
<https://www.asaporg.com/webinars/free>
- ExecutiveAssistants.com
<https://www.executiveassistant.com/webinarseries>
- Ed2Go
<https://www.ed2go.com/>

A CALL TO ACTION

**Educational Office Professionals
Ready to Lead!**

**The New Jersey Association of
Educational Office Professionals
(NJAEOP)**

is actively seeking **new Executive Board members** to help shape the future of our organization.

We currently have **vacant positions**—
and this is your opportunity to step up,
get involved, and make an impact.

✓ **If you work in an educational office
anywhere in New Jersey, you are
eligible to join!**

✓ **No prior board experience required—
just your dedication and energy.**

Join a team that supports, uplifts, and
grows together.

**Let your voice be part of the
conversation.**

Interested? Reach out today!

We'd love to welcome you to the
NJAEOP leadership team.

macruz@westorangeschools.org

REMINDER

If you haven't already paid your
dues for 2025-2026, a
membership form is provided for
your convenience. Please fill it
out and forward it with a check
in the amount of \$20, make
checks payable to NJAEOP and
send to:

Denise Lambert, NJAEOP
Membership Chairperson
53 Watson Avenue
West Orange, NJ 07052

5 Workplace Obstacles that Secretaries Must Overcome

by Owen Reed

Most of the time, when people think about secretaries, they have out-of-date assumptions about what it means to be a corporate secretary. However, in actuality, the secretary's job has changed. By more fitting job names like "personal assistant," "executive secretary," or "management assistant," the word "secretary" itself has largely been abandoned. The obstacles a secretary has at work are numerous.

Company secretaries serve as "the eyes" of the organization, working nonstop and frequently in the background. They equally fulfill the demands of the employees and the customers in addition to those of the management board. The smooth operation of the company would likely be threatened without their dedication and assistance.

The top 5 difficulties faced by secretaries at work have been listed by Owen Reed.

1. Being aware of the industry. The most important requirement for a successful company secretary is business knowledge of the organization you work for.
2. Dealing with challenging people. The first person that managers, employees, suppliers, customers, board members, and guests are likely to go to when they need something for work is a secretary. These people will generally be pleasant. Unfortunately, secretaries occasionally have to deal with persons who are more challenging to work with. These folks might view you as less important than the other workers, or they might regard you as a target for their pent-up resentment.
3. Flexibility: Taking on new challenges. In the current digital era, businesses are susceptible to constant change. Many businesses are brought to their knees by a failure to transform, increased competitive pressure, and the inability to respond swiftly and agilely to this.
4. Taking responsibility for any mishaps. Even though they may not be the ones making decisions, secretaries are typically blamed when something goes wrong. Despite not always being the cause of the issue, they are nonetheless accountable for finding a solution.
5. Time management. Managing the workload may be one of the largest issues, particularly if secretaries support multiple executives. Meeting planning, scheduling, booking travel, and other duties fall under the purview of secretaries. Successful time management and other organizational abilities are crucial for a good secretary because of the scheduling of competing executive objectives and last-minute modifications.

Check out our affiliate -
National Association of Educational
Professionals (NAEOP)
at

<https://www.NAEOP.org/>

Learn about more stipends you can
earn, attend conventions and more!

HELPFUL KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS

- **Ctrl + A:** Select all text.
- **Ctrl + C:** Copy selected text.
- **Ctrl + X:** Cut selected text.
- **Ctrl + V:** Paste copied or cut text.
- **Ctrl + Z:** Undo an action.
- **Ctrl + Y:** Redo an action.
- **Ctrl + F:** Open a search field.
- **Ctrl + P:** Print a document or page.
- **Ctrl + Shift + T:** Bring a previously closed tab back.

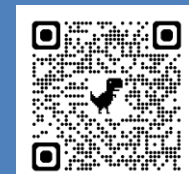
**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM
YOU!**

**FILL OUT THIS SHORT
SURVEY AND
TELL US WHAT YOU
THINK!**



Find us online at

NJAEOP.org





<https://njaeop.org>

New Jersey Association of Educational Office Professionals
Service * Integrity * Skill

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FOR 2025-2026

YEARLY MEMBERSHIPS RUN FROM JULY 1st TO JUNE 30th

LAST NAME _____ FIRST NAME _____ MI _____

POSITION _____

HOME ADDRESS _____

HOME PHONE _____ CELL PHONE _____

COUNTY _____ DISTRICT _____

EMAIL: _____ (Required)

ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP \$20.00 _____

RETIRED ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP \$15.00 _____

RENEWAL \$20.00 _____

RETIRED ASSOCIATE (NON-VOTING) \$10.00 _____

FRIEND OF NJAEOP (NON-VOTING) \$10.00 _____

AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

ENCLOSE CHECK/MONEY ORDER (made payable to NJAEOP) WITH THIS FORM AND MAIL TO:

Denise Lambert, NJAEOP Membership Chairperson
53 Watson Avenue
West Orange, NJ 07052

THANK YOU FOR YOUR MEMBERSHIP

NJAEOP needs your support to continue our programs designed for the Educational Office Professional to keep you being "the best you can be."

YOU ARE VERY IMPORTANT to us -
we only exist because of YOU!

YOU ARE NJAEOP!



THE 86TH ANNUAL NJAEOP CONVENTION

Great News! For the first time, the NJAEOP Annual Convention will be held in northern New Jersey! We are excited to invite all active and prospective members from our district and across the state to join us for this milestone **86th Annual Convention**. Learn what we do and how you can earn stipends. Or, just come and see old friends.

**West Orange High School
Tarnoff Cafeteria**

51 Conforti Avenue
West Orange, NJ

Saturday, November 15, 2025

8:00 am – 1:30 pm

~

Lunch will be served

See registration form on the next page

Bring a Colleague – Get a FREE Gift!

All NJAEOP members are encouraged to invite a fellow colleague (or more!) to attend. If your guest joins NJAEOP, **you** will receive a **FREE gift** as our thank-you.

KEY NOTE SPEAKER - Cathy McHenry, NAEOP Northeast Area Director “Building a Collaborative and Communicative Team”

Join us for an engaging and interactive workshop designed to enhance team building through effective communication, fostering a collaborative office environment, and understanding individual strengths. This workshop is perfect for individuals looking to improve their team dynamics, boost productivity, and create a more harmonious workplace.



Nominations & Elections of 2025–2026 Officers

The following slate of officers will be presented to members for voting at the convention. Votes from the floor will also be considered.

- **President** – Melissa Cruz (West Orange, Essex County)
- **Vice President** – **VACANT**
- **Recording Secretary** – Helaine Spitzer (West Orange, Essex County)
- **Interim Treasurer** – Joanne Duncan (West Orange, Essex County)
- **Membership Chair** – Denise Lambert (West Orange, Essex County)
- **PDP Coordinator** – Joanne Duncan (West Orange, Essex County)
- **Additional Vacant Roles:** Members at Large, Website Coordinator



86th ANNUAL CONVENTION
REGISTRATION/MEMBERSHIP
FORM

All registrations are due by NOVEMBER 1, 2025! Make checks payable to **NJAEOP** and send with this **REGISTRATION FORM** to:

Joanne Duncan,
Interim NJAEOP Treasurer
50 Rock Spring Avenue
West Orange, NJ 07052

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ District _____

County _____

Email: _____ (Required)

Registration Fee _____ **\$35.00**
(Includes Lunch)

General Membership Dues _____ **\$20.00**
(If you haven't already paid
your dues for 2025-26)

Total Amount of Check \$ _____
(Make checks payable to NJAEOP)

THE
86th Annual NJAEOP Convention

AGENDA

8:00am – 9:00am

Registration
Browse Tricky Tray Baskets
Continental Breakfast

9:00am – 9:30am

General Meeting

9:30am – 10:30am

Keynote Speaker
Cathy McHenry,
NAEOP Northeast Area Director
“Building a Collaborative and Communicative Team”

10:30am – 11:00am

Last Call to Browse Tricky Tray Baskets

11:00am – 12:00pm

LUNCH

12:00am – 1:00pm

Afternoon Presentation
Christina Binns, Library Media
Specialist, West Orange High School

1:00pm – 1:30pm

PDP Certificate(s)
Drawing for Tricky Tray Baskets
Door Prize(s)
Random Prize Raffle

Meeting Adjourned

86th Annual NJAEOP Convention Is ADJOURNED!
Thank you for Attending & Safe Travels Home!