

# Nathan Coulter

## 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.*

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.*

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.*

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.*

Yes  No

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

Yes  No

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

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.*

Yes  No

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

Yes  No

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

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?

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?

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?

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?

**Obviously the pieces mentioned are the most effective and important. I think it's also important to consider state sales taxes and see if they can be updated to be more effective at raising revenue as well as being more progressive.**

## 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?

Yes  No

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

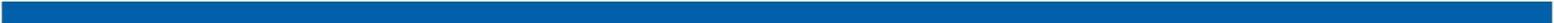
Yes  No

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

**The most important thing is to ensure that State Grant program funding is increased. The legislature also needs to work with the administration and OHE to hold the U of M Board of Regents and MinnState Board accountable, and to ensure that funding increases are met with appropriate tuition freezes or reductions.**

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?

**Short answer: pay them more. We also need to ensure that educators have access to professional support and better resources all the way around. When a former Teacher of the Year leaves the classroom, we know something is not right.**

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?

**Honestly, I'm hard-pressed to think of any beyond how students were doing on the particular day(s) that testing occurred. The higher the stakes of the decisions, the less reliable of a measure test scores are, and the lower the stakes, the less likely they are to be taken seriously.**

## 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?

**I will absolutely oppose bills like those passed in Florida and Texas and other states that limit teachers' ability to fully engage their students in the curriculum. One of the goals of teaching is not simply children learning, but that they are learning \*how\* to learn – by asking important questions, and forming their own thoughts and opinions and processes.**

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?

**Yes. The fact is that, particularly in Minnesota, we have ignored the reality of race and its effects on a wide variety of areas in our society. We need to take on the tough, but needed conversations, and come to grips with history so that we can learn from it and move forward.**

## 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?

**As the son and husband of Ed MN members, I know how critical unions have been for my family, and so many others. We need to strengthen the collective bargaining process to ensure that workers are more effectively able to come together and make their voices heard. I will oppose “Right to Work” laws and will work to reduce barriers to forming a union for all workers.**

## **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 John Marty’s MN Health Plan specifically. Generally speaking, we need to continue moving the ball forward on a health care system that pays health care professionals, and incentivizes Minnesotans, to keep people healthy, rather than a “pay as you go” model that encourages high costs for care and insurance, and discourages folks from seeking preventative care.**

## **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?

**I have not directly visited a public school in Bloomington, though I have worked closely with our school board members, teachers, and other professionals working in the district. I am planning to arrange a visit this school year.**

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?

**My background is partly in public education. My mother taught for 39 years at Normandale Community College, and my wife is an educator. I also studied education in my undergraduate program, and education policy in my graduate program. In addition to our local educators and union leaders, I will absolutely seek advice from Ed MN and other similar pro-public education organizations.**

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?

**When it comes to public education issues, Ed MN will almost certainly be my first call. I believe strongly in working in good faith with anyone who will do the same, and will always make myself available for conversation. If we disagree, I will tell you frankly and honestly. I don't believe in playing those kinds of games.**

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

**Public education is a core value of mine, drummed into me as the son of a public educator and union president. I will always err on the side of public educators and their preferences. That being said, I'm always willing to take in more information and ask more questions. When it's a difference**

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**in priorities, rather than values, my approach is to look at what will be most effective in the short and long term, and to examine what is most possible and practical. In the end, though, sometimes it's a judgment call, and as I said, I will always be straightforward with folks.**

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