

# Chris Brazelton (SD29)

## 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    No

*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    No

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

Yes    No

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

Yes    No

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

Yes    No

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

Yes    No



*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.*

X Yes  No

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

X Yes  No

*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.*

X Yes  No

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

X Yes  No

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

X Yes  No

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

X Yes  No

*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.*

X Yes  No

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

X Yes  No

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

X Yes  No

## **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?

X Yes  No

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?

X Yes  No

## 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?

X Yes  No

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?

**Progressive income tax rates on earned income and capital gains.**

## Higher education

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

X Yes  No

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

X Yes  No

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

**I support income-based grants and very low interest loans at state colleges and universities. I support loan forgiveness in public service professions.**

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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    No

## High-quality professional educators

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

**By fully funding the above areas, making sure development funds are available and class sizes reasonable and manageable with classroom support and social services, it is my belief that the stress levels will be greatly reduced and allow teachers time and space to do what they do best. Teach.**

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  No

## Teacher licensure

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

Yes  No

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

## 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 really struggle with standardized tests as they do not take into consideration the variety of learning styles, backgrounds and abilities, nor do they honor all cultural experience. I resist using the results as a large measure of the teacher's abilities for salary and tenure/promotion purposes. I found the most effective teachers were those who encouraged understanding versus memorization, who allowed questioning and development of critical thinking skills.**

## 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?

We have struggled with groups of parents in our local school district (as so many have across the country) who demand teachers refrain from including or discussing the mistakes we have made as a country in their teaching of history, calling it “Critical Race Theory”. Those same parents demand less comprehensive sex education, no support for LGBTQ+ students, limited anti-bullying efforts, etc. We are losing teachers left and right. We need more support from school administrators to stand firm against this pressure and support their teachers and school staff. As legislators, we can provide some insulation in the form of state laws that administrators can point to in supporting comprehensive education in publicly funded settings. I look to your experts for guidance on this.

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?

Absolutely! Those who have been harmed by these past (and ongoing) mistakes know they exist, and I can only imagine how difficult it is to feel engaged in an education that glosses over them. We cannot heal from a past that is denied, nor solve the ongoing legacy issues if we don’t understand their causes. I believe that in order to close the achievement gap we must have honest, age-appropriate discussions about who we are, how we got here, and open up the possibilities so that students can grow up to be a part of where we go from here in a positive way.

## 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    No

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    No

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

Yes    No

## Union Rights

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20. Do you support collective bargaining rights?

Yes  No

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  No

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  No

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

**I am an active and proud member of AFSCME local 34 and was a member of our bargaining table team in the last negotiation sessions. I have seen our rights to organize and collect dues be harmed by recent decisions including Janis. I will fight all efforts to weaken these and related rights at the legislature.**

## 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  No

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

Yes  No

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

Yes  No

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  No

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 support universal, single payer health care. There have been several options proposed that improve upon our current broken system. John Marty has been fighting this battle and I look to people like him and Becky Lourey for guidance as we craft solutions.**

## Privatization

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

Yes  No

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  No

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

Yes  No

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  No

*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  No

## Your role as a legislator

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33. Have you visited a public school in your district in the past year? 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? Would you like us to help arrange a visit?

As a member and past chair of our local Diversity Task Force I have been working with parents and school board members opposed to the agenda of the “anti-CRT, anti-masking, anti-sex education, don’t say gay” parent groups. I have attended school board meetings and have voiced the need for comprehensive education and anti-bullying efforts and safe spaces for those subject to bullying. I am also the Hennepin County liaison to PHK, the Wayzata school district’s Family Services Collaborative. I welcome ongoing access to and connections with all schools within SD29 and beyond.

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?

I have an ongoing relationship with current and past school board members, administrators and teachers.

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

Direct communication. If we were to be at odds on an issue, I would like to be able to reach out and discuss it, be open to learn and understand any new facts, or at least have enough respect to explain where or why we differ. Based on the questions asked here, I don’t see that happening often.

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

I will always approach issues with a mind open to new understanding, however I also believe that public funding for public education means that the good of the public must be the first consideration. I grew up attending Catholic schools from 1st through 12th grade and do not support using public money to fund private schools.