

SUSTAINABILITY HERO

June 2022



Dr. Lawrence S. Feinsod
Executive Director, New Jersey School Boards Association

Dr. Lawrence S. Feinsod has served nearly a decade as the executive director of the [New Jersey School Boards Association \(NJSBA\)](#) and devoted 53 years to advancing public education. Since 2013, he has been a stalwart ally and founding partner of [Sustainable Jersey for Schools](#). He helped shape the *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* program that now has 1,051 schools and 64% of New Jersey school districts participating. He is an ex-officio member of the [Sustainable Jersey Board of Trustees](#) and chair of the *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* Certification Standards Committee. On July 1, 2022, Dr. Feinsod is retiring. He leaves an impressive record of accomplishments including his outstanding sustainability leadership in New Jersey.

Under his direction, NJSBA became a founding partner of *Sustainable Jersey for Schools*. From the start, NJSBA integrated *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* into the annual NJSBA Workshop and its Sustainability Working Sessions. The *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* Annual Awards ceremony has been hosted by NJSBA at Workshop five times since 2015.



“The work of Sustainable Jersey is truly remarkable,” said Dr. Feinsod. “As an organization, it has had a positive impact that is unique in New Jersey and across the country. The actions that municipalities and schools complete are impressive and the results are beyond what I could have imagined. It has truly moved the needle for sustainability at the state, national and planetary level. I feel lucky to be a part of it.”

Dr. Feinsod began his career as a special education teacher in Linden. He values kindness and champions the importance of each individual person. This outlook is evident in his everyday interactions and over the span of his life’s work as an educator and public-school advocate. He explained that his parents taught him the worth of service to the community through their actions and by reminding him often that “volunteering is the rent we pay to be part of a community and live a good life.” His father served as the volunteer fire chief of the Maplewood Township Fire Department for 30 years and his mother became a successful business woman after raising her two children, all while maintaining an active role in the community.

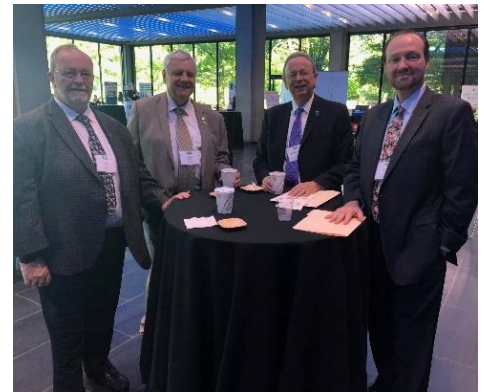


As executive director of NJSBA, Dr. Feinsod manages the day-to-day operations of the organization, which is one of America’s largest school boards associations. He attributes his success to the NJSBA staff. “NJSBA has the best staff in the nation,” he said. “The outstanding achievements of NJSBA are due to their hard work.” Dr. Feinsod provides guidance and oversight, but allows his staff the freedom to manage their work. As a kid, Dr. Feinsod was the catcher on his baseball team where he learned early on to focus on the big picture while making sure nothing got by him.



Sustainable Jersey for Schools Launch: In 2012, representatives from local school districts were serving on their municipal Sustainable Jersey green teams. It was clear that there was a need to create a program that specifically addressed sustainability within the education sector. The leadership of Sustainable Jersey approached Dr. Feinsod to discuss the development of a voluntary sustainability certification program designed specifically for schools. As a result of these meetings, the two organizations cemented an enduring partnership that led to the creation of *Sustainable Jersey for Schools*.

Dr. Feinsod said, “I didn’t hesitate when I was asked about a partnership with Sustainable Jersey. Our children need to understand the critical importance of sustainability in their lives. I knew this program would be a huge step in the right direction.” Similar to the municipal program, *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* convened experts, local school officials, educators and other stakeholders to determine the content of the program. On July 22, 2013, over 100 people attended a kick-off meeting and working groups representing various partners across the state began to define the program standards and actions that would advance schools toward certification.



At NJSBA’s 2014 Workshop, Dr. Feinsod and Sustainable Jersey’s Executive Director Randall Solomon were joined on stage by leaders of eight key partner organizations to announce the initiative. The partners are an integral part of a comprehensive coalition of education, business and state agency partners that help vet the certification program actions.



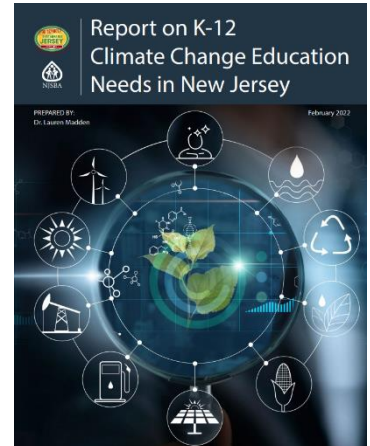
“*Sustainable Jersey for Schools* enables local boards of education to take a leadership role alongside municipalities in sustainable practices. It represents a major goal of NJSBA because the link between sustainability and school districts has reached into the classroom, with benefits to our students’ physical and academic well-being,” Dr. Feinsod said. “Sustainability practices advance our schools financially and educationally. And the *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* program has been a major factor in helping our schools reach this important goal.”

Sustainable Jersey Digital Schools: The [Sustainable Jersey Digital Schools Program](#) was created in June 2020 to integrate new content into *Sustainable Jersey for Schools* that strengthens support for schools in meeting the challenges of digital learning. Digital Schools was formed as a partnership with the [New Jersey Department of Education](#) and NJSBA, and is [endorsed](#) by New Jersey Leadership for Educational Excellence. The primary goal is to support schools in their digital learning planning and implementations in order to help them prepare all students for



college and careers in an ever-evolving digital world. In 2021, [37 schools from nine school districts](#) were the first schools in New Jersey to earn [Digital Schools Star recognition](#) as part of their Sustainable Jersey for Schools certification.

New Jersey Climate Change Education Support: In June 2020, New Jersey became the first state to incorporate K-12 climate change education across content areas in the state’s Student Learning Standards. In 2021, NJSBA and Sustainable Jersey joined forces to identify what assistance New Jersey schools need to adopt the new climate change learning standards. A leadership committee composed of educators, school board members, representatives from the state and federal governments, the state’s major education groups, non-profit environmental advocacy and conservation groups, higher education and the private sector, was convened as a result.



In 2022, NJSBA and Sustainable Jersey released a comprehensive report with recommendations on how New Jersey schools can incorporate K-12 climate change education throughout the curriculum. The guidance in [Report on K-12 Climate Change Education Needs in New Jersey](#) serves as a key resource for the school community to successfully navigate new learning standards. “NJSBA was aware that school districts throughout the state were eager to receive information and resources on climate change education, so educators have the tools they need to meet the state’s updated New Jersey Student Learning Standards,” said Dr. Feinsod. “The recommendations in this report will go a long way to helping schools accomplish that goal and is one more example of how NJSBA serves the school community.”

Education and Experience: Dr. Feinsod was selected as the eighth Executive Director of NJSBA in September 2012. The organization’s 26-member Board of Directors approved the appointment unanimously, following a nationwide search. Dr. Feinsod has served as the superintendent of schools in the Cranford, Madison and Mount Arlington school districts. From 2008 to 2012, he was the state Department of Education’s executive county superintendent for Essex County, assisting and overseeing 23 school districts with a student population of approximately 130,000. In addition, he served for approximately 20 years as a member of the Board of Education of the [Morris-Union Jointure Commission](#), including a term as the board’s president. Dr. Feinsod is a former president and co-founder of the [Garden State Coalition of Schools](#), a grassroots advocacy group of school administrators, school board members and parents, established in 1992.

Dr. Feinsod is a recipient of the Outstanding Educator Award from the Newark affiliate of the National Organization of African American Administrators (2012), the Outstanding Service Award from the [New Jersey Association of School Administrators](#) (2008), and the Education Leadership Award from the New Jersey Coalition of Educational Leaders for the support and advancement of women in leadership positions (2004).

Dr. Feinsod holds a Doctor of Education degree from Rutgers University, a professional diploma in Educational Leadership from Fordham University, and a B.A. and an M.A. from Kean University. He attended the public schools in the South Orange-Maplewood School District where a teacher made a lasting impact on his life. Dr. Feinsod explained, “Nearly everyone has a great teacher in their life who influenced and encouraged them. Mine was a 5th grade teacher, Miss Sloan, who inspired me to spend my career in education.”

Dr. Feinsod and his wife, Sharon, reside in West Orange. They have two adult daughters and a 10-year-old granddaughter. Dr. Feinsod and his wife love to travel and are planning a trip to Portugal to celebrate Dr. Feinsod’s retirement.