

# Elise Diesslin HD20B

## 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?

**I think fairer taxation is the most logical step in the state providing further funding for public education. Your zip code and parent's income shouldn't have any effects on your access to education.**

## 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?

**I am of the generation of students saddled with thousands of dollars of student debt. I am also a child of two teachers. I think debt relief, or even forgiveness would help people like me, and then paying teachers a living wage would help people like my parents. Teachers go to school and take on so much debt, and we don't pay them a living wage, let alone one they could afford to pay off loans with. Budgeting and funding should go towards lowering the cost of tuition and paying teachers fairly.**

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?

**Again, I think a living wage would be huge. Teachers are driven by their passions, but passion only goes so far. To retain great teachers, we need to show that appreciation through fairer wages. As far as recruitment, if there were debt relief programs for recent college graduates, they may stay in the job longer knowing they are following their passions and have an actual route to pay off school.**

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 personally think standardized testing isn't teaching. Students aren't learning what they should be through standardized testing alone. Teachers are forced to teach for the test, rather than teaching curriculum for the students.**

## 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?

**Less government regulations, less censoring of topics, such as history for example. History is not glamorous, oftentimes its gross and awful, students need to know the truth and not have subjects skirted around.**

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, I alluded to it in my previous answer. Knowing one's history makes it easier to make informed decisions, if students don't know Minnesota's and or America's own history, we are doomed to either repeat it or allow horrible behavior to continue. Historical perspective is imperative to know as a state and country.**

## 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 have been endorsed by unions in the past. I am also a child of two teachers, and I know how important unions are to them and their livelihoods. I am not an expert at all things, and therefore I would use the unions and their members to assist with legislation on any topic pertinent to 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  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 believe in health care for all. Health care is a human right. I don't think health care should be tied to your employment, and I have heard from many families that members have held off on retirement or are worried to change jobs because they will lose their health insurance.**

## 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 parents that teach in two different schools in my district, I have been in each school in the last year. One is my alma mater and I am more familiar with than the other, but I know our school buildings are often underfunded and almost always in need of some sort of repairs.**

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?

**Mostly my parents, but I am also friends with other educators in the area.**

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?

**I think we could work closely together to better education initiatives in Minnesota. If I disagreed on something, I would contact your leadership and schedule a sit down to explain why and or be open to discussing it should I be short on information you could fill me in on. As mentioned, I am not an expert in everything. I would trust those that do the job to be the best advocates for the job.**

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

**I have been endorsed my Education Minnesota before and believe in your mission, should there be conflicts, I believe we could work them out and find the best solution for public schools in Minnesota. I will not support state funding for private schools.**