

Anita Gaul (MN Senate District 15)

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 – I cannot answer this, because I am unsure what a “full-service community school” is.

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 – Explanation: I think school districts providing this type of training/professional development on their own is a good idea, I'm just not sure if it's the state's job to provide this.

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 - I cannot answer this question, because I simply don't know enough about this to answer with certainty. I would need to learn the pros and cons of doing this before taking a position.

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?

At this time, I don't have any new ideas to raise revenue. I know that currently the state has billions of surplus dollars in its budget that will go unused because the legislature ended without a passing a spending bill. This is ridiculous and frustrating. This money could have been used for our schools and instead it's sitting there unused, going to waste.

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?

One idea that has been floated is the state paying the first two years of tuition for all Minnesota students at any 2- or 4-year college in Minnesota. This seems like a good way to reduce education debt and also help Minnesota colleges/universities that are currently struggling with low enrollments. I would certainly consider legislation like this.

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?

One way, as I mentioned previously, is for the state to pay the first two years of tuition for all Minnesota students at any 2- or 4-year college in Minnesota. Another might be loan forgiveness programs for people who go into education and/or who teach in schools facing the most critical teacher shortages.

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 – Again, I don't know enough about this to take a position on it. I would need to know the pros and cons before answering.

Teacher licensure

12. Do you support changes to state law to allow Tier 1 teachers to join the teacher bargaining unit?

Yes No – Again, I don't know enough about this to answer. I would need to know the pros and cons of making this change.

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?

Not many. To be perfectly honest, I am not a fan of standardized testing. As a teacher myself, I see the pitfalls of testing. Students' test scores do not necessarily reflect the ability/skill/effectiveness of the teacher. Sometimes tests don't reflect even the ability of the students themselves, as they may just have had a bad day and didn't do well on the test that day. Standardized tests are also biased against some students, as they contain wording/concepts that are not common knowledge to all.

As a parent, I am frustrated by how many days my own children spend doing standardized tests. These are days they could actually be learning content instead of taking yet another test.

For all these reasons, I don't think too many major decisions should be determined by test scores.

Honesty in Education

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

One way as a legislator would be for me to vote against any bills proposing to limit what teachers can teach – all these ridiculous bills that prevent teachers from teaching concepts that cause “racial discomfort” (like a bill that was signed into law recently in South Dakota) and things like that.

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! I’m a history instructor! It’s important to teach accurate, honest history (and that includes teaching about the painful history of racism), not the white-washed, mythological version of history.

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?

By voting for any pro-union bills and voting against any proposed legislation that attempts to weaken unions and the ability of workers to organize.

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 – I cannot answer this question, because I simply don't know enough about it to answer intelligently.

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 certainly believe everyone deserves healthcare and healthcare benefits. If I knew what could reduce the cost of health insurance (in general, not just for school districts), I would be the first to propose that legislation 😊

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 – Sorry, I just don't know enough about the systems already in place to know whether or not this is necessary.

31. Will you support a moratorium on new charter schools until such changes are made?

Yes No – See explanation to Q30.

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?

Yes, I have visited the Marshall Public Schools (elementary, middle and high schools) in the past year. I have children in each of those schools. My observations from my various visits confirmed what I already believe about the Marshall district: Marshall has excellent schools with teachers who work hard and do good work. They genuinely care about their students.

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 am an instructor at a community college (Minnesota West Community & Technical College), so I am mostly aware of issues relating to higher ed. I have many friends who teach in K-12 schools, however, who keep me informed of the issues they are facing. I also have a good friend on the Marshall School Board who helps me understand better the issues the Marshall School District faces.

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 am a person who asks a lot of questions (I'm a historian—it's what I'm trained to do!). When a bill concerning education would come before the Minnesota Senate, I would consult with the

constituencies it would effect: teachers, the union, administrators, paraprofessionals, etc. I am a firm believer in sitting down with people and talking things out, so that I can understand why they take the position they do and fully understand all the nuances and possible repercussions a particular piece of legislation might have.

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

First, I will hear everyone out. I think it's important to always hear all sides of an issue before one makes a decision. That's what made George Washington and Abraham Lincoln such good presidents: they included in their Cabinets people of the opposite party/viewpoint from their own so that they would always a multiplicity of views on any issue.

I'm no Abraham Lincoln or George Washington, but I do believe in hearing everyone's views. I would balance competing priorities by reassuring every group that I will give them a full hearing before making decisions or voting a certain way.