

# Education Minnesota Voter Information – Governor

Dear educator,

Everyone who works in public education deserves to be treated with respect. In 2022, we must choose leaders who will listen to educators; recognize our work, expertise and dedication; and support us with fair compensation and supportive working conditions. We also must choose leaders who will ensure our children will be safe and welcomed in school, have the freedom to learn both the good and bad of our history and have access to the mental health supports they deserve. Because of this, we wanted to provide some information on where the candidates for Minnesota governor stand on the issues educators have said they care about the most.

A candidate's position is sometimes more complicated than a "yes" or "no" answer. We have done our best to represent each candidate in a fair and reasonable way. All of the candidate's statements have been cited from their source.

<p><b>What action will you take on school funding?</b></p>	
<p><b>Tim Walz and Peggy Flanagan</b> Walz has committed to increasing education funding every year, including dedicated funding for full-service community schools, intermediate school districts, special education and more student support personnel.<sup>1</sup></p> <p>In their first four years in office, the Walz/Flanagan administration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased education spending by \$1.2 billion over four years, including the largest per-pupil increase in 15 years.</li> <li>• Directed \$29 million in one-time funding to support the general operation of schools and cushion temporary enrollment losses during the pandemic.</li> <li>• Preserved thousands of seats in the state's pre-kindergarten program.</li> <li>• Targeted spending to reduce the racial opportunity gap, including programs to recruit and retain more teachers of color.</li> <li>• Provided more full-service community schools, layers of student support services, mentoring for new teachers, expanded non-exclusionary systems of discipline, and training in trauma-informed teaching for teachers and paraprofessionals.<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>	<p><b>Scott Jensen and Matt Birk</b> Jensen supports reducing state spending on public schools. Jensen said funding public schools is a "black hole" the state is "dumping money into with no results." He proposed eliminating the personal income tax which would cost the state \$30 billion in annual revenue, money that funds education, health care and other programs.<sup>3</sup></p> <p>In 2011, Jensen said that schools need to "share the pain" and led the campaign against a school funding referendum to help Waconia build new schools, which were desperately needed to reduce overcrowding. At the time, Waconia even had to put students in warehouse space.<sup>4</sup></p> <p>While in the Legislature, Jensen and his Republican colleagues in the Senate put forward a budget that would have underfunded public schools so drastically that the superintendent of the Anoka-Hennepin School District said, "The Senate budget will be crippling."<sup>5</sup></p>
<p><b>How would you support unions and the issues addressed in a collectively bargained contract?</b></p>	
<p><b>Tim Walz and Peggy Flanagan</b> Walz will protect the right to collectively bargain, make sure defined-benefit pensions are supported and defended and never allow Minnesota to become a "Right to Work" state.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>Scott Jensen and Matt Birk</b> Birk said that the Minneapolis teachers union doesn't care about kids after their historic strike in 2022. He called teachers' unions far too powerful and influential, and said that he and Jensen will "reign them in."<sup>6</sup></p>
<p><b>Do you support vouchers or school choice proposals?</b></p>	
<p><b>Tim Walz and Peggy Flanagan</b> Walz will continue to fight against vouchers and public funds going to private schools. He said Minnesota has exceptional public schools that are the backbone of this state and that he will always do everything in his power to protect our public education system from privatization.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>Scott Jensen and Matt Birk</b> Jensen said dollars must follow kids and that competition makes us all better.<sup>7</sup> He called the public school system "broken" and said school choice and vouchers will be his way to fix it.<sup>8</sup></p> <p>Birk started his own Catholic high school in Burnsville. He said that families should be empowered to make educational choices and for a lot of those families, that is going to be religious schools, and that "school choice is going to serve our students and it will make our public schools better because we're not beholden to Education Minnesota."<sup>9</sup></p>
<p><b>How can the state help districts recruit and retain educators, especially educators of color and young educators, that doesn't include them taking on extensive education debt and other barriers? Maybe even more crucially, how can we help educators feel supported, valued and respected?</b></p>	
<p><b>Tim Walz and Peggy Flanagan</b> Walz wants Minnesota to have the best teaching workforce in the nation by ensuring the profession is valued. In 2021, Gov. Walz signed into law \$33.5 million to attract, train and retain teachers of color. In 2022, the Walz/Flanagan budget proposal would have established a Statewide Teacher Mentoring Program to support and improve experiences of professional educators, expanded the Grow Your Own Teacher Training Programs to train more people of color and Indigenous people for a career in teaching, covered the costs for the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Exam and teachers' first Professional Teacher License and provided teacher retention bonuses for those new to the profession.<sup>10</sup></p>	<p><b>Scott Jensen and Matt Birk</b> In the Senate, Jensen voted for some funding to support the Increase Teachers of Color Act in 2017 and 2019. These were small amounts with no culturally competent policy language provisions.<sup>18</sup></p> <p>Jensen recently said teachers need to stick to the "3 R's and stop hypersexualizing students."<sup>11</sup></p>

<p><b>Do you agree that Minnesota students deserve an honest and accurate education about race that enables them to learn from the mistakes of our past so they can create a better future for all Minnesotans? Do you agree that Minnesota students need welcoming and affirming schools for all students?</b></p>	
<p><b>Tim Walz and Peggy Flanagan</b> Walz believes we all want to prepare our students to be critical thinkers, good citizens and future leaders by giving them a more honest look at where we've been as a state and nation and where we are at now. He believes our children should learn from our history and respect people regardless of what they look like, where they come from or who they love. He believes that's what students need to live and lead in a multiracial state where one day everyone can thrive.<sup>10</sup></p> <p>Walz helped start the first GSA at Mankato West High School in the mid-90s as a teacher. "As a straight, white, married football coach, it was my responsibility to create a culture that was open, welcoming and understanding."<sup>12</sup></p>	<p><b>Scott Jensen and Matt Birk</b> Jensen said students in public school are learning to hate one another because of Critical Race Theory. "If I'm governor, schools will focus entirely on better educational outcomes — NOT political indoctrination."<sup>13</sup></p> <p>Birk believes schools are pushing an agenda of indoctrination to form kids' belief systems without even telling the parents. "To me this is nothing short of evil."<sup>14</sup></p> <p>Birk said it's a disservice to teach kids gender-affirming lessons. He wonders how public schools ended up getting so interested in sexually indoctrinating kindergartners, and that with their administration, kids won't be used as pawns in the "gender-ideology game."<sup>15</sup></p>
<p><b>What will you do to make sure that every student has access to a total team of a school counselor, school nurse, school psychologist and school social worker?</b></p>	
<p><b>Tim Walz and Peggy Flanagan</b> The Walz/Flanagan 2022 budget proposal included \$77 million to hire more student support personnel, such as counselors and social workers. Walz wants to also help increase access to similar resources for families outside of school, such as allowing Minnesotans to accrue up to 48 hours a year of paid leave for shorter-term needs, such as caring for a child during a school closure or taking them to a doctor's appointment.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>Scott Jensen and Matt Birk</b> Birk said student mental health issues are partly due to the fact that we have pushed God out of schools, as well as social media, capitalism, sexualization and breaking up the family unit.<sup>16</sup></p>
<p><b>When will special education be fully funded and provided with resources to reduce educator workload?</b></p>	
<p><b>Tim Walz and Peggy Flanagan</b> In 2021, Walz signed into law an additional \$10.4 million to help school districts cover special education costs. In 2022, Walz/Flanagan's budget proposed an additional 2 percent increase in per-pupil funding along with a 15 percent increase in special education funding.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>Scott Jensen and Matt Birk</b> Jensen called legislators and told them to reject 2022 special session offers, which included millions of dollars to help cover the special education cross-subsidy, and wait until after the election.<sup>17</sup></p>
<p><b>How will you support education support professionals?</b></p>	
<p><b>Tim Walz and Peggy Flanagan</b> Walz supports a \$25 an hour wage for ESPs. Walz and Flanagan fought to have ESPs included in frontline worker pay. Walz believes hourly workers should be eligible for unemployment benefits and that ESPs should have dedicated, paid training.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>Scott Jensen and Matt Birk</b> In the Senate, Jensen opposed an amendment that would have required schools to employ hourly workers during the pandemic.<sup>18</sup></p>
<p><b>What will you do to ensure higher education is funded at the 67 percent level, as is required in state statute?</b></p>	
<p><b>Tim Walz and Peggy Flanagan</b> Walz believes that Minnesota must get back to the state paying two-thirds of the cost of attendance at state colleges or universities and the state should continue to invest in our institutions to ensure we live up to the promise of accessible, affordable and excellent higher education for all Minnesotans. The Walz/Flanagan 2022 budget proposal would have expanded financial aid, increased the number of semesters that students have access to aid, and would have eliminated application fees at colleges in the state.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>Scott Jensen and Matt Birk</b> Jensen proposed eliminating the personal income tax, which would cost the state \$30 billion in annual revenue that funds education, health care and other programs.<sup>3</sup></p>
<p><b>How will you support educators as governor?</b></p>	
<p><b>Tim Walz and Peggy Flanagan</b> Walz will unequivocally oppose vouchers and any restrictions on educators' rights to collectively bargain or advocate for their students. Walz will make sure good policies pass by talking with educators and making sure they are at the table when decisions are made that impact our schools. Walz will make sure educators are brought to the table for all decisions that will affect them to ensure their voices are heard and needs are met.<sup>1</sup></p>	<p><b>Scott Jensen and Matt Birk</b> Jensen said parents are the best judges of what their kids are doing, learning and eating. He says the government will co-opt parental responsibilities.<sup>19</sup></p>

Comments and information were taken from Education Minnesota candidate questionnaire (1), walzflanagan.org (2), MPR interview, 5/27/22 (3), Star Tribune article, 5/2011 (4), Star Tribune article, 5/9/2011 (5), Twitter post, 6/8/2022 (6), Twitter post, 6/29/22 (7), Crow River Media article, 10/21/21 (8), Twitter post, 6/27/22 (9), Education Minnesota public candidate forum (10), Campaign Facebook video, 3/29/22 (11), Twitter post, 9/9/22 (12), www.drscottjensen.com (13), Campaign Facebook video, 11/9/21 (14), Twitter post, 4/3/22 (15), Campaign Facebook video, 7/29/21 (16), Minnesota Reformer article, 6/16/22 (17), Minnesota Senate Journal (18), Campaign Facebook video, 6/23/22 (19).

Education Minnesota's member-led, transparent gubernatorial endorsement process helped shape the decision to endorse Tim Walz for governor, made by Education Minnesota's Political Action Committee. The PAC is made up of 23 educators from districts all over the state. Scott Jensen chose not to seek our endorsement and did not participate in the process, which included answering a questionnaire and meeting with educators for roundtable discussions and a half- or full-day school visit.