

NJAAPT NEWSLETTER

JANUARY - 2009

President's Message

Happy New Year! On behalf of the Executive Board I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of our members a Happy and Healthy 2009. For the NJAAPT January means the beginning of a period when activities begin in full swing. To recap what is being sponsored, here is a list that should intrigue you:

Jan. 10 – The Physics Olympics

Feb. 20 – Dave's Demo Night

Mar. 20-21 – Sectional Meeting

These events bring together our members and their students in an informal setting and they are as entertaining as they are informative. Take the time to plan ahead to join your colleagues at least one of the programs. I have no doubt that you will not be disappointed in the presentations you attend.

December was an active month with The Holiday Treats Workshop and the Faraday Christmas Lectures at Rutgers. The Holiday Treats was again very well attended not only by those who received materials but also by others who can't see what they were missing. Try to get in on the event next year and plan for the first Saturday in December to be a part of the Holiday Treats crowd.

2009 proves to be a very important year in the sciences. Just as the physics community did in 2005 to celebrate Einstein's great year, the astronomy community is doing likewise. This year marks the four hundredth anniversary of the first use of the telescope by Galileo to observe the heavens and the start of his dramatic discoveries about our solar system. We will post on our website any activities that you may participate in during this year. We wish the best to all those involved in the projects to commemorate this year a great. This also provides physics teachers with the chance to supplement their teaching the concepts of universal gravitation by using the materials from sources celebrating this memorable year.

Let's make 2009 a better year than 2008 for our students and ourselves.

Ray Polomski

Bergen County Meeting

NJAAPT co-sponsored a meeting/workshop, which attracted 45 participants. The day loomed sunny and warm, but as the meeting time approached, so did the weather change that brought clouds into the area.. The overcast skies did not dampen the enthusiasm of those attending the event, but served as an invitation to participate in lively conversation.

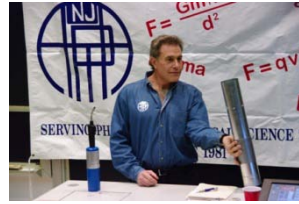
Due to the overcast, the use of the solar telescopes set up by Joe Sivo from BCC was curtailed. When the breaks in the clouds permitted there were great views of the sun. After people register and gathered at the solar telescopes, they were guided to the Buehler Challenger Center for a tour of the facilities. The site is one of a number in the US that memorializes the crew of the Shuttle Challenger by providing students and adults with the opportunity to partake in a space launch and mission. The director of the center, Kathie Klein, described each phase of the program and the attendees were able to enter the mission control room, the shuttle launch simulator, and the mission experiment room. For those who had never been to the center, it was an eye opening experience and one which the NJAAPT would like to look into as a possible workshop in the future.

Following the tour, the group proceeded to the Tech Building at BCC to hear two talks relating physics and astronomy. The first speaker, Sam Storch, addressed the topic of teaching physics by using astronomy in his community college classes. His presentation, "The Irresistible Meets the Immovable – Using Astronomy To Get Students Excited About Physics" Sam drew upon his personal experiences to illuminate physics concepts by introducing astronomy principles. The second speaker, Dr. Scott Thomas of Rutgers University, described the work of the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at the CERN Laboratories in Switzerland and France. His talk, "The Coming Era of Discovery at the Large Hadron Collider", synopsized the development, construction, and potential of the LHC. Both individuals imparted very practical knowledge that could be brought back and used immediately in the classroom.

At the conclusion of the talks, those who remained were treated to a buffet dinner provided by BCC. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate and since no clearing was evident, the viewing of the heavens was canceled. BCC has two telescopes for use in its astronomy classes and also for outreach into the community.

We would like to thank Paul Griffo, who first proposed the meeting along with Joe Sivo, two years ago and Joshua Guttman for their efforts organizing and coordinating the event. If you are in Bergen County or somewhere nearby, why don't you plan on joining your fellow physics teachers next November for a fun afternoon and evening at Bergen Community College?

Holiday Treats 2008



Imagine getting presents early and it is even your birthday. That is what happens on the first Saturday in December each year for the past twenty or so years. The NJAAPT Annual Holiday Treats Workshop brings out the children in all of us, especially the 35 members who received a box filled with materials for their classroom and personal use. This year we again provided a tremendous amount of items by purchasing them, constructing them, or receiving materials that were donated by companies, organizations, or government departments. Some of the items we were able to obtain included:

- Many posters and related materials from NASA and the Chandra X-Ray Telescope Mission
- Nuclear fusion materials from General Atomics Corporation
- Physics by Freeman Press
- A green laser pointer
- Clicker in the Classroom
- Materials from NIST
- Items made by John Valente, Carl Buonfede and Borislav Bilash

Once the box was unpacked, there were numerous door prizes followed by the drawing for our major prizes:

- Books from Prentice Hall
- A plasma ball
- An energy/momentum demonstrator
- A crystal model of a diamond
- A school site license for electricity from Yenka Software

Each year the program is carried by a number of individuals who give a great deal of time and effort to make this a success. My thanks go to Dave Maiullo and his students, Jessie Blair, John Valente, Borilaw Bilash, Anthony Lapinski, Nancy Michelsen, Dave Bandel, Rich Urban, and Joe Spaccavento. Look for photos of the evening at our website and plan on attending next December.

Ray Polomski

ACCOUNTABILITY REGULATIONS IMPROVED

On November 17, 2008, Commissioner of Education Lucille Davy issued final revised accountability regulations which contain a number of improvements over previous versions of the regulations, including increased flexibility regarding travel expenditures and a greater role for NJPSA members to participate in regionalization studies to be performed in each county. A number of the revisions adopted by the Commissioner were in direct response to the advocacy efforts of the NJPSA and other education organizations. Listed below is a brief summary of the improvements made in the final regulations:

- **Improved Definition of "Regular School District Business Travel"** - The final regulations permit boards to adopt policies which allow for regular business travel without prior board approval. Regular business travel now includes in-state professional development programs that cost \$150 or less per person per program. The regulations also provide that the \$150 amount may be adjusted in future years for inflation. In the earlier draft, regular business travel had been limited to \$100 per event, with no adjustment for inflation. See N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-1.2.
- **No More Cap on Number of Attendees for In-State Professional Development** - The final regulations eliminate the cap on the number of persons permitted to attend in-state professional development programs without first receiving prior written approval from the executive county superintendent. The earlier draft version of the regulations allowed for no more than three persons absent prior written approval. See N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-5.9(c). For out-of-state events, the regulation now provides for attendance of no more than five persons without prior written approval of the executive county superintendent.
- **Protections for Collective Bargaining Explicitly Included** - The final regulations explicitly include language taken directly from the authorizing statute, making it clear that the regulations cannot be used to interfere in any manner with collective bargaining. This underscores the fact that nothing in the regulations can be used to interfere with collectively negotiated contract terms. See N.J.A.C. 6A:23A-2.1(b).
- **Reasonable Meal Expenses May be Reimbursed** - The regulations now provide for "full" reasonable reimbursement for out-of-district one day training sessions which include lunch in the lump-sum registration fee, This should alleviate concerns regarding professional development which include reasonable meal costs in the registration fee. In addition, the regulations now permit refreshments to be provided in out of district training sessions. The regulations now also permit reimbursement for the cost of an official luncheon or dinner, up to \$7 and \$10, respectively, where the meal is scheduled as an integral part of an official proceeding or program related to school district business and the employee's responsibilities.

- ***Input for NJPSA Members in County Regionalization Studies*** - The regulations require each executive county superintendent to form an advisory committee to study school district regionalization and consolidation of services. The final regulations require that at least on a quarterly basis, county representatives from the NJPSA and the other education organizations which are a part of LEE (Leadership for Educational Excellence which includes the NJPSA, NJASA, NJEA, NJASBO, NJPTA, NJSBA) attend and participate in meetings of the advisory committee to be convened by the Executive County Superintendent. This critical change in the code will ensure that NJPSA representatives have the opportunity for sustained input into every county's regionalization and consolidation study.

New Jersey Science Convention Proposals

The 2009 NJSC has opened the application process for presentations at its October meeting. Forms for workshops and presentations are available at the following website: <http://www.njsc-online.com/presenters.htm> . The committee is attempting to increase the number of teacher presentations from last year's two day convention. If you have the opportunity to spend a day or two sharing your knowledge with others, please consider signing up. Physics is very underrepresented at the NJSC and we could sure use more exposure by having our members partake in the activities, presentations, and workshops.