

Toward full and equitable funding for public education in Minnesota

The educators of Education Minnesota believe providing every student with access to an excellent system of public education is a goal all Minnesotans share. Unfortunately, our state's efforts fall short for many students, especially students of color and students living in poverty. The growing shortage of trained educators shows the system is also failing the professionals who work within it.

Closing our state's racial and economic disparities will require an array of policies, but that mix must include a multi-billion-dollar increase in the state's investment in public education. Funding Minnesota schools fully and equitably will mean providing every student with the resources they need to succeed later in life.

Urgent needs

Educators and pro-education allies, who share our goals and have the lived experiences we need to hear, may disagree on priorities and methods, but we can all agree that our schools are in crisis and the need for new investments is urgent.

To continue the full-funding conversation, Education Minnesota staff have reviewed member polling, union leadership priorities, educator assessments of their worksites and reports from the Educator Policy Innovation Center* to create a list of funding needs with the highest levels of support among the union's members. This list is not in order of importance, nor is it final. With input from parents and other education allies, members of Education Minnesota will have opportunities to refine the list.

www.edmnvotes.org

Education Minnesota is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association and AFL-CIO.  1359



**FOR 100% VOTING
FOR FULL FUNDING OUR STUDENTS DESERVE
FOR WELCOMING SCHOOLS FOR EVERYONE**

#EDMNVOTES

Area of need	Highlights
Structural reform of state K-12 funding, including eliminating cross subsidies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ State funding for public education will increase by 2 percent plus the inflation rate every year or, at a minimum, inflationary increases. ▪ Make direct investments to reduce district reliance on local levies that increase spending disparities between districts. ▪ Support districts with large numbers of English language learners by completely paying for EL costs. ▪ Increase the state's direct spending on special education services until the amount covers 100 percent of districts' costs, minus the amount paid by the federal government.
Educator compensation and working environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Recruit and retain sufficient numbers of professional educators to bring class sizes down to the ratios recommended by academic research. ▪ Increase recruitment and retention of education support professionals by mandating a rate of pay of at least \$20 an hour. ▪ Reduce the educator shortage by setting a minimum starting salary of \$50,000 and providing current teachers with \$10,000 raises. ▪ Reduce health care costs for all school employees through the creation of a special fund to lower the cost of private health insurance.
School infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Directly fund capital projects to eliminate disparities in physical learning conditions. Too many students and educators learn and work in schools without natural light, proper ventilation, radon remediation or functioning heating or air conditioning systems. ▪ Many schools lack the proper equipment to teach laboratory science or give students access to up-to-date vocational and technical equipment.
Preschool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide all Minnesota 4-year-olds access to half-day, pre-K with licensed educators.
Trauma-informed, restorative schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Trauma-informed, restorative schools reduce racial disparities in discipline, reduce disruptive behavior, increase academic achievement and lead to improvements in satisfaction with the teaching and learning environment among students, parents, communities and educators. ▪ Implementing this wholly different approach to student behavior requires extensive staff training and professional development.
Teacher preparation, mentoring and professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Provide extensive, intense professional development to all E-12 staff around cultural competency with aims of closing racial gaps in discipline and academic achievement. ▪ Create a dedicated funding stream for mentoring and induction programs, starting with programs designed to support teachers of color who have specific needs and high attrition rates. ▪ Create an equitable and sustainable funding stream for the 2011 Teacher Development and Evaluation law, an unfunded state mandate, to provide professional development to teachers. ▪ Lift the cap on the Q Comp teacher compensation program so more districts can participate.

Area of need	Highlights
Increase the number of teachers of color	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significantly and rapidly increase the number of teachers of color in Minnesota through the five strategies advocated by the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers in Minnesota, including stipends, scholarships and loan forgiveness.
Student support professionals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the counselor-to-student ratio in Minnesota to the national average. Provide resources for the hiring of more student support staff, including counselors, speech language pathologists, school psychologists, school-based physical therapists, school nurses, school-based occupational therapists and school social workers.
Full-service community schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand access to full-service community schools across the state. If we want to have equitable outcomes for our students, we must have equitable opportunities for all our children and families.
Direct funding for public higher education and education debt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reverse the trend of privatizing higher education and invest in strategies to help students succeed, including lowering tuition, providing at least one counselor per campus and funding research-backed programs that provide extensive student supports and accelerated degrees. Improve the compensation, work rules and physical working conditions in Minnesota's campuses to improve the recruitment and retention of high-quality faculty. Improve retention of educators and other professions that work for the public good through aggressive forgiveness programs for education debt.
Special education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to eliminating unfunded costs, create funding for programs to treat compassion fatigue, limit physical injuries to staff, reduce burnout, hire and train more education support professionals, build more collaborative relationships between general education and special education teachers and improve methods of identifying students in need of special services with the goal of reducing racial disparities in SPED referrals.
Unique local needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Every local will have its own unique set of needs that our union believes should be part of the collective bargaining process to ensure districts spend new investments effectively and equitably.

Estimated costs

Minnesota schools suffer from a mismatch between the resources their students need and the funding provided by the local, state and federal governments. This tension demoralizes educators and drives them from the profession. It reduces the quality of education students receive in schools, particularly students of color and students living in poverty.

The cost of immediately erasing the chronic underfunding in Minnesota schools and adding an unprecedented level of racial and economic equity to the system will cost far more than the \$4.3 billion discussed in February 2019. That number failed to account for addressing the mental health needs of students, improving access to higher education, increasing compensation for ESPs and teachers, and many other needs identified by educators as they imagine what “full funding” would mean in their worksites.

Revenue question

In Minnesota, we are at our best when we look out for each other, when we dig our neighbors out of the snow, no matter what they look like, or where they come from. But today, a wealthy and powerful few try to turn us against each other so they can keep hold of the wealth our work creates. They want to keep us from joining together to ensure that everyone pitches in what they can afford so that everyone can thrive. When we unite, we can raise the money to give every Minnesota child a great education. The first step is restoring fairness to our tax code by raising revenue from the largest corporations and wealthiest 1 percent of residents. They have avoided paying their fair share while our schools have starved. Now it's time for our state to eliminate the tax giveaways that benefit the rich and powerful and raise revenue from those who can afford it. That will be the first and most important step toward fully and equitably funding public education in Minnesota.

**For more information on the academic research base for many of these priorities, see the extensive 2019 report from the Educator Policy Innovation Center, "Building an Equitable School System for All Students and Educators." The report is available for review and download on the Education Minnesota website.*