



May 2026

To the New Jersey Department of Education,

One of the stated goals of the recent NJSLA changes was to improve student confidence and perseverance—especially for students who may disengage when faced with overly difficult items.

The NJDOE describes adaptive testing as an approach intended to “reduce testing anxiety” by presenting students with questions closer to their current level in order to encourage “confidence and focus.” As someone who works with educators across New Jersey, I deeply appreciate the importance of designing assessments that measure student understanding while also supporting meaningful engagement with mathematics.

Educators across districts are reporting:

- more questions than expected based on the published blueprints
- many students encountering content that appeared aligned to standards above grade level
- confusion around what was actually being measured
- uncertainty about how adaptive testing is functioning within the assessment

Whether every perception is technically accurate or not, these concerns matter because assessments inevitably shape instruction.

If teachers lose confidence in the alignment between standards, blueprints, and assessments, classrooms can begin shifting toward test survival instead of meaningful mathematics. That shift impacts not only instruction, but also student confidence, discourse, and opportunities for deep mathematical thinking.

Educators are not asking for easier tests.

They are asking for transparency, clarity, and alignment.

If we want students making sense of mathematics—not panicking through unfamiliar content—we need assessment systems educators can understand and trust.

Many educators are still seeking additional clarification around:

- blueprint expectations and item distribution
- how adaptive testing is being implemented
- whether students may encounter above-grade-level content and how those items are used or scored
- how these experiences align with the stated goals of improving confidence and perseverance

This letter is not intended as criticism for the sake of criticism. Rather, it is an invitation for continued dialogue and transparency around an assessment system that significantly impacts classrooms across our state.

Educators who wish to add their voice to this conversation are invited to do so respectfully through the comments on social media or by formally adding their support using this Google Form:

[bit.ly/26NJSLALetterSupport](https://bit.ly/26NJSLALetterSupport)

Sincerely,

Cheryl Fricchione

Founder, Coaching That Counts

Former President, Association of Mathematics Teachers of New Jersey (AMTNJ)