



17TH ANNUAL

Education Justice Lecture

*Understanding Today's Public
Education Landscape: How We Got
Here and Where We're Going*

Wednesday, June 3, 2026



17th Annual

Education Justice Lecture

Understanding Today's Public Education
Landscape: How We Got Here and
Where We're Going

Wednesday, June 3, 2026

Panelists

Jennifer Berkshire & Jack Schneider

Authors, Educators, and Hosts of the *Have You Heard?* [podcast](#)

Moderator

Robert Kim, Esq.

Education Law Center, Executive Director



About Education Law Center

For more than 50 years, Education Law Center has worked to ensure all children have the opportunity to attend safe, inclusive, and well-resourced public schools that help them reach their full potential—and to make certain that public education remains the foundation of a strong and thriving democracy. We use six core strategies to execute our mission: community engagement, research, litigation, policy advocacy, communications, and strategic partnerships. These strategies work together in a connected and continuous cycle: community engagement and research inform our advocacy and legal work, and communications and strategic partnerships build public understanding and the collective power needed to sustain lasting change.

In our home state of New Jersey and in states across the country, we engage in impactful litigation; in-depth research; extensive policy advocacy and coalition and campaign work; and targeted communications to expand students' rights, ensure equitable and adequate school funding systems, and ensure public funds for education are used to support and strengthen public schools.

ELC is also tackling several cutting-edge legal issues, including:

- Fighting the Trump administration's illegal attempts to dismantle the United States Department of Education, which puts millions of students and federal education funding at risk;
- Opposing private school vouchers, including the federal voucher program, with every tool at our disposal;
- Enforcing the separation of church and state as co-counsel in a lawsuit to prevent Oklahoma from sponsoring and funding the nation's first religious charter school;
- Leading the fight for school integration as co-counsel in two novel school desegregation lawsuits in New Jersey and Minnesota;
- Protecting the freedom to teach and learn by analyzing and monitoring censorship laws that restrict what is discussed or taught in the classroom; and
- Supporting legal efforts to uphold anti-discrimination laws by requiring taxpayer-funded schools in Maine and Vermont to abide by state laws prohibiting discrimination against LGBTQ+ and other students.

In addition, ELC partners with and provides technical assistance to state and local organizations throughout the country. We also provide free legal assistance to hundreds of low-income families in New Jersey through our Students' Rights Project.

Visit our [website](#) and read our updated [Strategic Plan](#) to learn more about our areas of focus. Visit the [News](#) page for up-to-date communications about our work across states and visit the [Publications](#) and Research pages for crucial state and federal advocacy tools.



Dear Friend of Education Law Center,

Public education is facing unprecedented attacks. Efforts to dismantle the U.S. Department of Education place millions of students at risk, jeopardize critical federal education funding, and threaten essential civil rights protections. The collapse of the Office for Civil Rights has left vulnerable students without meaningful relief, and unaccountable and often discriminatory private school voucher programs, including the new federal voucher scheme, are sweeping across the country, taking vital resources away from public schools that welcome and serve all students.

In many states, students either lack the constitutional right to a quality public education or are unable to enforce the rights they do have. And in nearly every state, efforts are underway to ban or limit teaching about race, gender, and other topics essential to understanding our shared history and diversity.

At Education Law Center, we are working every day to preserve public education as the cornerstone of democracy, ensure that every child has access to an equitable, inclusive, and diverse learning environment, protect the rights of vulnerable student groups; and advance social and racial justice.

The months and years ahead will bring significant challenges, but ELC remains committed to meeting this moment and continuing the fight.

In the months and years ahead, ELC's advocacy, technical assistance, and legal efforts will only grow in urgency. Thank you for standing with us as we work to defend public schools as vital community pillars and public education as a cornerstone of our democracy.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Robert Kim", is written in a cursive style.

Robert Kim, Esq.
Executive Director
Education Law Center

Board of Trustees

Kevin Welner, Ph.D.

*Professor, University of Colorado,
School of Education
(Board Chair)*

Alejandra Ceja

Corporate Social Impact Executive

Janel George, Esq.

*Associate Professor of Law,
Director, Racial Equity in Education
Law and Policy Clinic, Georgetown Law*

Lindsay Heck, Esq.

U.S. Government

Laura Jiménez

*Former Director of Grantee Relations,
U.S. Department of Education*

Jacqueline Jones, Ph.D.

*Former President & CEO,
Foundation for Child Development*

Kevin Kelleher

*Executive Director,
New Jersey Education Association*

David Long, Esq.

Retired Education Attorney

Aaron Merkin

*Senior Confidential Specialist,
Office of the Executive Director,
National Education Association*

Janelle Scott, Ph.D.

*Professor & Chair,
University of California at Berkeley*

Shital C. Shah

*Senior Advisor to the
United Way Worldwide CEO*

Rebecca Spar, Esq.

Special Education Attorney

Hon. Gary Stein (Ret.)

Pashman Stein Walder Hayden

Clifford G. Stewart, Esq.

The Law Office of C. Gregory Stewart

Staff

Robert Kim, Esq.

Executive Director

Elizabeth Athos, Esq.

*Senior Attorney,
Educational Equity*

Nicole Ciullo

*Associate Director of
Policy & Development*

Kaitlyn Comesañas

Program Associate

Patrick Cremin, Esq.

Staff Attorney

Danielle Farrie, Ph.D.

Research Director

Sharon Kregel

*Director of Policy, Strategic
Partnerships & Communications*

Camara Stokes Hudson, Esq.

Staff Attorney

Wendy Lecker, Esq.

*Senior Attorney, School Finance
& Resource Equity*

Jessica Levin, Esq.

*Litigation Director/Director,
Public Funds Public Schools*

Theresa Luhm, Esq.

*Director of Finance, Operations,
& Development*

Darlene Nawuridam

Program Assistant

Katrina Reichert, Esq.

Staff Attorney

Aimee Roche

Intake Coordinator

Ann Romero

Finance & Operations Manager

Hiba Siddiki

Garden State Fellow



Supporters

ELC would like to thank the following foundations, corporations and organizations for their generous support.

Amalgamated Charitable Foundation	New Jersey Bar Foundation
American Federation of Teachers	New Jersey Education Association
The Fund for New Jersey	New York State United Teachers
Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation	Princeton University
Great Schools New Jersey	Prudential Financial
Interest on Lawyers Trust Account (IOLTA)	Southern Education Foundation
MacMillan Family Foundation	Taub Foundation
National Education Association	Ventus Charitable Foundation
Nellie Mae Education Foundation	William T. Grant Foundation
	W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The work we do would not be possible without the tremendous amount of pro bono support we receive from lawyers in private practice. We are honored to have worked in partnership with dozens of law firms across the country.

Proud of
Education Law Center's
Work Since 1973

Kevin Welner, Ph.D.
Alejandra Ceja
Janel George, Esq.
Lindsay Heck, Esq.
Laura Jiménez
Jacqueline Jones, Esq.
Kevin Kelleher
David Long, Esq.
Aaron Merkin
Janelle Scott, Ph.D.
Shital C. Shah
Rebecca Spar, Esq.
Justice Gary Stein
Clifford G. Stewart, Esq.



Panelists



Jennifer Berkshire

Author, Educator, and Host of the *Have You Heard?* [podcast](#)

Jennifer Berkshire grew up in the Midwest, and while she has long since been transplanted to the East Coast, she will forever be a Heartlander at heart. She discovered her love for storytelling while covering a series of bitter labor battles in her native Illinois in the early 1990s. Grad school couldn't compare, and so she forsook academic life for one of an itinerant interviewer. Her interest in—some would say 'obsession' with—public education began in 2006 when she took a job editing the statewide newspaper for AFT Massachusetts. She would go on to start an irreverent blog called EduShyster, chronicling the excesses of the education reform movement.

Jennifer writes about the intersection of education and politics for the [Nation](#), the [New Republic](#), the [Baffler](#), the [New York Times](#), and other publications. She is the author of three books: *More Worlds to Negotiate: John Dunlop and the Art of Problem Solving*; [A Wolf at the Schoolhouse Door: The Dismantling of Public Education and the Future of School](#) (with Jack), and [The Education Wars: A Citizen's Guide and Defense Manual](#) (also with Jack). She teaches in the Boston College Prison Education Program and the Education Studies program at Yale. Follow her on [Bluesky](#).



Jack Schneider

Author, Educator, and Host of the *Have You Heard?* [podcast](#)

Jack Schneider is a scholar, teacher, writer, and activist. In his day job, he is the Dwight W. Allen Distinguished Professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, where he leads the Beyond Test Scores Project. His academic research broadly examines how educators, policymakers, and the public develop particular views about what is true, what is effective, and what is important in education, and he is particularly interested in how those views can diverge from ground-level reality inside schools and communities. Much of his work, for instance, looks at how student learning and school quality are quantified, and details the intended and unintended consequences of such efforts.

Jack also writes frequently for the public in outlets like the [New York Times](#), the [Nation](#), and the [Atlantic](#), often making the case that educational reform is more complex than many of its champions would have us imagine. In his work with Jennifer—on the podcast and on the page—he has established a reputation as a defender of public education's core principles, even as he has been an outspoken critic of racial and economic injustice. As a result, he tends to be unpopular with those who blame schools for inequality, and he is generally loathed by free market zealots. Follow Jack on [Bluesky](#).

Follow ELC on Social Media!



Stay Connected to Receive Our Latest News & Updates



[on Facebook @edlawcenter](#)



[on LinkedIn @edlawcenter](#)



[on Instagram @edlawcenter](#)



[on TikTok @edlawcenter](#)



[on Bluesky @edlawcenter.bsky.social](#)



[on YouTube @edlawcenter](#)

ELC EDUCATION
LAW CENTER

The members of the
**New Jersey
Education Association**

proudly support the

Education Law Center

as it works to advance educational opportunity
and justice for public school children in
New Jersey and across the nation.



Pictured above:

Tina Dare
Secretary-Treasurer

Steve Beatty
President

Petal Robertson
Vice President


Learning & leadership

White & Case is proud to support the **Education Law Center** and its 2026 Education Justice Lecture.

Responsible Business is how we actively participate in the global community—by serving those in need, building legal capacity and supporting meaningful causes—all while operating sustainably, responsibly and ethically.

WHITE & CASE

whitecase.com/responsible-business



Arnold & Porter is proud to support the **Education Law Center** in its groundbreaking work to pursue safe, non-discriminatory, and well-funded learning environments for public school students.

Arnold & Porter

©2026 Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP. All Rights Reserved.



**Thank you and congratulations to the
Education Law Center for its continued work
to defend public education.**



American Federation of Teachers New Jersey, AFL-CIO

720 King Georges Road / Suite 300
Fords, N.J. 08863
(732) 661-9393 / www.aftnj.org

Executive Officers

Jennifer S. Higgins *President*
Dr. Susanna Tardi *Executive Vice President, Higher Education*
Silvia Pereira *Executive Vice President, Prekindergarten to 12*

Pat Paradiso *Treasurer* Josephine Nagle *Secretary*

Higher Education Vice Presidents

Elaine Bobrove
James Castiglione
Lynne Cummins
Emari DiGiorgio
Laurie LeFever
Nancy Merrill
Christine O'Connell
Robert Russo
Darlene Smith
Bill Sullivan
Todd Vachon
Leonard Winogora

Prekindergarten to 12 Vice Presidents

Michael Backo
Nelson Baiza
Jeff Cabrera
Timothy D. Carr
John Cunha
Teri Hammond
Michael Iovino
Robin Pinckney-St. John
Ryan Sandor
Josiah Santamaria
Laurie Troiano
Leslie Velez

Congratulations to ELC!

Thank You for All You Do for Public Education



NJISJ

NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE



**FBT
Gibbons**

**FBT Gibbons is proud to support
the Education Law Center.**

**One firm.
Shared values.
Expanded capabilities.**

On January 1, 2026, Frost Brown Todd and Gibbons joined to form FBT Gibbons, creating a national mid-market legal powerhouse, with 800+ attorneys across 26 offices.

To learn more, visit us at fbtgibbons.com.

FBT Gibbons. Advantage Starts Here.

©2026 FBT Gibbons LLP. May be considered attorney advertising in certain jurisdictions.

fbtgibbons.com

OUR CONGRATULATIONS

----- to-----

The Education Law Center

-----and the-----

The New Jersey Education Association



*Proudly Representing Unions and Their Members
for Over 100 Years*

570 Broad Street, Suite 1402
Newark, NJ 07102
Tel: 973-623-1822

150 W. State Street, Suite 230
Trenton, NJ 08608
Tel: 609-392-8172

www.zazzali-law.com

*Dedicated to protecting workers, supporting educators, and
advocating for our communities*



Lowenstein Sandler is proud to support the

**EDUCATION LAW
CENTER'S 17TH
ANNUAL EDUCATION
JUSTICE LECTURE**



PROUD TO SUPPORT EDUCATION LAW CENTER

& their mission to promote fair and equitable school funding, racial justice, and effective school reform.

CBIZ BORDEN PERLMAN INSURANCE SERVICES:

Personal | Commercial | Specialty

609.896.3434 | 800.932.4476

[CBIZ.com/BordenPerlman](https://www.cbiz.com/BordenPerlman)



LATHAM & WATKINS LLP



Latham & Watkins is proud to support

Education Law Center's (ELC) 2026 Education Justice Lecture

ELC's work ensures high quality and equitable education for all public school students through litigation, research and data analysis, policy advocacy, and more.

LW.com



David B. Rubin, P.C.
Attorney at Law

450 Main Street, Metuchen, NJ 08840
www.rubinlaw.net

**PROUD TO SUPPORT
EDUCATION LAW CENTER**

We are proud to support ELC

Education Law Center

*Thank you for being the leading voice
for public school children in
New Jersey and across the nation.*

Novak | Francella
LLC CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS

BOSTON | CONNECTICUT | NEW YORK | PHILADELPHIA | WASHINGTON, DC

www.novakfrancella.com



Paterson Education Association

Strong, Unified, and Ready to Fight

Every classroom in Paterson thrives when educators have a voice. At the Paterson Education Association, we're not just colleagues – we're a community. We stand strong together, united by a commitment to our students and our profession. When challenges come, we don't back down. We rally. We organize. We win.

<https://www.patersonnea.org>



NJPSA is proud to support the work of the Education Law Center and its Annual Education Justice lecture.

We know that quality schools require high quality school leaders.

Join the school leadership profession by earning your NJ Principal or Supervisor

Certification in just 12-18 months with our NJEXCEL program.

Learn more at www.njexcel.org.

**PashmanStein
WalderHayden**
A Professional Corporation

**Proud Sponsor
of the
Education Law
Center!**

NEW JERSEY
Hackensack • Holmdel

NEW YORK
New York City

PENNSYLVANIA
Philadelphia

DELAWARE
Wilmington

201.488.8200 • pashmanstein.com



**BURLINGTON COUNTY
EDUCATION ASSOCIATION**

Chris Bowman, President

Brenda Martin Lee, 1st Vice President

Cathy MacManiman, 2nd Vice President

Lisa Chiavuzzo, Secretary

Andrew Jacobs, Treasurer

Tamara Beatty, NJEA Executive Committee Member

Debbie Fitzpatrick, Office Manager

Heather Smith, Office Assistant

 REISMAN • GRAN • ZUBA LLP

CONGRATULATES
EDUCATION LAW CENTER
ON ITS 17TH ANNUAL LECTURE

FREEMAN
LAW OFFICES, LLC

Special Needs Attorneys

**A PROUD SPONSOR OF
EDUCATION LAW
CENTER'S 17TH ANNUAL
EDUCATION JUSTICE
LECTURE**

609.454.5609

100 Canal Point Blvd., Suite 121
Princeton, NJ 08540

www.freemanlawoffices.com

 **LEARNING POLICY INSTITUTE**



*Research that informs policy
so policy can transform learning.*

learningpolicyinstitute.org



**SHOP ELC
MERCH!**

Visit our store at
<https://bit.ly/4tu3RYh>

All proceeds benefit
Education Law Center

Volunteer Lawyers for Justice

Volunteer Lawyers for Justice congratulates the Education Law Center on its 17th annual Education Justice Lecture, continuing their vital work to advance education equity and racial justice in New Jersey and beyond.

CELEBRATING 25 YEARS OF ACCESS TO JUSTICE

vijnj.org

THROUGH PROGRESSIVE RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY, THE NORTH CAROLINA JUSTICE CENTER WORKS TO ELIMINATE POVERTY IN OUR STATE BY ENSURING EVERY HOUSEHOLD HAS ACCESS TO THE RESOURCES, SERVICES AND FAIR TREATMENT IT NEEDS TO ACHIEVE ECONOMIC SECURITY.



NORTH CAROLINA JUSTICE CENTER
www.ncjustice.org

TOP 7 REASONS YOU NEED A SPECIAL NEEDS TRUSTS AND ESTATE PLANNING.


1. With a special needs trust your child can enjoy the use of property intended to be held for his or her benefit.
2. Special needs trusts provide for Those who may lack the mental capacity to handle their own financial affairs.
3. Estate planning offers fiscal advantages.
4. Estate planning helps beneficiaries retain access to essential government benefits, including medicaid, social security, and odd services.
5. Estate plans are designed to pay for products or services otherwise excluded from public funding.
6. Estate planning allows you to control where your assets go after you are no longer here.
7. A special needs trust is needed to shield your loved one's assets from being exhausted by the government.

WHEN IT COMES TO SERVING THE NEEDS OF YOUR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, **SUSSAN, GREENWALD AND WESLER** ARE THE ATTORNEYS YOU CAN TRUST.

OUR AREAS OF PRACTICE

- Autism Spectrum Disorders
- Asperger's Syndrome
- ADHD
- Allergies
- Auditory Processing Disorder Behavioral Disorders
- Cognitive Impairment
- Developmental Delays Diabetes
- Emotional Regulation Impairment
- General & Special Education Hib
- Matters
- Hearing Impairment Orthopedic Impairment
- Sensory Integration
- Dysfunction
- Specific Learning Disabilities Speech & Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Visual Impairment

Sussan | Greenwald & Wesler

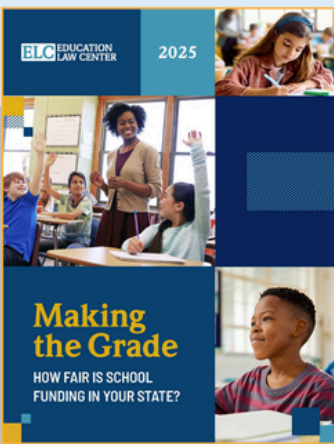


(609) 409-3500 www.sgwlawfirm.com info@sgwlawfirm.com



LOCAL 68
OPERATING ENGINEERS
ATLANTIC CITY WEST CALDWELL

Making the Grade: HOW FAIR IS SCHOOL FUNDING IN YOUR STATE?



ELC EDUCATION LAW CENTER 2025

Making the Grade
HOW FAIR IS SCHOOL FUNDING IN YOUR STATE?

www.edlawcenter.org

ELC's *Making the Grade 2025* documents persistent disparities in education funding, both among and within states, in the 2022-23 school year. The report warns that fair school funding policies are especially critical as states face an uncertain federal policy landscape.

Read the report, press release, tools for advocates and technical appendix [here](#).



**Make a tax-deductible contribution
to ELC to support our work!**



If you prefer, you can mail a check, made out to “Education Law Center,” Attention to:
Darlene Nawuridam, Program Assistant,
60 Park Place, Suite 300, Newark, NJ 07102.