

# Mary Hinnenkamp

## 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?

**To be honest, I have racked my brain and cannot conceive of alternatives that are progressive and equitable. I have always favored taxing the wealthiest among us to pay for education. I am uncomfortable with dedicated funding as it tends to shrink the size of the pie in times of economic trouble, and I am opposed to sales tax increases as they tend to be regressive. Of course, the federal government could increase its contribution. Just paying for the unfunded mandates would be a welcome source of revenue.**

## 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 was very supportive of the MN House education bill which would have provided a free year of community college tuition to eligible students. Unfortunately, the Senate failed to act on it. That would have helped. I think that we should continue with this effort.**

**I think that the state should initiate debt forgiveness programs for people who work in lower paying nonprofit fields such as social work, teaching, nursing, and so on**

**I think high school students should have better access to finance classes covering college debt, credit card debt, and related real-life topics so they and their families can make more informed decisions.**

**Of course, part of the problem is that so many students begin college, don't finish, and then are stuck in lower paying jobs and have college debt. I think there should be more sustainable assistance to students over two or four years, depending on the program. From my own experience with my children, all of the assistance seemed to be front loaded with declining assistance over the two or four years of their education.**

**We should increase the financial assistance of PELL grants for eligible students.**

**We should make sure that there are enough counselors in high schools and colleges to better assist students who are pursuing post-secondary options, so that students make better informed decisions, and so that student realize that while a four year college education is wonderful option for some students, there are other well paying, satisfying careers that do not require a 4 year degree.**

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?

**I would support better pay through greater financial investments in our schools. We must not ask teachers to continue to work harder and do more for less. I would support better pay for ESP's and other professional support staff.**

**I would support teacher driven initiatives to increase teachers' ability to collaborate on curriculum to meet standards and for teachers to be fairly compensated for that extra time and work.**

**I would push back on efforts to put schools in the position of being responsible for all of the problems in society. By that I mean that if we want students do well, we need to support families. When students enroll in kindergarten with wide disparities in learning and reading readiness, schools and students are already in a mode of remediation. I think this is tragic.**

**And I think we should not ask teachers to be armed in classrooms. There is so much wrong with that idea. I find the whole concept unacceptable and would strongly oppose any similar legislation in Minnesota.**

**I think there needs to be push back to elements in our political community that want to destroy public schools and do so in part by attacking public school teachers. I loved being a teacher and the Director of the Albert Lea Area Learning Center and want young people to see what a satisfying career it is. As a member of the Teacher of Year Committee, I am constantly in awe of the talent and hard work of the teachers in Albert Lea. To attract young people to teaching, celebrate teachers.**

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 was teaching when the push for high stakes standardized tests began. I was dismayed because I felt then and feel now that testing should not punish students by stigmatizing them or withholding diplomas, or punishing teachers and schools by withholding funding or removing leadership. At the Area Learning Center, we suddenly had students who had one more barrier for our students to overcome in order to earn their diplomas.**

**The roll of tests should be to inform teaching. Is a particular reading program or reading strategy effective? What is the best program or text? Then teachers can make informed decisions based on the available data.**

## **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?

**Using standardized tests to inform teaching rather than punishing students and teachers, would be a start. Allowing teachers to collaborate and paying them for all the time needed to develop curriculum would help. I would initiate and support such efforts.**

**Regarding curriculum, we must protect the processes in place so that standards in all curriculum areas are free from political influences, but rather are informed by our evolving historical understandings about the history of our country.**

**I oppose all efforts to censor books, libraries, and teachers who are presenting accurate and age - appropriate information to our students.**

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, absolutely. Isn't that a key part of any education: learn the facts, understand their meaning, and then inform future decisions based on those facts?**

**For too long, our schools have presented a very sanitized and inaccurate history of our country. Early in my teaching career, when I taught an American History class, we rushed through the reconstruction period because it was "not as important." In fact, we seemed to jump from one war to another, as if that was the goal of learning our history: to know when our wars took place, not why. In retrospect, it seemed long on details and very short on critical thinking. I ended my career at Fountain Centers Adolescent Unit and was then free to spend more of the time on understanding and analysis of our history and institutions.**

## 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 will not vote for and will strongly oppose any efforts to weaken unions and the efforts of unions to advocate for teachers. I would work for and support the collective bargaining process and would oppose efforts to weaken that process. I support the right of workers, including teachers, to go on strike. I support a prevailing wage laws. I would work to protect workers’ rights and would initiate legislation when necessary to protect the rights of people to organize and collectively bargain, and form unions as we now see at Amazon, Starbucks, and other work sites.**

## 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 support universal health coverage, Medicare for all and similar proposals. I believe that health care affordability and access are a right and should be guaranteed as they are in most other industrialized nations. Aside from the humaneness of this policy, a side effect is that unions such as our teachers' union could better negotiate contracts which would cover other issues such as salaries, benefits, and working conditions. When I was still teaching, I saw our contracts accept small wage increases (1% or 2%) in exchange for better health care coverage.**

## 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?

**After my retirement six years ago, I began volunteering at Southwest Middle School in an EL classroom, and at Halvorson Elementary as a sort of reading buddy to kindergarteners and first graders. I also took a parttime job as the PAWS teacher in 2020 working with excluded students, but then the pandemic hit. It all came to a halt as the PAWS program became moot and volunteers were not allowed into the buildings in this district.**

**I have been seeking to renew my teaching license, and have been taking classes this school year with current teachers in this district. This has been enlightening, as I saw the new difficulties that arose for teachers and students during the pandemic.**

**I am on the AL Teacher of the Year Committee and have the great pleasure of working with current teachers and staff to read about, meet, and celebrate the outstanding teachers in this 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?

**I receive and read education magazines such as NEA Today and Minnesota Educator. I find taking the renewal classes for re-licensing informative, and my work on the TOY Committee is as well. I have current teachers and school board members in my friendship group.**

**For me it is a truism: Once a teacher, always a teacher.**

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 closely with Ed Mn if elected. I know the members of our local unit and would consult with them or with leadership at other levels if I am concerned or need clarification on an issue.**

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

**I am not sure what you mean by other education groups. I know as a member of Ed MN and as someone who used to sit on this screening committee that our organization advocates for what is good for our teachers, what is good for our students, and what is good for their families. I support ED MN.**