# Oct 15 - Sherrill - NJSBA

Hi, I'm Ray Penny with New Jersey School Board Association. I'd like to uh welcome We have a special uh two special programs. Both gubernatorial candidates have agreed to talk to the over 4,800 schoolboard members and charter school trustees in New Jersey about their views on education. So, this will be just focused on education. I think you'll really enjoy it. Uh and it gets you to hear our members and administrators can hear what the candidates feel on education. Hi, welcome to uh another edition of uh Education Matters. Uh I'm Ray Pine. I'll be your host. We've been interviewing the gubernatorial candidates. For this interview, I'm very uh pleased that we have uh Congresswoman Mikey Cheryl from the 11th district. Welcome, Mikey. How are you? &gt;&gt; I'm good. Thanks so much for having me. &gt;&gt; All right. Uh so first of all, thank you on behalf of the 4,800 school board members and charter school trustees in the state for them to hear your thoughts on education. So we'll get right to it. The first question, New Jersey is continually ranked one of the best education systems in the state. We're usually number one or two no matter what metrics you use. Um but you know, what will you do to keep us there or maybe even improve uh our rankings? Yeah. So, there's a couple things. Um, overall, making sure that every single kid in the state has access to a great public school education. I think that is something that has not only lifted so many people up, but also um really fuels the most competitive workforce in the nation, too. uh we have the most high-end workforce and I have had several companies who've actually left and come back because they could not find as well educated of a workforce as they do here in New Jersey. So, it's critical not only for the success of our students and our families that kids have access to great education, but it's also critical to our workforce. Um, and so I think uh one of the places I'd start is with third grade reading. are actually seeing some pretty bad results in many parts of the state and those scores. Um, kids who are not reading right now at third grade level and that's a critical inflection point for our students. If you can't read at grade level at third grade, then you have trouble going on in your social studies, history courses, um, science courses, etc. If you can't read the homework. So, making sure each kid has the resources they need um, so that they can achieve further success. and in doing so driving in stuff like highintensity tutoring which is an ev evidence-based particular type of tutoring that helps when students have uh have fallen off the track a little bit. We know from COVID we're still recovering with learning loss etc. And making sure we don't um kind of you know have students that have gone through maybe a rough patch in their academics. We don't want to just leave them behind. We want to make sure that we are getting the students the resources they need to be successful. high-intensity tutoring is such a great way to do that. And it also provides maybe an on-ramp to teaching uh for tutors who kind of come in and realize how much they love it and they can um get on the track to start teaching our kids as well. Um, and then I also want to make sure that we're looking at some of the county-based school systems to help address the historic segregation of our our state, but also some of our county based schools, our occupational schools or our STEM schools are some of the highest performing schools in the state. So, making sure we have those kind of nimble um uh high schools that can really help uh address the workforce of the future as well as we see AI and stuff like that. &gt;&gt; I'll get to AI in a minute. Um um school funding is always an issue and it's probably it is the biggest portion of the state budget. Um we have a funding uh system in place um that it's fully funded. uh not every single district is happy. What What are your thoughts on school funding? &gt;&gt; Yeah, so this is the first time that we've actually fully funded the school formula in this administration in in years really. And I think um it's important that we keep putting the resources in there because we have seen some slippage in our national results and making sure that our schools have the resources they need to perform well. Um and deferring some of the cost of running schools that each municipality faces. that can be really helpful if the funding formula has run well, but we need to modernize and stabilize it. And by that I mean um some of the formula hasn't been updated in several years and so looking at where students with disabilities are living. Um now it's sort of a one-sizefits-all, but really addressing some more individualized funding for those areas with higher than average uh students with disabilities. um areas that that have um some of the higher cost in education, but also stabilizing it because in too many cases these funding changes come in near the uh start of the school year and so suddenly right before schools are starting you see some cut to your funding and all of a sudden you're firing teachers or ending programs. So in that way too we need to stabilize it so there aren't wild swings year-over-year. &gt;&gt; Okay, I'm shift gears a little bit. um particularly since the pandemic social emotional uh learning and also looking at the mental health of our students has become very important and some say it leads to academic achievement. Is that going to be a focus of your uh school district as of your school district your administration as well? &gt;&gt; Um definitely this is a key part of my is going to be a key part of my administration. It's certainly a key part of what I'm campaigning on because I'll tell you as a mom of four kids, I have four three teenagers and a 20-year-old. And so, as you can imagine, um that age group has been hit incredibly hard. Certainly, COVID impacted them and and their socialization, their social emotional well-being. But then um even more impactful right now is the online um the online platforms that are such an everyday part of their lives that can be so incredibly damaging. So that's why as governor I'm going to pass the kids online safety act, making sure we are addressing age appropriate design code and holding big tech accountable for the mental harm that they are doing to so many of our kids right now, but also pushing in more mental health resources into our schools to help our students navigate this much better because it it's really it's really sad. I'll just tell you um in the past uh two weeks alone I have heard um um of two uh suicides of children um in that that we know the families and stuff. So, it's been that this is a this is a really really tough issue and um hearing from students at how what a poor impact the what goes on online has on their mental health and how the um design code and the algorithms move them into worse and worse places online and and actually any type of therapy or support system they have in place is undermined by the online activity. It's really um it's really so sad to hear. So, as governor, I'm going to to address this and like I said, starting with the kids online safety act. &gt;&gt; Well, I was going to get to this question later, but I think I'll do it now since it ties in directly what you say. Schools are grappling with the cell phones usage of students, uh how they should use it in school, if they should use it, should it be banned? Uh and also AI is coming on as an educational tool, but also that has, you know, there's a lot of issues with that. Since you you kind of touched on that, do you want to eliberate elaborate on, you know, your thoughts of AI and cell phones in schools? &gt;&gt; Yeah, and I'll be quick because I just noticed the time and I have to hop off in a few minutes, but um I'll let you, you know, I'd say, yeah, I'm for a cell phone ban in schools. Kids need a break. They need to focus on their learning. They need to focus on their social emotional wellness. And I think taking cell phones out of schools can really be helpful to that. &gt;&gt; Okay. Do I have one? I have one more question. &gt;&gt; You have one more. &gt;&gt; One more. Uh, diversity, equity, and inclusion is uh something that is uh Did I just lose? Okay, I thought I lost you. Diversity, equity, and inclusion is something that it's kind of a flash point for some people. Uh, it's better known as DEI. Some people feel it helps all the students uh particularly those that might uh be overlooked and some people feel it kind of plays uh the opposite. It plays favorites. So what are your thoughts on DEI and the schools? Um and how how do you look at as an administration? &gt;&gt; You know I think one of the strengths of our state and one of the reasons we have some of the most successful students in the nation is because we have students from all over the world. Um, it's because we have students from all different backgrounds and so it's incredibly important to me to find pathways to success for every student. We, you know, I do it because I think it's morally the right thing to do uh to to help drive opportunity. I also do it because I think it's the best uh economic thing I can do for our state is to provide this really strong workforce. And part of that and part of the understanding, we are not a state that is isolated. We're not sort of a backwater. We are a state that has power in the world. Um, and so the idea that, you know, the idea I think that that helps our students most is to give them a broad understanding of the world and a broad understanding of our history and our background. And in too many cases right now, the Trump administration is trying to whitewash that. So, for example, you know, clearing Jackie Robinson off the DoD websites or trying to act as if um some of the Civil War uh generals who attacked our nation, our democracy, and our country uh should be lifted up even though they committed treachery. I I think is just um really uh not what New Jerseyians want to see. I think in New Jersey, we want to hear about all the New Jerseyians that led to our success from every background. And I think that that diversity of thought is really important and that's important to me. &gt;&gt; Okay. Well, I'd like to thank Congresswoman Mikey Cheryl for joining us for, you know, a few minutes here to talk about her thoughts on education. Uh I hope you all enjoyed uh hearing from the congresswoman. Thank you. Well, &gt;&gt; thank you so much for having me and hope to see you soon. Thanks again.