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# Courier News

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## EDUCATION



A student works on a reusable worksheet in a third grade classroom during a lesson focusing on English language arts using phonics-based instruction at Columbus Elementary in Lodi on March 27.  
 PHOTOS BY JULIAN LESHAY GUADALUPE/NORTHJERSEY.COM

# Playing catch-up

## Why some states saw better student gains than New Jersey after COVID-19

Mary Ann Koruth NorthJersey.com | USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

Francine Terranova's third graders know the difference between a macron and a breve, even if many adults don't. • Those names — for the dictionary symbols used to mark up vowels in words — rolled as easily off the tongues of the 8-year-olds during a recent English class at Columbus Elementary in Lodi as the sounds of 'y' in "dry" and "empty." • That's because they had gotten an early start toward proficiency in third grade, a critical milestone. • When teachers noticed pronounced lags in early reading among children returning to the school in September 2021 after the COVID pandemic closed it, the Lodi district introduced Wilson's Foundations, a structured reading curriculum, "as a strategic response" to catch kids up, said Robert Cannizzaro, the school principal.

See CATCH-UP, Page 3A



Third grade teacher Francine Terranova asks the class a question about suffixes.

"Several of our country's poorest states — Mississippi, Kentucky, Louisiana and South Carolina — now have a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged fourth graders reading proficiently than we do."

Paula White  
 School reform advocate and head of JerseyCAN

# New trial denied in 1998 murder case

Mike Deak  
 MyCentralJersey.com  
 USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

A state appellate court has rejected a request for a new trial by a man convicted of murdering the daughter of a former Bound Brook mayor in 1998.



Gannone

Francis Gannone Jr., 56, is serving a 30-year-to-life sentence in East Jersey State Prison in Rahway for the murder of Valerie Fasanello, daughter of former Mayor Ron Fasanello. State records show Gannone will be eligible for parole in September 2028.

Gannone sought a new trial in 2023, asking Superior Court Judge Angela Borkowski to reconsider his conviction based on what he described as newly discovered evidence of possible jury tampering during his 2001 trial.

See GANNONE, Page 6A

# Fight over zoning for self-storage heads to June 3 hearing

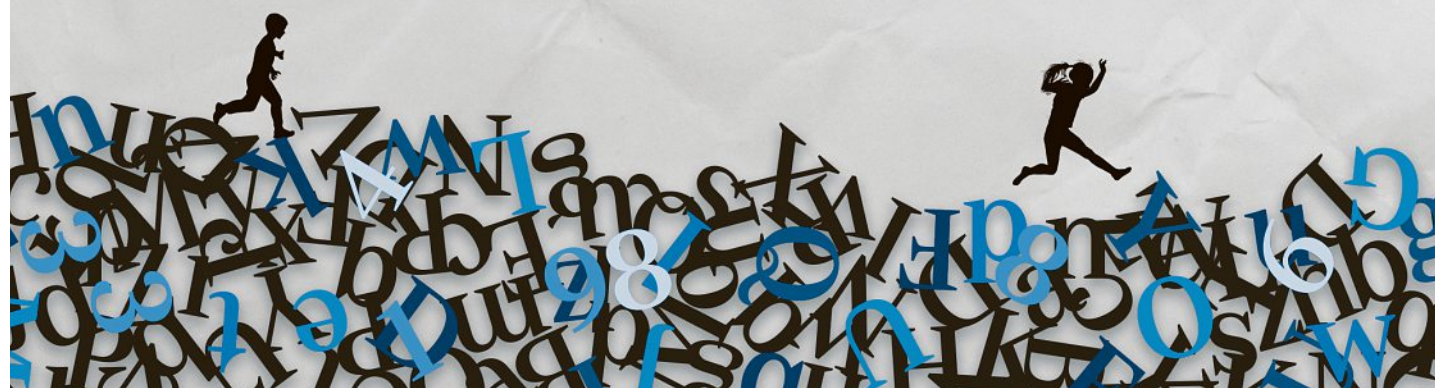
Mike Deak  
 MyCentralJersey.com  
 USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

SOMERVILLE — The borough Zoning Board of Adjustment will continue public hearings June 3 on a controversial proposal to demolish a historic West End Avenue building and construct a three-story self-storage facility across from Borough Hall.

About 100 residents attended the board's first hearing April 15 on the plan by NAN Realty Holdings LLC of Cranford to build a 70,000-square-foot self-storage facility on a 0.73-acre lot and an adjacent 0.47-acre vacant parcel at 28 and 30 West End Ave. The site sits between Fulton Bank, at the corner of West End and Mountain avenues, and Cuoco Funeral and Cremation Services.

The proposal calls for demolishing the two-story brick building at 20 West End Ave., constructed in 1880 and described in a real estate listing as a "one of a kind classic building." The structure previously housed Hughes Plummer & Associates, an insurance agency.

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