

# Fernando Alvarado

## Education Minnesota candidate questionnaire

### Education funding

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1. Education Minnesota believes the solution to closing the state's racial opportunity gaps must include fully and equitably funding public education, from preschool to postsecondary institutions. There's widespread agreement the full-funding agenda will require several billion dollars in new education investments. Please indicate your support or opposition to the following components of our full-funding agenda.

*Inflation: Reverse Minnesota's perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula and tying it to inflation.*

Yes

*SPED cross subsidy: The state must also fully fund its portion of special education costs instead of relying on school districts to pay for them.*

Yes

*EL cross subsidy: Fully fund the costs districts pay to provide quality English learner programs and instruction.*

Yes

*Lower class sizes: Lower class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need and deserve.*

Yes

*Full-service community schools: Expand access to full-service community schools across the state.*

Yes

*Universal pre-K: Provide universal pre-K taught by licensed teachers, so all children are ready for kindergarten.*

Yes



*Teachers of color: Fund programs to increase the number of teachers of color significantly so teachers providing instruction better reflect the students in our classrooms.*

Yes

*Student support: Provide additional resources for school districts to hire more student support staff, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses and other job classifications.*

Yes

*TDE/Q Comp: Fully fund the 2011 Teacher Development and Evaluation law, an unfunded state mandate, to ensure teacher quality and lift the cap on the Q Comp program.*

Yes

*Professional development: Provide professional development to all staff around cultural competency and trauma-responsive classrooms with aims of closing the discipline disparity gap.*

Yes

*ESP living wage: Ensure all education support professionals earn a living wage of at least \$25 an hour.*

Yes

*Teacher compensation and benefits: Increase teacher compensation to provide competitive salaries and benefits to recruit and retain teachers.*

Yes

*Health care for all school employees: Make health insurance more affordable, fair and predictable for educators and school employees so they stay in the profession.*

Yes

*Education debt relief: Provide debt relief to retain teachers so they can afford to stay in the classroom.*

Yes

*Higher education: Renew Minnesota's commitment to invest in the state's future by fully funding public higher education in Minnesota.*

No I would be willing to go 2 years post high school. I believe there should be some ownership by the student so that they take their choice seriously and commit to the program they belong to.

## **Education Support Professionals**

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2. Do you support ESPs being able to access unemployment insurance in the summers, when they are not guaranteed work?

Yes

3. Will you support dedicated, paid training each year for education support professionals to get the training they need that is specific to their work and students' needs?

Yes

## **Taxes/revenue**

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4. Would you commit to raising revenue to ensure the wealthiest corporations and richest households pay what they truly owe in taxes so every student, no matter what they look like or where they live, can attend a fully funded public school that prepares them to pursue their dreams?

Yes

5. Education Minnesota believes in restoring fairness to the state tax code by raising revenue from the very wealthiest corporations and richest households and reducing the reliance on local levies to fund schools. Considering your own experience and expertise, are there other progressive, equitable ways to raise state revenue that you would recommend the union consider supporting?

I believe that your suggestions as outlined would be the starting point. I would have to work with other senator's to come up with other solutions.

## **Higher education**

6. Do you support increasing the state's direct investment in public higher education to significantly reduce institutions' reliance on tuition?

Yes As stated above 2 years post high school.

7. Will you support investments in capital bonding projects that preserve buildings, remodel classrooms and keep our technology assets current?

Yes

8. What would you do, as a state legislator, to help with education debt?

**I would work with other legislatures to see if debt could be offset with working in areas where there is a greater need.**

9. Some college campuses have no counselors, while others have a ratio of 1:11,000 students. Will you support each Minnesota State campus having at least one counselor so students have access to mental health and academic support services?  Yes

## High-quality professional educators

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10. What will you do to help recruit and retain high-quality educators in our classrooms?

*I would work to reduce class size, would work to provide services that assist teachers in the performing of the career. Ask them what they would suggest also.*

11. Do you support changes to current law to include our fully-licensed Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) teachers in the continuing contract law?

Yes

## Teacher licensure

12. Do you support changes to state law to allow Tier 1 teachers to join the teacher bargaining unit?

Yes    No   Need to learn more about this.

13. Do you support deleting the option in Tier 3 that allows a person to receive a full professional license without completing a teacher preparation program?

Yes    No   We need to visit the qualifications to make sure that they meet the standards of Minnesota licensure.

## Standardized testing

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14. What individual or system-level decisions in education do you believe are appropriate to make based on standardized test scores?

*I would have to follow the recommendations of the experts with the understanding not all students are represented well on a standardized test.*

## Honesty in Education

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15. What can you do to protect teachers in the classroom and ensure that they have the freedom to teach?

*Talking to the Union to hear their suggestions on classroom safety would be requested. Their suggestions should be then worked on to be implemented.*

16. Do you agree that Minnesotan 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? Why or why not?

I believe an accurate history should be shared so that we can learn about the disparity that has occurred over time. We cannot understand or correct what we do not know, by teaching this to our children we can then it is hoped that our children can then make changes that creates equality and equity for all.

## Time to Teach

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17. The planning and differentiating that teachers do daily needs more time. Most after school “prep” is filled with meetings. The current statute falls short of the time needed for preparing lessons. Will you support adjusting this statute to increase prep time?

Yes

18. Will you support legislation that protects an educator’s prep time so it can’t be used for meetings or having to sub for colleagues?

Yes

19. Do you support paid, dedicated time outside of student contact time for special education teachers to complete their paperwork and required meetings?

Yes

## Union Rights

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20. Do you support collective bargaining rights?

Yes

21. Will you oppose any legislation or constitutional amendments that would weaken collective bargaining rights, the right to organize, the right to strike, automatic payment of union dues, union access and activities at worksites or other anti-union policies backed by anti-worker groups?

Yes

22. Do you support teacher tenure and due process rights so the experts who work the most with students have the support to stand up for them?

Yes

23. How will you support unions as a state legislator?

**I would ask for their input on issues that concern them.**

## **Working families**

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24. Do you support the current language that allows educator locals to unilaterally seek a bid and join the Public Employee Insurance Program (PEIP) as the insurance provider for local bargaining units?

Yes

25. Will you support continuing defined-benefits retirement systems for public employees?

Yes

26. Will you support providing the necessary state funding to ensure financial sustainability of public pension funds?

Yes

27. Will you support exploring new systems for providing educators with a secure retirement, including exploring early retirement options that might help recruit and retain educators?

Yes

28. What legislation could you introduce or support that would reduce the cost of health insurance to school districts? Where do you stand on health care for all?

**I would support capping costs on services and medications that have been standardized for years.**

## **Privatization**

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29. Do you oppose state tax credits for private K-12 education tuition and expenses?

Yes

30. Will you support policy changes that will ensure a stronger accountability system with necessary oversight and reporting to ensure quality management and instructional practices in charter schools?

Yes

31. Will you support a moratorium on new charter schools until such changes are made?

Yes

32. Minnesota students, from different places and of different races, deserve well-resourced, welcoming schools. These needs are urgent and can't wait decades for lawyers and courts to force it to happen.

*Do you oppose efforts that would delete constitutional mandates for using taxation to fund public education funding and for providing equal access to public schools to all students?*

Yes

*Do you also oppose these same efforts that would enshrine standardized testing – with all its racial, cultural and economic biases – into the Minnesota Constitution?*

Yes

## **Your role as a legislator**

33. Have you visited a public school in your district in the past year? No If so, which one? What were your observations from your visit? How will that experience inform your work as a legislator? If not, when did you last visit a school? When I dropped my mother off for her role as a Grandparent for the lower grades Would you like us to help arrange a visit? Yes.

34. What have you done to become informed on issues relating to public education? What organizations and individuals do you go to for your information?

**A number of my friends are educators and I have visited with them. I have also had visits with my mother who works in the classroom as a grandparent. I would go to Education Minnesota for information.**

35. How do you envision working with Education Minnesota if you are elected/reelected? If you disagree with us on an issue, how will you communicate that?

**If elected I would like to communicate and hear their concerns verbally in meetings with other legislatures so we could be on the same page and would also visit individually as time permits. There are also emails and zoom meetings. Communications should be a two way street where questions should be able to be asked and answers received.**

36. If elected/reelected, how will you balance competing priorities that might exist between Education Minnesota and other education groups?

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I would have to work with staff and come up with trying to make time for all concerns. It is going to be a learning curve as there are many priorities for SD16.

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