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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.

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

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

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?

I think that raising taxes on the wealthiest corporations and households is the way to go. I do not have any other ideas at this time.

Higher education

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 think that all student loan interest rates for higher education should be 2%, regardless of the fed minimum. I believe that if people take out student loans, there should be accountability for paying it back, but the interest rate should NOT be higher than what it is for a home. ever. I think that current student loan holders who have public service positions should have their debt (at least in

part) forgiven, but the long-term solution is to reduce the interest rate, not forgive all of today's loans with no plan for what the future student borrowers must do.

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?

We need to start with salary. But, once the teachers are in the schools, there needs to be appropriate support and mentorship. An idea I have is that all first-year teachers should only teach half a day alone. The other half of the day, they are team-teaching with a veteran teacher. Teaching is one of the only professions that a person has to PAY FOR their “internship” instead of being paid for it. If we could give first-year teachers a higher level of support (or even extend this team teaching program until year 3, where the new teacher teaches one more period per day on their own), we could have higher retention. I am not exactly sure how this would work in an elementary setting, but I am sure there are elementary experts who could make this work. :-)

Retention is key up to the 5th year, a time when statistically most teachers leave the profession entirely, if they are going to leave. It is critical to have starting salaries competitive with other professions and also support our new teachers emotionally, pedagogically, and socially.

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 (*depending on if the Tier 1 teacher is on a path to get full licensure*)

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 am not certain that sound educational, class-specific decisions are helped by knowing standardized testing results. I think they are good guide for knowing where students stand with certain objectives, but individual students are exactly that: individuals, and standardized test scores are not necessarily an accurate representation of what a student knows, understands, and can do. They may have test anxiety. They may have forgotten to eat breakfast that morning. They may be clicking “C” for the entire exam just to get it done. There are a myriad of reasons why a standardized test score is lower (or higher) than what level a student is at in various subjects.

Honesty in Education

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

Teachers must be able to teach the truth, no matter how “upset” someone may get about it. To ensure this, I would introduce legislation to protect teachers from fringe groups / superfluous or extraneous litigation or complaints. If a teacher can tie their lessons to an objective and it is possible to remain politically neutral - or if a teacher has presented information in good faith, based on current research and accurate resources, they should never be punished for it. In addition, the legislation would include cost protections: the complainant would cover all costs until a verdict is rendered, should it go so far as to involve legal action.

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. The whole truth must be told. I think the difficulty is the limited amount of time that we have with students. For example: there is no way to cover ALL American History in high school. The care that must be done in the choices made for what to teach students and when is important. However, the choices must cover a broad range of topics, including those that are either difficult to hear about or could cause students to be uncomfortable. Learning how to handle situations where you are uncomfortable is also a part of the educational experience.

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?

I will make sure that unions are able to stay strong in Minnesota. I will vote against legislation that weakens unions (all unions). I will stand with union members in public events.

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 (although, IMO, this insurance is also garbage, but that is a different conversation.)

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?

Individual health care for teachers is actually pretty good. Most districts cover the cost of health insurance entirely and put in to a health-savings program for retirement for a SINGLE teacher. Where it gets tricky and expensive is when the teacher has to insure more than themselves. I think there should be more balance with this, and the costs of insuring more than yourself should be lower. I believe whole-heartedly in health care for all. As I posted as a sidebar above, PIEP is still garbage insurance. I still have to pay 100% of my healthcare until I reach my annual deductible. In Iowa, I paid a LOT more for insurance, but I also only had to pay \$30 for an urgent care visit, regardless of how much of my deductible had been reached already.

I think that basic, universal health care is a human right and should be covered by our tax dollars. I also believe that a private insurance system should still be available to those who can / choose to pay for it. No one should go bankrupt from an illness. Period.

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?

X 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?

X 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?

yes. I am a public school teacher. Can I get into this on my phone call? :-)

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 live it every day.

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 am excited to work with Education Minnesota. I have been an NEA/AFT member my whole career - even in Iowa! and I think it is important for teachers to have collective bargaining rights. I was fortunate to leave Iowa to come to MN before the bargaining rights were gutted there. When I disagree, I have a firm belief that it is always best to talk to people directly. On the phone or in person is always the best way to go because email and texting can have an implied tone that does not exist.

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

I will research what all of those priorities are and figure out what is best for Minnesota students. I do not see myself agreeing with what other Education groups may be proposing. To be transparent, I am not sure. I am not as familiar with other education, lobbying-type groups.