

NJPSA Candidate Questionnaire for 2025 General Election

This candidate questionnaire aims to gather insights into your stance on critical education policy issues affecting New Jersey that impact our association members.

Candidate Name *

Anthony Acosta

Legislative District Number *

31

Office You Are Seeking *

State Assembly

Party Affiliation *

Republican

Campaign Contact Information - Phone

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Campaign Contact Information - Mailing Address

Please do not list if using home address

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Campaign Contact Information - Staff Contact Name

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Campaign Contact Information - Staff Contact Email

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1. Your Educational Priorities



As the 2025-26 school year gets underway, what do you perceive to be the top three issues and challenges for New Jersey students and schools? As a member of the General Assembly, what would be your educational priorities and how would you work with NJPSA to address these issues?

Top three issues: Overcrowding, high taxes, weak focus on basics.

Priorities: Transparency, parent voice, teacher support.

With NJPSA: Work together on reforms that cut waste and put students first.

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2. School Funding



The 2008 School Funding Reform Act, SFRA, and its subsequent amendments determine state aid distributions to New Jersey school districts each year. Schools are funded through a combination of local, state and federal funding sources. School district spending is constrained by state law that imposes a 2% tax levy cap on school district budgets. Over the past few years, New Jersey has made significant investments in our schools, yet some districts face significant financial challenges due to provisions of the SFRA, as amended, inflationary school costs, rising needs in their school community, and the spending restrictions of the cap law.

What changes, if any, do you think should be made to our school funding formula? Would you support changes to the spending cap law to permit cap adjustments to exclude certain high cost areas (transportation, health insurance costs, etc.) from the spending cap or other flexibilities to help districts avoid teacher layoffs and program elimination?

Funding formula: It must be updated for fairness and transparency so every district gets what it truly needs.

Cap law: I'd support smart flexibility on unavoidable costs like transportation and insurance, while protecting taxpayers from runaway spending.

3. Educator Shortage



Even prior to the pandemic, school principals and supervisors were grappling with a shortage of teachers and educational service employees (counselors, nurses, etc.) in making their annual hiring decisions. In recent years, the educator shortage has been pervasive, impacting all districts and school staffing needs from physics teachers to bus drivers.

What specific initiatives will you support to strengthen the educator pipeline and promote diversity in the profession?

I'll support reducing bureaucratic barriers to entry, expanding mentorship and training programs, and promoting incentives that attract and retain qualified educators.

4. Student Assessment



NJPSA believes that student assessment is an important instructional tool that assists educators, students, and parents in understanding a student's progress in school. Teachers use formative tests to determine a student's understanding as material is taught. Principals and supervisors rely upon student testing data to identify areas of needed curriculum change or modification. Student test results on standardized assessments are utilized in the evaluation of teachers, principals and assistant principals, and the state and federal government use standardized test scores as an accountability tool to identify school performance issues for remediation. Additionally, in New Jersey, we require high school seniors to pass a standardized test, the NJ Graduation Proficiency Assessment (NJGPA) to graduate from high school.

What is your view of the appropriate use of standardized tests in New Jersey schools? Do you believe the NJGPA or other statewide assessments should remain a graduation requirement? If not, what alternatives should be considered?

I don't support standardized tests. Our focus should be on curriculum that equips students with real-world skills and prepares them for life after school.

5. School Facilities



Every New Jersey school should provide students and school staff with a safe and healthy environment for learning to occur. Yet, the condition of school facilities across the state varies dramatically, particularly where challenging local budgets do not provide for facilities maintenance, necessary expansions or upgrades to meet evolving health and safety standards.

Would you support new state investments in school infrastructure statewide through state funding and/or new bonding initiatives to support school construction and infrastructure needs?

Yes. I support new state investments to ensure all schools have safe, modern facilities, while making sure taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently and transparently.

6. Student Wellness and Support



Schools face major challenges in meeting the health and wellness needs of our students, particularly in the mental health area. Although our schools strive to provide **all** students with a safe and supportive environment to learn, student mental health needs are rising at alarming rates, particularly as specific student populations face new stressors in our divisive world. NJPSA believe that every student needs our support and the opportunity to learn free from threat, discrimination, or abuse.

Will you work with NJPSA to support every New Jersey student? What ideas do you have to assist schools in meeting the mental health needs of our students?

Yes. I will work with NJPSA to support every student. Schools should have access to more counselors, mental health programs, and community partnerships, while keeping families involved and prioritizing real-world coping and life skills.

7. Educator Pensions



New Jersey educators, including principals and supervisors, have spent their professional careers devoted to assisting their students to succeed in life. Our members chose this profession despite the fact that they could have earned more in the private sector. A key part of that choice was the knowledge of a secure pension when they retired. Currently, the public employee pension systems are still significantly underfunded despite record investments in recent years. Additionally, new educators receive a "lesser" pension, based upon pension tiers created in 2007.

Will you support continued strong investments to address the unfunded liabilities of the Teachers' Pension and Annuity Fund (TPAF) and other public employee pension systems?

Would you support a renewed look at the tiered pension system which serves as a barrier to the educator pipeline by providing new educators with a reduced pension?

Yes. I support strong investments to fully fund public employee pensions and believe the tiered system should be reviewed to ensure new educators have fair, competitive retirement benefits.

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