

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.

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Legislative District Number *

36

Office You Are Seeking *

Assembly

Party Affiliation *

Democratic

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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?

As we begin the 2025–2026 school year, I believe the greatest challenges facing our schools are the ongoing educator workforce shortage, the need for equitable and sustainable school funding, and the rising mental health needs of students.

Our state consistently ranks among the top public school systems in the country, and this year was ranked #1 by U.S. News and World Report. My educational priorities focus on ensuring that New Jersey's children continue to have access to high-quality public education. To achieve this, I will support investments and policies that strengthen the educator pipeline, provide fair and sustainable funding to districts, and expand appropriate mental health resources for students. I will also continue to work collaboratively with NJPSA to advance these priorities, as I believe solutions must be data-driven and shaped in partnership with education professionals.

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 commitment to education must be matched with a funding formula that reflects today's economic and demographic realities. While the SFRA provided a foundational framework, there is room for improvement.

I support reexamining the formula to ensure districts with rising enrollment, special education demands, and unique socioeconomic challenges are not left behind. I also support allowing flexibility within the 2% cap, especially to exempt high-cost areas such as healthcare, student transportation, and special education services—cost drivers over which districts have little control. Without these flexibilities, we risk undercutting the very programs that make our schools strong.

Avoiding teacher layoffs and program cuts is not only a budget issue. It is also a key issue in student success. I will work with NJPSA and my legislative colleagues to seek funding solutions that are fair, sustainable, and responsive to local needs.

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?

The educator shortage in New Jersey is urgent and multifaceted. We must approach it from both ends—recruitment and retention.

I support state investment in grow-your-own teacher programs, tuition assistance, and student loan forgiveness for those entering high-need roles or serving in underserved communities. We must also diversify our educator workforce by expanding support for candidates from underrepresented backgrounds, including targeted scholarships, mentorships, and streamlined credentialing pathways.

I also believe that we must modernize our support for educators throughout their careers—through strong mentorship, professional development, and workplace wellness programs. When we invest in our educators, we invest in our students.

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?

Assessments have their place in education — as tools to guide, rather than drive learning. They should not be used to define a student's potential, a teacher's quality, or a school's success. Rather, they should be used as tools to guide and evaluate instruction and programs to best support student growth and development. Regarding graduation requirements, we should carefully consider alternatives to a single high-stakes exam, such as the NJGPA or other state assessments. I would look to NJPSA members and other education professionals for their expertise in identifying the most effective alternative approaches that both uphold high standards and support student success.

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 fully support new state investments in school infrastructure, especially in aging or under-resourced districts. Students and educators deserve safe and healthy environments. This includes fully-functioning HVAC systems and proper ventilation, the removal of hazardous materials such as lead or asbestos, and expanding capacity in overcrowded schools.

In fact, I have already taken legislative action in this area by spearheading Assembly Bill 3019, which requires mercury-free flooring and air quality safeguards in schools, childcare centers, and community facilities. I worked closely with education professionals, including the NJPSA, to ensure that this legislation reflects the needs and priorities of those responsible for the daily health and safety of students.

I would also support bonding initiatives and dedicated capital funding for school construction and facility upgrades, especially where local tax bases are insufficient to meet infrastructure demands alone.

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?

Student mental health is a top priority. The lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, rising levels of anxiety and depression, and ongoing challenges such as bullying, social media, and social pressures continue to affect many of our young people and directly influence their ability to learn and thrive. I recognize that recent state efforts, while well-intentioned, have not fully met the needs of students or schools. We must ensure that resources are directed where they are most effective — into our schools, with trained professionals who know and support our students every day. I am committed to working with NJPSA and education leaders to increase the number of school-based mental health professionals, strengthen early intervention and follow-up services, and expand funding for school-linked programs that connect families with community-based care. I also believe that state programs must be held accountable. Specifically, these programs should require regular evaluation to ensure that funding produces meaningful outcomes for students.

7. Educator Pensions

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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 fully support full funding of all public employee retirement systems, including the Teachers' Pension and Annuity Fund. After years of underfunding, the state must remain on track to meet its obligations to the educators, administrators, and staff who dedicated their careers to public service with the promise of a secure retirement. Strong, consistent investment in our pension systems is not only a matter of fairness, but also of fiscal responsibility, as it prevents future generations from bearing the costs of past shortfalls.

I also believe it is time to take a renewed look at New Jersey's tiered pension system. The current structure, which provides newer educators with diminished benefits, discourages young people from entering or staying in the profession at a time when we face serious workforce shortages. Reviewing this system in partnership with educators, administrators, and fiscal experts would help us strengthen the educator pipeline and reinforce the long-term stability of our pension funds.

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