

Brian M. Hobson - House District 5A

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.

X 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.

X Yes No

EL cross subsidy: Fully fund the costs districts pay to provide quality English learner programs and instruction.

X Yes No

Lower class sizes: Lower class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need and deserve.

X Yes No

Full-service community schools: Expand access to full-service community schools across the state.

X Yes No

Universal pre-K: Provide universal pre-K taught by licensed teachers, so all children are ready for kindergarten.

X 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.

Yes No (I have questions)

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 a progressive tax on income, and also wealth has to be considered. I also suggest finding equitable ways to share resources with small public community schools in outstate Minnesota where property tax bases are limited and communities are hard pressed to approve bonding or levies to fund needed school maintenance and updates. Capital improvement grants, generous transportation reinvestment, and rural teaching bonuses may help to staff and support our rural schools which have some similar problems with graduation and achievement disparities when compared to wealthier schools in proximity to larger cities.

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 have a great many ideas to reinvent pre-service teacher training programs, and while I am sure it would be a massive lift, I would like to see all people entering teaching spend much more time as paid ESPs while earning their teaching license. This may mean two years of "pedagogy" coursework and two years of paid "student teaching". After completing this, teachers would have a probationary license similar to the current system, but we have to stop nickel and diming teachers. What does this do for us? It increases the professional training for teachers in classrooms. It encourages ESPs to continue their education and to sweeten this even more, after 5 years as a licensed teacher, we can forgive any remaining educational debt related to pre-service teacher education.

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?

See my above answer about debt. It is also imperative that we encourage people from a variety of backgrounds to become teachers. This likely means increasing pay and benefits, but it may also mean we consider much more expertise and experience as germane. It is true that teachers need to know much more than content to be effective, so if someone has content knowledge, help them work, get paid and learn how to be great teachers, and vice-versa, if someone is a great teacher, streamline the process to add licensure areas.

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 These folks are teachers and union members!

Teacher licensure

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

Yes No (And I have concerns with the tiered licensure system)

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 (and I discussed this issue above)

Standardized testing

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

We as teachers know what tests are. I One type of assessment that we can use to figure out what students are missing, and what we as teachers need to do to improve our instruction. Do standardized tests do that. Maybe globally, but not with the specificity that is helpful. Cohorts of students are different, dynamics are different. One size does not fit all and yet that is what standardized tests try to do. Let's look at multiple assessments and measures to see what students really need. If Pearson wants to produce a free test that we can use as one metric, great! I'll have my 3rd graders take it and we can look at the scores together so they can tell me what they are missing.

Honesty in Education

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

Stop berating teachers, stop blaming teachers, stop banning books, stop telling teachers what they can or should talk about because honestly... Teachers know more of what is going on in schools than anyone else.

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?

Good teachers know how to build a community that includes every student. Good teachers know how to have hard conversations, or avoid conversations better than any politician. The most valuable thing in a classroom is the teacher's time and good teachers are going to spend that time in the best way possible. I'm a teacher in a small rural community school. It is of course our goal to broaden the view of our students and also teach them skills so they can launch into an uncertain world for them. THIS IS A BALANCE. I want to be able to have discussions about our flawed and cruel American history and I also want my students and the small town community to carry on learning from me so IT IS A BALANCE. My main purpose is to be a model, and example of integrity, fairness and grace. This may not be enough, but I hope I can leave this world just a little better than I came into it.

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?

X Yes No (and with smaller class sizes, prepping becomes approachable)

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?

X Yes No (this is often contractually negotiated also)

19. Do you support paid, dedicated time outside of student contact time for special education teachers to complete their paperwork and required meetings?

X Yes No

Union Rights

20. Do you support collective bargaining rights?

X 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?

X 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?

X Yes No

23. How will you support unions as a state legislator?

I oppose "right to work" or any measure that would weaken unions. I support fair share fees that encourage union membership. I also am pragmatic in that I know that teachers are a slightly more liberal reflection of the communities in which they teach, and the reason that some teachers are anti-union is because of the NEA typically endorsing Democrats. That being said, it's pretty hard for a union to endorse a candidate that doesn't think unions should exist so I think as a legislator, I would also try to be a teacher about this issue.

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?

X Yes No (and PEIP has to have huge oversight because it is not sunshine over there)

25. Will you support continuing defined-benefits retirement systems for public employees?

X Yes No (Main factor in boomer generational wealth)

26. Will you support providing the necessary state funding to ensure financial sustainability of public pension funds?

X 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?

X 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 for all (single payer) would be top of list. Short of that, a statewide public employee pool into which small businesses could buy in would also be useful. However, this would have to absolutely be a stable pool that is non-profit and exceedingly low admin costs.

Privatization

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

X 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?

X Yes No

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

X 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?

Every school day from 2003 to the present with limited times away. I am a teacher. It's what I am and what I do. It is the foundation for everything I do, think and care about.

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 politically active and a teacher. I seek out information from my colleagues, union field representatives, IOs and union events.

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 a teacher which means I am a consensus builder and listen well. I am also a learner. I need to learn more about a few issues (IE. Qcomp etc). I am also professional, calm, intelligent and cogent. I can disagree without name calling, and can express my ideas clearly. I rely on evidence and facts as a basis for my opinions. With different evidence or better facts my opinion is changeable because as a teacher, I know that holding to a misconception in light of new evidence is what we are trying to teach our students not to do. Seems some adults need a refresher course.

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

Public schools are the only institution that takes and works with everyone. That is my priority. I am a professional teacher. EDMN has represented my interests as a professional teacher, and while I am aligned with EDMN on a whole lot, there are occasions when teachers may take a back seat to the needs of students, and public schools.

Brian Hobson
House SA

Questions for Legislative Screening:

1. Do you support fully funding school districts to hire adequate student support staff, including counselors, social workers, school psychologists, licensed school nurses and other job classifications?

Yes - absolutely
Students need support ~~from~~ ^{at} all levels.

2. We know that for students to be successful, ESPs need to be respected as the educators they are. Will you support legislation that would help education support professionals receive affordable health care, a livable wage, and unemployment in the Summer?

Yes - need quality support to help ^{meet needs} of students.

3. Will you support educators when we attempt to bargain items such as class size, staffing ratios for counselors, nurses and mental health professionals and, other items that directly affect students?

Yes! Reg. working conditions makes all things possible

4. Are you willing to raise expectations in the legislature for the possibility and reasonableness of fully funding our public schools? i.e. a rough estimate to get desired counselor ratios, smaller class sizes etc. is about \$4.3 billion.

Yes!

5. Would you support the move to a more fair tax structure in Minnesota in order to fully fund public education? This may entail new taxes and increases to corporations and wealthiest Minnesotans.

Yes! Why not be responsible to pay it forward for the next generation.

6. Are there questions you have for us or any clarification on Education Minnesota's priorities for education in the State?

Yes!

② Any thing we can do to support the ESPs

③ Of course - yes on any + all teachers/ESP issues.

There is no higher issue than high quality education that's to be achieved by Fully funding. We can afford it right now