

# Alicia Donahue – State Senate, District 54

## Education Minnesota candidate questionnaire

### Education funding

---

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**

---

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

---

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?

**Corporations benefit from a workforce that is educated, I fully support raising revenue through additional tax on those who benefit from creating and funding a robust public school system.**

## Higher education

---

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?

**As a first generation college student who went on to graduate school, I know what it feels like to have the weight of student loan debt that never seems to shrink despite payments month after month. I will support creating job training programs and affordable higher education that will produce a skilled workforce moving our economy forward. I will also look at ways we can address educational debt at the state level if our federal level fails to address it.**

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

---

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

**I would seek to understand what is causing the loss of high-quality educators before making long-lasting decisions. Initially a few ideas that come to mind include meeting teacher's needs with support in and out of the classroom, creating true self care structures that decrease burn out and increase productivity, as well as paying for continuing education credits so that does not have to come out of their pockets.**

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

---

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

---

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

**I do not necessarily believe that standardized tests are a true representation of the knowledge students have nor of the quality of the teachers. We need to find a way to better assess how schools are meeting the needs of students without antiquated tests that we know no longer evaluate growth and learning.**

## Honesty in Education

---

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

**We need to restore faith in our education system. Over the last several years unethical and dishonest leaders and elected officials have chipped away at our trust in one another. Teachers are professionals who have spent years learning their craft before they step foot in a classroom, if we**

**are able to decrease class size and create a sustainable workload each teacher would have the opportunity to engage in conversations with parents and build relationships that will restore faith and trust. I would also do everything I could a state level to enact legislation that would support these efforts.**

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! We must be willing to teach, reflect on and learn from our past to create a community where all Minnesotans have a fair and equitable opportunity to succeed.**

## Time to Teach

---

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

---

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 someone who has worked for and been part of unions for many years, I know the value they provide. Unions strength our economy by supporting and empowering our middle class while reducing income inequalities based on race and gender. I will do everything in my power to strength collective bargaining and oppose any legislation that would weaken them.**

## Working families

---

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?

**Health care is a basic right. We need to move away from privatized health care systems, create a modality where health care providers are rewarded for quality outcomes instead of quantity outcomes and work toward ensuring everyone has quality, affordable and accessible health care.**

## Privatization

---

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

---

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 supervisor in child protection, I have visited many public schools in the past year and interacted regularly with teachers, administrators, counselors, and social workers. However, I will be honest, those schools are in the county next to my district. I have visited Shakopee High School after hours, engaged in conversations with our school board and superintendent, attended school board meetings and worked on the campaign to pass the levy (which we did so successfully) in 2021.**

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 had conversations with teachers, school administrators, counselors, social workers, paraprofessionals, school board members and superintendents. As far as organizations I look to Education Minnesota, the Department of Education, PACER and the Office of Ombudsman.**

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?

**I would work with Education Minnesota as well as teachers in my district first and foremost ensure their voices were being heard and that issues that mattered most to them were addressed. I would look to Education Minnesota for their knowledge and expertise on topics related to our educators, students, and the overall wellbeing of our education process. As a social worker, I have spent my career engaged in conversations with folks who may disagree with me. I am open, honest, and transparent. I believe the only way to a solution is by working together.**

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

---

**Throughout my entire career, I have been faced with navigating situations where there were competing priorities. In each situation, I remain open to all the facts and information presented to me, listen to all sides, consider all possibilities and try to find a resolution that meets the needs of everyone.**