

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 *

Jason Corley

Legislative District Number *

13

Office You Are Seeking *

Assembly

Party Affiliation *

Democrats

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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?

The top three issues and challenges confronting New Jersey students and schools for the 2025-26 academic year are: stability and adequacy of school funding, student mental health and learning recovery, and infrastructure (safe, modern school facilities). As a member of the General Assembly, key educational priorities would include strengthening funding formulas, expanding support systems for academic and mental health, and partnering with NJPSA to drive data-informed, innovative policy solutions

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?

New Jersey's current school funding formula has recently seen several temporary adjustments aimed at reducing aid volatility, such as capping annual decreases and increases in state aid, and using three-year averages for property values to calculate district contributions. However, there is growing consensus that permanent statutory changes are necessary to address the formula's shortcomings and provide stability for districts facing rising costs in key areas like transportation and health insurance

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?

To strengthen the educator pipeline and promote diversity in the profession, supporting a mix of state and local initiatives is essential. Specific measures that merit support include expanding apprenticeship and "Grow Your Own" programs, promoting alternative certification pathways, providing financial incentives and professional development, and focusing on retention for teachers of color

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?

Standardized tests should be used primarily as diagnostic and accountability tools to help educators assess curricular strengths and areas for improvement, rather than as rigid, high-stakes graduation barriers.

Emphasis should be on informing instruction, supporting interventions, and monitoring statewide trends to address equity and achievement gaps

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?

Statewide investment in school infrastructure will improve student health, safety, and learning, address longstanding inequities (especially in SDA/former Abbott districts), support energy efficiency, and create jobs.

New bonding, paired with annual appropriations, is necessary to tackle both emergent repairs and long-term strategic modernizations

Support is warranted for a new round of school construction bonds and robust annual capital allocations, with streamlined application and equitable distribution focused on the most critical projects

Such investments are vital for ensuring that every student in New Jersey has access to facilities that meet 21st-century learning standards

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, working closely with the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA) to support every student is vital, especially in addressing the growing mental health needs in schools. NJPSA has actively supported legislative and programmatic efforts to strengthen mental health services, and collaboration with them reinforces a coordinated, school-based approach

Implement Coordinated School Health Programs
Increase Mental Health Staffing and Training
Strengthen School Safety Teams and Climate Practices
Address Impact of Social Media

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?

Support sustained, strong state contributions to fully fund TPAF and other public employee pensions to ensure long-term viability and financial responsibility.

Advocate for a thorough examination of the tiered pension system to address unintended consequences for recruitment and retention, exploring reforms that maintain fiscal balance while improving benefits fairness for new educators

Engage stakeholders, including educators, unions, financial experts, and policymakers, in transparent discussions and data-driven solutions to strengthen New Jersey's pension system.