

NJPSA Questionnaire for NJ Legislature - 2021 General Election

User: Brown Blaeuer, Melissa / Email: melissabrownblaeuer@gmail.com

Survey answered on: 9/27/2021 06:06 PM

1. Legislative District #: (answer type: Number)

26

2. Office You Are Seeking: (answer type: Short Text)

Assembly

3. Party: (answer type: Short Text)

Democratic

4. Campaign Phone Number: (answer type: Short Text)

+1 830-635-7264

5. Campaign Mailing Address: (answer type: Long Text)

PO BOX 2219, Oak Ridge, NJ, 07438

6. Staff Contact Name and Phone Number (if preferred): (answer type: Long Text)

Dylan Terpstra, Campaign Manager, dylan@MelAndPam4LD26.com, 973-945-7181

7. State investment in a state level school facilities strategic plan to address long-ignored school infrastructure needs across all school districts in need in New Jersey (answer type: Multiple Options With Single Answer)

Support

8. Supporting school employees' (including NJPSA members') rights to collective bargaining (answer type: Multiple Options With Single Answer)

Support

9. An ongoing commitment to the scheduled phase-up of funding of public employee pensions according to the schedule set forth in the law (answer type: Multiple Options With Single Answer)

Support

10. Private school vouchers in any form (tuition tax credits, opportunity scholarships, etc.) (answer type: Multiple Options With Single Answer)

Oppose

11. No new unfunded state mandates for public schools (answer type: Multiple Options With Single Answer)

Support

12. What health care policy approaches and priorities do you support for our public schools with the goal of maintaining in-person learning? In your mind, since educators are not health professionals, when do you believe a statewide approach is needed and when is a local approach more appropriate in deciding pandemic-related school health policies? (answer type: Long Text)

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I am not a health professional and defer to the best we have in the scientific and medical communities. I support remediating the ventilation, technology and facility capacity of the public school infrastructure as recommended.

Health care policies that abide by the recommendations of the NJ State Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention must take precedence. We must heed their learned and peer-reviewed, informed perspective, advice and leadership for the best path to confront COVID, free from unfounded and deeply political, cynical and dangerous misinformation permeating the Internet and social media. Such instability and opportunism is shameless and shameful.

Arguments seeking to promote risky, reckless behavior in the name of personal liberty, as many local voices urge, is a misguided manifestation of the politicized power of social media and social proof over professionalism and an informed perspective. The public trust is bolstered by action and policy aligned with our highest intentions and long-term vision, which must be internally consistent, coherent to be efficient and successful.

I fear more that students will be impacted their whole lives knowing not wearing a mask or following the best medical advice prolonged and spread COVID19 -- perhaps with a close family member or friend catching COVID and dying. These are profound, lifelong memories in the making, affecting the quality of their lives. Any short-term hindrance to the learning experience that necessary measures incur, or plays to the vanity of appearing without a mask in social and public settings, pale in comparison.

13. What issues do you see in this area and how can you assist local districts in addressing school infrastructure needs in both SDA (Schools Development Authority) districts and regular operating districts? (answer type: Long Text)

It disdains me that despite the allocation of CARES and ARP funding to directly address needed repairs to accommodate COVID safety enhancements, per this question... "districts still face funding challenges, regulatory obstacles and delays in addressing these critical repairs." These issues need to be called out and resolved.

Local school districts are already deeply challenged with the pervasive home-rule approach to school funding in New Jersey, where we have among the best yet most expensive school systems in the nation. I admire the New Jersey legislature's leadership to promote various means to incorporate shared services across districts to apply downward pressure on real estate taxes by cutting overhead where practical. This will open up funding sources to improve building infrastructure needed during COVID and future health and welfare challenges.

I further believe such long-term cost-mitigating strategies will have these critical added benefits: Cater to the needs of 21st century business know-how and readiness by giving students broader curricula and learning opportunities tailored to their unique skills and abilities in trades and academia that will optimize their future personal and community prosperity by realizing their full potential. This is the bottom-up economics approach that our campaign champions as the answer to four decades of corrosive trickle-down falsehoods that have weakened the American economic and political systems and the public trust.

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Relieve the issues of chronic poverty and severe segregation caused by the siloed school system architecture in New Jersey. We can achieve this through a higher-level, interconnected public education system with greater social and cultural diversity that fosters empathy, sensitivity and awareness in all students.

14. As a legislator, will you support professional educators in their work with their students and avoid the temptation to mandate specific programs for every school district as we work to meet the individual needs of each student, school and district? How will you support the work of educators and principals in your district? (answer type: Long Text)

I will support the work of educators and principals by trusting in their shared mission and vision to do the right thing by our students throughout this episode of COVID19 challenges to bring the best of their full range of skills, insight and talent to bear. Their line of sight and closeness to these problems equips them to lead the way in designing solutions that close the gaps to sustain the value each student receives for their attendance now and throughout their school careers.

The legislature has adopted a collaborative approach with boards of education, educators and administrators to navigate the current and long-term, evolving framework of funding and curricula offerings that would lower costs in the long run while maintaining extraordinary results and quality. At every turn, the inclusion of all stakeholders and critical perspectives must be maintained to achieve the best possible outcomes -- the professional prestige and viability of our education infrastructure, strategic investment in our most valued resource, our people, and generations of satisfied students equipped to be productive, engaged citizens and to further their academic experience or transition into business owners and employees.

15. Do you believe New Jersey students should pass a state graduation test or demonstrate proficiency in math and language arts standards as described above to earn a high school diploma? (answer type: Long Text)

I am not a professional educator and feel that the broad range of assessments referred to above, recommended by the NJPSA, may be sufficient to help students identify their unique strengths to further develop to optimize their lifelong realization of their full potential and personal prosperity. I do not think a one-size-fits-all approach to education is for the benefit of society, but rather that individual students should be helped to cultivate their passions based on their unique familial and intellectual qualities.

To the degree that the current range of assessments and counseling better serves this purpose, the quantitative math and reading graduation tests mandated might be intrusive and extraneous. In the end, it is fundamentally critical that we build bottom-up economic and social strength that fosters faith in the future and one another, enriched with diversity and cultural appreciation and understanding. An educated and literate electorate will be best prepared to overcome the intense political, economic and societal challenges we face. Taking the lead from professional educators most versed in what works, with the input of other economic and social science perspectives rather than divisive political influences, is the best way to realize these vital goals.

16. As a legislator, what will you do to promote education as a positive career path to our youth and what types of initiatives will you consider to enhance the educational career pipeline for the future? How will you promote diversity within our future workforce? (answer type: Long Text)

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Public education is the means by which almost all children become literate and acquire the social, physical and intellectual skills and capabilities to meet the needs of the future economy and society. Ensuring that education is well-funded and optimized to offer tailored solutions and a broad range of curriculum options for trades, academia and modern business and technology is one of the most important services of the public sector and government. It is a matter of national pride, capability, investment and aspiration.

I will do all I can to optimize the use of public funds to invest in a system that is efficient, cost-effective and optimized to offer the best education experiences and diversity through sharing of appropriate services, while respecting the needs of local communities, educators and students.

I mentioned above that offering broader curricula across districts through shared facilities and services will enhance diversity in the future workforce, end chronic segregation and poverty, and promote empathy, compassion, appreciation and affinity.

In addition, the need to incorporate accurate curricula in history and diversity is vital, and should not exclude inconvenient truths nor favor a particular faith, culture or political agenda. The truth must be respected if we are to promote future peace, prosperity, sustainability, strength and fidelity to the American dream of real and meaningful liberty, equality, due process, and opportunity.

17. Will you vote for legislation (S-3284 (Greenstein)/ A-5011 (Wimberly)) that provides the same accidental death benefit to school employees who lost their lives in the service of their school community while performing such essential services? (answer type: Yes/No)

Yes

18. Thinking about the future, what are your goals for our public education system and what actions will you take as a state legislator to support our educators, our students and our schools? (answer type: Long Text)

I mentioned above that reducing the cost of education, promoting diversity, and offering more tailored curricula and learning paths will lower the cost of education and property taxes through regionalization and shared service where possible and appropriate.

It will likewise promote personal prosperity and realize the full potential of all learners to realize true economic progress after four decades of trickle-down splintering and dysfunction.

This can be achieved by working backwards from these high-level goals to include all education stakeholders in a collaborative process to solve problems with innovative and effective programs with measurable metrics against these goals and the larger, net-positive impacts on society.

Re-imagining the art of the possible from clearly articulated goals and success measures is the modern, tried and true methodology to reach unprecedented milestones. The greatest benefits will be to reduce conflict, poverty, crime, addiction, disaffection and dropout rates, and a general need for societal band-aids such as social safety nets to curb homelessness, domestic violence and lack of job preparedness.