

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 Valdes

Legislative District Number *
33

Office You Are Seeking *
Assembly

Party Affiliation *
Republican

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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?

1. Lack of funding- eliminating wasteful spending from the state budget would provide more funding to the school system

2. Curriculum- we need to get back to basics such as reading, writing, and math. Too many unnecessary classes not teaching the life skills needed to survive moving forward.

3. Common sense- lack of common sense legislation is destroying our schools. Unfortunately it always comes down to funding. We should not reward poor performing schools with more funding so they can waste it on useless contracts costing more taxpayer money.

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?

The school funding process needs an overhaul. Certain districts do have huge budget gaps. I believe a case by case evaluation is essential.

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?

Again, I believe eliminating wasteful spending from all budgets will ultimately improve not only the state but the school systems as well. With more available money you can provide higher salaries for all levels ensuring a livable wage.

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?

NJGPA should stay in place in my opinion but I also believe more vocational training as well as school choice is the future.

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 improving the infrastructure of schools but on a case by case basis

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?

Parents need to be more accountable for their children's needs. More interaction between parents and teachers is a must. We can not expect teachers to do it all with their low salaries.

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?

I support COLA. I was endorsed by the NJ Retired Police and Firemen Association. As a public worker and union guy myself, i will always support funding pensions for all