

Tina Folch HD41B

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?

With the State 2022 surplus, I think it would be interesting to examine diversion of other taxes towards education (for example, if the State were to allow cannabis to be legal, diverting new taxes towards schools). Also, the student pupil funding formula needs to be automatically tied to inflation at a minimum rather than hoping the Legislature will step up to cover cost-of-living adjustments. Additionally, I think it would be interesting to look at programs that incentivize school districts further into the adoption of renewable energy to offset utility costs.

I am open to being creative because the zip code should not determine the quality of the school district.

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?

Loan forgiveness has been an option for a while now, but in talking with teachers many have applied and been denied. My sister and her wife, for example, met all the requirements for the federal loan forgiveness program as educators but were denied. We need to find real options to forgive loans and/or reduce loans for teachers who enter the profession and continue in that position for a set number of years. Cash incentives for new teachers who will accept jobs in hard to fill areas (rural/inner city).

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?

- **Keep the licensure requirement to ensure high quality teachers**
- **Financial incentives for college students to go into education, such as the federal loan forgiveness, if they stay in a job for a certain amount of time.**
- **Explore other incentives to stay in education such as tuition reimbursement to continue to get masters degree or district paid courses for in-house credits to move to higher pay faster. Also, there should be incentives/guaranteed funding so districts can negotiate contracts with less steps allowing teachers to reach maximum salary faster.**
- **Rural areas also may need other incentives to attract candidates, such as low interest housing loans.**

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 (see comment below)...

I'm not sure on this question. I would love to have a conversation with EM regarding this topic. My hesitation is that I can see that perhaps a CTE (Career and Technical Education) teacher would be a case for not requiring a full teacher prep program. However, every CTE teacher without a teaching degree should have a requirement for classes in classroom management, curriculum writing, education equity etc. in order to be prepared for teaching in today's world.

Standardized testing

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

Principals and teacher leaders should be making decisions, not legislators, in using test scores to make decisions for their schools. Decisions should consider student growth and not necessarily just on proficiency. Local district leaders and stakeholders are better prepared and educated to make curricular decisions based on this data.

Honesty in Education

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

Educators are the experts in the field of curriculum and they should be allowed to decide collectively what curriculums should look like without outside pressure from special interest groups.

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. It's hard to believe that this question even needs to be asked in 2022. Schools have been working on these addressing the issues of equity for years. Current conservative political extremism has no place in education. Every student deserves a quality education that addresses our nation's history honestly so students can learn from the past.

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 work to protect collective bargaining and FIGHT to ensure adequate funding for education.

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?

Support legislation HF4853/SF4566 to schools reduce premium costs, more choice for districts and employees by lowering the nonrenewal year withdraw rate from 50 to 20 percent. I believe that if we did have health care for all, we would see substantial cost savings across the board for all citizens and governmental agencies could have significant savings.

Privatization

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

Yes No

Until all public schools are adequately funded there should not be tax credits for private education and expenses.

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?

Both of my sons recently graduated from Hastings High School in the classes of 2020 and 2022. I have been an extremely active parent in their schooling. As a Hastings City Councilmember, I am serving as a member to the School District 200 Community Engagement Committee in an effort to advance community partnerships and communicate the successes of our schools.

Furthermore, I have been very active in the Hastings Thrive Program working on diversity and equity issues with the district and have been active with the local football boosters in raising money for the

high school football program. Also, I serve as a board member to the Hastings YMCA which in large part supports the wellness of the youth in our community. I feel that my experience as an active parent and community leader gives me keen insights into the needs of our school district.

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?

As a community leader, I have developed relationships with the School District 200 administrator and have met with several of the school principals. I ask the leadership and teachers of my local schools about what they are experiencing. In addition, I have personal relationships with Hastings school board members to understand their perspectives. Last, my own sister is a principal at a high school and provides me valuable knowledge about the reality of what is going on in schools today. As a legislator, I would additionally look to Education Minnesota and the Minnesota Dept. of Education for guidance on issues.

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 truly believe in surrounding myself with trusted advisors who are experts in their fields. I believe in supporting the teachers' unions as they are dedicated to advancing the wellbeing and education of our youth. To date, I do not come across an issue that I do not agree on with Education Minnesota. I am a very direct person. If I disagree on an issue, I would discuss it with representatives to better understand where we have common values and how we may differ. My experience has taught me to work collaboratively with other stakeholders means focusing on common goals and finding solutions to issues can mean compromising to keep advancing forward towards success.

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

As I said before, I think it is important to identify common values and goals with stakeholders. The needs of all stakeholders are not the same and sometimes we need to prioritize competing priorities. I think it is important to acknowledge everyone's concerns and see where progress can be made to advance the highest priorities and take the little wins when we can get them.

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