

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: *

Latham Tiver

Office Sought: *

☐ NJ General Assembly

☒ NJ State Senate

☐ Other:

Party: *

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

Legislative District #: *

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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?

The initial step in ensuring school safety is establishing a culture of mutual respect among students.

Additionally, every school district should collaborate closely with their local police department and the State Police to implement a state-approved crisis plan. For schools that lack local police departments, we have to explore ways to fund them to hire School Resource Officers. As a legislator, I will advocate for legislation that increases funding for security initiatives such as these.

Lastly, I will work towards reducing the barriers to entry for individuals aspiring to become school counselors. Currently, our state has some of the most rigorous training hour requirements in the nation for this profession. It is crucial to make this career more accessible to attract more professionals who can assist with the mental health needs of our children.

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?

School guidance counselors are so important to the school community. They are on the front line of looking out for students' well-being. They teach trauma lessons in school and provide an accepting atmosphere for students and teachers, giving them a support structure when feeling overwhelmed.

As Senator, I will support legislation that will increase the number of counselors in schools and increase the incentives for people joining the profession. I will also support legislation that helps fund School Resource Officers for districts and improve coordination with local police departments and schools to coordinate emergency plans better.

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?

Everyone is struggling to hire right now, and it's no different in the education field. The first thing we can do to address the teacher shortage is to make sure they are paid amongst the best in the nation and have attractive benefits to make people want to enter the profession.

As for the retention problem, we must keep our promise as a state and fully fund the pension system every single year. I will also support the creation of educator grants for secondary education, loan forgiveness, sick leave for teacher burnout, and taking care of a sick family member. As a union member, I strongly support collective bargaining to allow teachers and ESPs to negotiate fair wages, health care, benefits, and job security.

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?

If elected, I believe it is essential to prioritize the safety, privacy, and welfare of our students in an increasingly digital age. My running mate, Assemblyman Mike Torrissi, is working on legislation requiring parental consent for social media use. I plan on supporting this legislation if it comes up in the Senate.

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 is a helpful tool in the arsenal of educators. It helps gauge where students are academically and can help shape future curriculum. But it's just one tool in the arsenal. It doesn't measure a student's creativity or give a complete picture of their academic portfolio. That's why I would support legislation that would eliminate standardized testing as an exit exam. The standardized test has a place in education, but it is not the end all be all as a gauge for a student's future academic success and should never be used to rate a teacher's performance.

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?

New Jersey has the highest property taxes in the nation. The 2% cap has been an excellent tool in keeping property tax increases at a minimum. What we need to do as a state is reexamine the S2 school funding formula. S2 doesn't account for inflation and constantly underfunds special education and transportation costs, which are astronomical and need to be supported more by state funding. S2 is broken and had to be bailed out earlier this year. We must fully fund schools every year so no district falls further behind. Especially after the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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?

See above answer.

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?

Parents have the right to let their children read any book in their private homes. Parents also have the right to know what their children read in schools. School is a shared space, and reading material needs to be age appropriate. I do not support any pornographic material in public school libraries or books that depict pornographic events. School is not the place for this. Books with a literary purpose should never be banned, regardless of what some might find offensive. We must teach children how far we've come as a society and teach the good, the bad, and the ugly side of history.

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?

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NJPSA
NEW JERSEY PRINCIPALS
AND SUPERVISORS ASSOCIATION

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