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Kathryn Lemerich

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Middlesex County

With over 20 years of experience in education, Kathryn Lemerich is a dedicated leader in a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) and sustainability. She currently serves as the Secondary Supervisor for STEM in the [Metuchen School District](#) and co-chairs the district's Sustainability/Climate Change Committee. In this role, she has been instrumental in supporting sustainability efforts throughout the district and forging local and state connections to support the district's work.

A true sustainability champion, Kate is recognized for her vision, collaborative spirit and commitment to driving meaningful change. Under her leadership, the Metuchen School District was honored with the 2024 New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Governor's Environmental Excellence Award. Kate also serves as the President-Elect of [NJASCD](#) (New Jersey Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development), was one of 46 educators to be named an ASCD Emerging Leader in 2017 and was the recipient of the 2024 Metuchen High School Star Awards Program Administrator of the Year award.

Kate explained, "This honor is not about me being named a hero—it's a testament to the incredible work of those around me. It belongs to every student, teacher, parent, Board of Education member, administrator and community member I've had the privilege to work with in the Metuchen Public School District. They are the true sustainability heroes of this work!"

Kate actively shares her expertise by presenting at state and national conferences, including the 2024 [Sustainable Jersey for Schools](#) "Building Sustainable Schools: Strategies for Integrating Climate Education and Sustainability in your District" panel at the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association Fall Conference. She is a tireless advocate for the transformative work happening in the Metuchen School District, continuously fostering connections and resources to empower the entire community.

Three of the four schools in the Metuchen School District have achieved bronze-level certification with Sustainable Jersey for Schools. Kate has been instrumental in rallying district staff, students and administrators to participate in the certification process. Reflecting on this work, Kate shared, "We're fortunate to have a strong partnership in our sustainability work with the school board, staff, students, environmental commission, shade tree commission and parents. We believe in what we're doing and know we can make a difference."



This collaborative spirit extends beyond certification efforts. With the support of administrators like Metuchen School District Assistant Superintendent Dr. Tania Herzog and the stand-out talents of Climate Change Committee Co-chair Yoko Kato—a Metuchen High School science teacher and advisor to the Environmental Club—the team has strengthened the environmental clubs and worked alongside the Metuchen Shade Tree Commission to implement the Tree Ambassadors program, furthering the district’s commitment to environmental stewardship.

Kate played a key advocacy role during the district’s referendum project, ensuring sustainability was a priority. Her efforts helped incorporate considerations presented through their energy audit, including LED lighting and energy-efficient HVAC systems. She also connected the district with [Sustainable Jersey’s energy technical assistance](#), funded by Elizabethtown Gas, working closely with the district’s Business Administrator, Michael Harvier, to find affordable and sustainable options for the district.

The Metuchen School District’s Sustainability/Climate Change Committee—a collaborative group of administrators, teachers, parents and members of the Board of Education—drive the district’s sustainability efforts. Recognizing the importance of student voice, Kate advocated for adding a student representative, acknowledging, “Students are the future, and we want their ideas to be heard and valued as we seek innovative sustainability solutions.” To learn more about the actions completed by Metuchen High School, read the [2024 Sustainable Jersey for Schools Certification Report for Metuchen High School](#).

Climate Change Awareness

Kate and Yoko serve as the co-chairs of the Sustainability/Climate Change Committee, which is dedicated to raising climate change awareness among faculty, students and the community while integrating climate change education and supporting sustainability actions throughout the district.

The committee led many initiatives, including the [Metuchen Staff Climate Change Awareness Initiative](#), an effort designed to engage educators in meaningful climate education. Participants entered a monthly prize drawing for a set of eco-friendly household items after completing activities such as reading articles, listening to podcasts, exploring climate education resources such as the [New Jersey Climate Change Education Hub](#), and teaching a climate change lesson. Metuchen High School received 10 certification points for this work with the Sustainable Jersey action: [Green Challenges](#). The district welcomed Dr. James Shope from Rutgers University, a climate change expert, to the district to deliver a talk on climate change to the entire community.

As a testament to the success of the district’s climate education integration efforts, teachers and students from various subject areas were invited to present their climate change lessons to the New Jersey Department of Education’s Climate Change Division along with New Jersey First Lady Tammy Murphy.

Tree Ambassadors Program

Metuchen High School students participated in the Tree Ambassadors Program, a collaboration between the Metuchen Shade Tree Commission and the district. The program was supported by Superintendent of Schools Dr. Vincent Caputo and Dr. Tania Herzog and was led by Yoko Kato in partnership with Dr. Ken Sammond from the Shade Tree Commission, who helped select students and oversee the initiative.

A cohort of high school students engaged in a series of expert-led sessions on tree ecology, gaining valuable skills to assess the health of urban trees in the community, led by an impressive lineup of community and local speakers. Applying their knowledge, the students developed a presentation on



the roles, benefits and needs of trees, which they delivered to elementary and middle school students. Following the lessons, they led hands-on tree planting activities, fostering younger students' engagement with sustainability efforts. Building on their success, the Tree Ambassadors will welcome a second cohort of students, further strengthening Metuchen's commitment to urban forestry and environmental education. As part of the Borough of Metuchen's 125th anniversary celebration, the Shade Tree Commission has committed to planting 125 trees, and the Tree Ambassadors are conducting an analysis to determine optimal planting locations. Metuchen High School received 10 certification points for this work with the completion of the Sustainable Jersey Action: [Civic & Stewardship Volunteer Initiatives](#).

New Jersey Climate Challenge Winner: Anti-Idling Initiative

In 2024, the Metuchen High School Green Team led an [anti-idling initiative](#) that resulted in about a 50% reduction in the number of idling cars at the high school. The initiative was supported by the [Metuchen High School Environmental Club](#).

The Environmental Club launched a campaign to educate the school community on the environmental impacts of vehicle idling through data collection, [a pamphlet](#), [presentations](#) and [posters](#). Inspired by the [New Jersey Student Climate Challenge](#), which provided project ideas and guidelines, the students developed an initiative aimed at reducing idling on school grounds.



At the start of the school year, parents were asked to sign an electronic anti-idling pledge, committing not to idle their vehicles on school property. Later, during the winter, the students took a more hands-on approach, implementing a multi-faceted awareness campaign. In February and March, they conducted initial data collection on the percentage of cars idling outside the school during pickup times. To directly engage the community, the students distributed pamphlets to waiting drivers, explaining the harmful effects of idling. They also delivered presentations to the Driver's Education classes, teaching future drivers about the environmental consequences of idling. Posters were placed throughout the school to reinforce key messages. Additionally, a community-wide email was sent to raise awareness, and Metuchen High School Principal Porowski incorporated anti-idling messages into his morning announcements and newsletters.

The campaign had a measurable impact. At the start of the initiative, 67% of vehicles were idling outside the school. After just two weeks of outreach efforts, that number dropped to 34%. The students submitted an application and the required [project video](#) to the 2024 New Jersey Student Climate Challenge, and won third place and a \$500 grant for the school. Metuchen High School also received 10 certification points for this initiative with the completion of the Sustainable Jersey for Schools Action: [Anti-Idling Education & Enforcement](#). The New Jersey Student Climate Challenge is open now with submissions due by April 9, 2025.

More About Kate

Kate began her career as a mathematics teacher in the Walled Lake Consolidated School District and Cranbrook Schools in Michigan before moving home to New Jersey, where she taught in the Millburn Township Public Schools. She went on to serve as the Supervisor of Business and Mathematics for Madison Public Schools, Vice Principal of the Flemington-Raritan Regional School District and Principal at Tewksbury Township Schools. She also worked as a K-6 Elementary Math Consultant for the New Providence School District.

Outside of work, Kate and her husband enjoy traveling, paddleboarding, hiking and spending time outdoors with their two children. Kate also has a passion for reading and gardening.