

*President's Message*

**NJASA President Dr. Rick Falkenstein  
2025-2026**



***The Ripple Effect***

Spring is often the most challenging season for school leaders, and this year is no exception. Rising costs, tight fiscal limits, and increasing demands on our schools are testing the resolve of both new and veteran administrators. With the aforementioned challenges, the decisions we make during budget season leaves little room for error.

This year's challenge was compounded by the two-week delay in the state budget and health insurance premium increases that far exceed the traditional two-percent cap many districts plan around. These factors have forced districts across New Jersey to make difficult choices while staying focused on what matters most: our students. The budget process is more than balancing numbers. It is a series of choices as districts decide where to allocate their limited resources.

Our lives, both personally and professionally, are shaped by the choices we make each day. During challenging times, those choices reveal who we truly are. They reflect our values, our priorities, and our commitment to the students, staff, and communities we serve. The pressure of our professional choices often takes a toll on our own well-being. Whether it be taking a walk around your building, shooting baskets with students, reading to classes, or riding your bike, I ask that you also make the choice to take the time to take care of yourself.

Leaders who promote self-care recognize it not as an indulgence, but as a strategic leadership tool essential for long-term effectiveness. By prioritizing their own well-being, they create a "ripple effect" that sets a precedent for their entire organization to follow.

During these challenging times, I encourage you to become a ripple effect by modeling and promoting self-care for yourself and those around you.

Rick Falkenstein  
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