

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 *

Rosalee Keech

Legislative District Number *

LD 9

Office You Are Seeking *

General Assembly

Party Affiliation *

Democrat

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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?

- Recognizing that education happens best in an environment where a child's basic needs of safety, nourishment, shelter are provided, I will work with parents, students, educators, law enforcement, school administrators, school boards, teachers and local officials to identify and fund best practices to stop school shootings, provide meals and homes to those families with children that are currently homeless and/or meal deprived;
 - Bullying or sexual exploitation have been shown to cause suicides, school shootings and other forms of violence. Funding for anti-bullying programs and implementing best practices is a top priority for me. All children should not fear going to school because of being bullied whether it is by other students or trusted professionals.
 - Ignored for too long, a key focus is expanding support for families with special needs' children by expanding funding for resources including teachers, support staff and materials that will maximize learning potential;
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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?

Change is definitely needed. However the approach I would suggest is to convene experts including representatives from school finance administrators, superintendents, principals, teachers, Boards of Education and local governments and those impacted most, parents, students and taxpayers to identify legislation needed for ensuring that our taxpayer dollars are achieving the goals of education. Further, this Task Force would make recommendations to communities struggling financially to meet our children's educational needs. Gaining consensus on the path forward amongst the multi-stakeholders and having that inform legislation required is a better approach than legislators dictating solutions. I would support the changes that the Task Force recommends. If the approach is not adopted, I would support excluding high cost areas especially 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?

Strengthening the educator pipeline (teachers and educational service employees) will require a concerted effort to make the education and certification needed affordable. I would support a plan where financial assistance would be provided to education pipeline students upon completion of five years of employment in NJ public schools. Additionally, students should be reimbursed tuition costs for time spent in "practice teaching".

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 agree that there are many benefits to standardized testing but think that there should also be other criteria in evaluating the professionals' performance. To name just a few evaluation measures:

- * students' evaluation of teachers,
 - * additional services other than classroom learning being provided by the school,
 - * anti-bullying and safety programs and results
 - * results of students' preparedness for post graduate activities (survey to be taken 2 years after graduation).
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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?

I would support new bonding initiatives to support school construction and infrastructure needs.

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! Ideas include anti-bullying programs, establishing protocols to remove professionals from working in schools if abuse is found to have occurred. Further, removal of licensing should occur to any school professional convicted of abuse which would prevent that individual from working in another school district.

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 and YES

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