

# NJPSA Questionnaire for NJ Legislative Candidates of the 2023 GENERAL ELECTION

Thank you for your dedication to public service and for your interest in what is on the minds of the members of the NJ Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA).

NJPSA represents over 7,000 active school leaders in New Jersey's public schools. Our members serve in the positions of principal, assistant principal, director, and supervisor. We are dedicated to providing a high quality education to every student in New Jersey schools.

The following questionnaire is designed for you to share your perspectives on issues of concern to the NJPSA membership. NJPSA will publish your responses on our special NJPSA Election Center website in October to inform our members in their Election 2023 decision-making process.

Thank you for taking the time to share your perspectives with us!

Candidate's Name: \*

Brandon A. Rose

Office Sought: \*

☐ NJ General Assembly

☒ NJ State Senate

☐ Other: .....

Party: \*

- ☒ Democrat
- ☐ Republican
- ☐ Independant
- ☐ Other: .....

Legislative District #: \*

12 ▼

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**Safe Schools**

School principals and supervisors are directly responsible for creating a safe, secure, and supportive learning environment for our students. A student's feeling of safety and security is at risk where school buildings are not up to health and safety standards, where the risk of gun violence can threaten our schools, and where school buildings are not fully equipped with current security staffing and equipment.

**If elected to the State Legislature, what will you do to address school safety and security in the broadest sense, not only to upgrade the physical structures and equipment in our schools, but also to safeguard our students from the threat of gun violence or other threats to their safety?**

Unfortunately, violence in our schools is becoming more and more prevalent. This is especially true of gun violence. Beyond upgrades to physical structures and equipment in schools, there are other steps that can be taken to address the problem of gun violence and other threats. I would advocate for raising NJ's CAP law to increase the age from 16 to 18 with respect to gun owners being responsible for children who find access to guns that are not securely stored. This would make sense because it would include most all school aged children rather than leaving out a small population that still attend school. I would also push legislation for all NJ school districts to have a threat assessment team that would work to identify students who are at risk of committing violence. This approach would work not only for gun violence but for most threats to student safety.

## Student Mental Health

Even before the pandemic, school leaders grew concerned with the rising mental health needs of students. Post-pandemic, students have returned to school with a broad range of needs including mental wellness and academic needs. A recent CDC study found that the number of young adults with depression more than *doubled* from 2011 to 2021. School leaders and their staff do all they can to provide appropriate student support, but the inconsistent range of services and current case overload on service providers, mental health professionals, and outside mental health services is a great barrier. This school year, the Murphy Administration is launching a new network system called NJ4S to provide preventative and referral service options for schools. This, as yet untried, system is designed to replace the highly effective School-Based Youth Services Program, which provides direct funding to some school districts to offer mental health and related services directly in school.

**As a state legislator, how will you prioritize, support, and fund student mental health issues in our schools? Will you advocate for continued funding for existing School-Based Youth Services programs in next year's budget discussions, as well as expansion for these tried-and-true SBYS programs?**

Mental health, especially with respect to school-aged children, is one of the focal points of my campaign and will be a day-one issue to address if elected. We need a comprehensive evaluation of what is being done today and how we can, and must, improve on mental health services, both in and out of school. I will be a strong advocate for funding mental health programs. My support of funding for these programs, whether they are in the school system, outside the school system or a combination of both, would be based on the information and evidence I am provided showing that they work. I would say that if the evidence indicates that the SBYS is an effective program, I would wholeheartedly support it and ensure it is funded as well as look to expanding it. My belief is that currently there needs to be better collaboration between all stake-holders involved with this issue. We need educators, mental health professionals, parents and legislators to work together in creating a comprehensive mental health program that provides quick access, appropriate services and seamless coordination between providers.

## Staffing Shortages/Educator Pipeline

One of the top concerns of NJPSA members is fully staffing their schools in all school roles, including teachers. Once again, the pandemic exacerbated a rising problem in our schools - the dwindling number of young people entering the education profession as teachers, counselors, and other critical school staffing positions. The State Legislature has been working to address barriers to the teaching profession within the licensing code and teacher preparation system.

### **If elected/reelected, what new ideas will you bring to this issue to ensure that our schools are fully staffed with well-qualified and prepared teachers and education service professionals?**

First and foremost, I would say the biggest thing I would do to keep schools fully staffed with well-qualified teachers and education service professionals is be supportive of the ones who are doing the job now. We have far too many educators leaving the profession because of low pay and onerous job requirements. Unfortunately, teachers are regularly demonized by certain factions of our society who have ulterior motives, whether it is to score political points or to profit monetarily. It doesn't surprise me that people don't stay in a profession where they are not appreciated. Another thing I would look to enact would be

a targeted, statewide recruitment program. This would be similar to what Illinois created in 2005 with their Grow Your Own Program. This program was established to identify, train and employ teachers who have previous ties to a community where they would work. This program was focused primarily in low income areas and where need was the highest. Additionally, as a Legislator, I would look to create a program to pay tuition for candidates who agree to teach in high-needs schools for a minimum of four to five years. Finally, I would look to repeal the NJ First Act. To me it doesn't make sense to restrict talented professionals from working in NJ simply because they live on the other side of a bridge.

## Social Media Impacts on Students

The U.S. Surgeon General recently reported on the “profound risk of harm” that social media poses to the mental health and well-being of children and adolescents. Recent tragedies in New Jersey, including the suicide of several young students, amplifies this danger. Social media frequently plays a persistent, negative role in bullying incidents both at and away from school. Principals face impenetrable roadblocks placed by social media companies in addressing these issues.

**If elected/reelected, how will you work with NJPSA to develop legislation that protects the online safety, privacy, and welfare of our students; requires social media companies to develop safer products for student use; and requires social media companies to work with schools and law enforcement in cases where students are harmed by social media use?**

The use of social media can become as addictive as a narcotic and can lead to extremely adverse consequences when used inappropriately or when someone overindulges in it. I would welcome working with the NJPSA in developing legislation to address the online safety, privacy and welfare of students. I believe a first step in this endeavor would be to enact legislation that requires social media companies to apply real age verification protocols in order to access their platforms. The current disclaimer on most sites that a person must be over "XX" in order to use it is really no deterrent at all. With respect to developing a safer product for student use, that would be achieved by what content they have access to based on age or other determining factor, that has been verified or confirmed by a parent/guardian who has assisted in creating an account with their child. All social media companies should be required to have real-time safety technicians who work with schools and law enforcement when students are harmed, or there is a potential for harm, by social media use and abuse.

## Learning and High Stakes Testing

NJPSA believes that student assessment is an integral part of the instructional process that is inextricably linked to a viable curriculum and strong instructional practice. Constructive and well-designed assessments provide on-going, actionable, and timely information to students, parents, and educators concerning what students know, understand, and can do in relation to our learning standards. Currently, New Jersey students are assessed in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science via standardized tests according to federal and state requirements during their elementary, middle and high school careers.

NJPSA believes that New Jersey must streamline its testing requirements to avoid over-testing, duplicative testing, and tests that students do not consider relevant to their futures, especially at the high school level.

### **What role do you believe standardized testing should play in a student's academic life? How would you assist educators in streamlining current requirements and eliminating unnecessary testing?**

Standardized testing should play a limited role in a student's academic life. Overall, a standardized test provides only a snapshot of what a student has actually learned. It most often only reflects how a student responds to a multiple choice test on a specific day, the day they took the test. Even the usefulness of the SAT, the most widely used standardized test, as being a predictor of college success is being debated. One avenue I would investigate to assist educators in streamlining current requirements and eliminating unnecessary testing would be ending the use of NJGPA as a requirement to graduate high school. This test does not help anyone and only hurts those people who have difficulty in passing this test.

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## Learning and High Stakes Testing

Will you vote in support of [S-3308/A-4639](#), legislation that would eliminate New Jersey's high school graduation exit test, a requirement that serves as a potential barrier to graduation for many students?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know/prefer not to say
- ☐ Other: .....



## School Funding

New Jersey schools are reliant on state, federal, and local funding to support our programs and services. Many districts are facing higher costs to operate, staffing shortages with negative fiscal impacts, health care cost increases, and new costs resulting from health and safety needs post-pandemic. Federal funding has assisted districts in meeting some of these challenges, but those funds must be used by 2024. Additionally, some districts have faced significant additional cuts in state funding due to changes in the law which redistributed state aid (S-2).

### **How will you work with NJPSA and other education stakeholders to address these funding concerns moving forward?**

I would work with the NJPSA and other education stakeholders to address funding concerns by developing a different means of determining state aid distribution. S-2 has not produced the outcomes that it was intended to produce, adequately fund all NJ school districts. To borrow a quote from Kenny Guinn, former Nevada Governor and an academic administrator, "We must rely less on spreadsheets and funding formulas and more on common sense." I've had many conversations with educators who feel that even though their districts are doing everything right fiscally, they still lose funding. As a father of two school aged children who lives in a district that lost millions of dollars because of S-2, I see the inevitable results of S-2 funding cuts; capital projects not being completed as well as teachers and support staff not be retained. I would also work with the NJSPA, and hopefully other members of the Legislature, by advocating for more federal aid for New Jersey schools.

### School Funding

Would you vote to eliminate or modify the 2% tax levy cap on school budgets in certain situations?

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know/prefer not to say
- ☐ Other: .....

### School Funding

How would you work to address the funding needs of the S-2 districts since the fiscal world has significantly changed since that legislation was enacted in 2018?

In order to address the funding needs of S-2 districts that were hit by dramatic funding cuts, I would look to provide S-2 districts with the opportunity to go outside the 2% cap to fund capital projects and or teacher retention.

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## The Right to Read – Book Bans

NJPSA is proud of New Jersey's strong student learning standards which have been highly rated across the country. A key component of all our learning standards is the goal of developing critical thinking and the analysis of multiple resources. Our members work hard to support student learning by working with our teachers to provide a rich curriculum aligned to these standards and the use of high-quality books and materials as support. We also partner with our parents to be part of their child's learning process. NJPSA is concerned about the rising incidence of demands to ban certain books from school libraries and the curriculum. While parents can surely direct the reading choices of their children, they should not be able to direct what resources and books are available to other students.

**Will you commit to protecting a student's right to read and learn according to New Jersey's student learning standards (NJSLS) by opposing any legislation designed to infringe on those student rights? As a state leader, how can you assist educators in communicating this message to parents and community stakeholders?**

I will absolutely, unequivocally and without hesitation state that I will protect a student's right to read and learn according to NJSLS by opposing any legislation designed to infringe on those student's rights. As a state leader, I can assist educators in communicating this message to parents and community stakeholders by stressing how important it is for students to get a well-rounded view of the world, outside of what their comfort zone is. They need to explore new ideas and concepts to gain perspective on the lives of others, people that may be different from them. Students need to think critically about the world around them and be given the facts about a topic. They need to be given access to books that can provide multiple perspectives on an issue. One student should not be limited in what they can read and have access to because another student, or student's parents, objects to it's content or subject matter.

## Pension Funding

In recent years, New Jersey has honored its obligations to make the full actuarially required annual payment to the Teachers Pension and Annuity Fund (TPAF) and Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) under a schedule or repayment established by state law.

**Will you continue to honor this obligation moving forward and fight to ensure that the public pension system for school employees is fully funded in next year's State Budget Process?**

- ☒ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ I don't know/prefer not to say
- ☐ Other: .....

## The End.

**Thank you for sharing your perspectives with NJPSA members statewide!**

Is there anything else that you would like our members to know about you or your candidacy?

I want to thank you for your consideration in my effort to be the next NJ State Senator from Legislative District 12. Please go to my website ([www.rosefornj.com](http://www.rosefornj.com)) to find out more about me and my campaign. Thank you.

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**NJPSA**  
NEW JERSEY PRINCIPALS  
AND SUPERVISORS ASSOCIATION

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