

# Heather Keeler – House District 4A

## 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.*

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.*

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 **\*\*Note I will Author this bill if you need one!\*\***

*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 **\*\*Including Tribal Colleges :) \*\***

## **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?

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

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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?

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 authored HF3906 to increase the equalizing factor for local optional revenue. This was the first area of taxes that I started to learn about. Through carrying this bill, I made connections with people who are extremely knowledgeable about this policy area. With Moorhead being a property poor community this was a good first step for me. I'm all in to continue to learn how we can be more progressive and community driven in our decision making.**

## 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?

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?

**Fight to be the Chair of the Higher Education Committee, so these conversations can always be a part of the conversations. There isn't just one bill or solution for this, it's an entire mindframe of decision making.**

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?

X 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?

Continue to work on my efforts to bring the teachers, staff, students and parent/guardians voices to the table so we can continue to address the bigger state wide issues. We have to do so much better at creating an umbrella of a system that is set up to support our teachers. Such as my effort to increase Teacher Prep Time and find an even larger increase for Special Education Staff. It's a small effort in a direction to tell you that I hear you. We also need to retain our Support Staff and help them grow in teachers, counselors and other staff. Working in conjunction with Higher Education we need to create a better plan for internal growth, and not the good ol boys kind of growth. Also , Increasing Teachers of color and indigenous teachers act is designed to help more students see education as a career opportunity, representation matters! This is a long term effort and we have to address it from all sides. Lastly, we have to pay our Subs a competitive wage. Being a border city and a form substitute coordinator I know how hard it is to find subs. Especially when you can go across the river and get paid more for less hours a day. Substitutes can also be a strong pool of long term employees.

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   -This is bigger than a yes/no answer. I'm open to discuss.

## 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?

As a whole, I am not a fan of Standardized testing.

## 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?

The first thing I believe we need to do is define verbal threat, harm statements, harassment, things of this sort. Listen to our teachers on what they foresee, they are the ones to engage with students and parents/guardians everyday. We have to be able to address the issues that get in the way of teaching.

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. Representation Matters!

## 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 \*\*This was my bill :) I will continue to fight for it\*\*

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 \*\*Part of that same bill language\*\* I got your back.

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?

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 don't support all Unions and I believe some have proven to not value a relationship with our Tribal nations. However, I absolutely support our Teachers and education based unions as I believe education is the backbone of our future.**

## **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?

X Yes  No

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

X Yes  No

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?

**I believe it is a human right to have access to quality, timely, affordable, safe and secure healthcare. The amount of money in your pocket should never equal the quality of care one receives. I grew up watching my mom work for 21 years to build and implement the South Dakota Medicaid program.**

Watching my entire family die so young because of the underfunded health care systems known as Indian Health Services. So I don't just want healthcare for all....we need high quality care for all.

## Privatization

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

Yes  No \*\* I will advocate for tribal charter schools, in this conversation\*\*

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?

Yes  No \*\*as long as tribal schools are excluded.

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

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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?

As a Spud Parent of the incoming 1st grader and Junior I spend time in the schools regularly and am always in communication with teachers, students, staff, adults, admin and others. Most recently, went to SGR twice today.

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?

**Always in conversations. Serve on the Indian Education Parent Committee and the UC Council for Football.**

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 will continue to be as available as possible for you all. I hope to continue talking circles and touching base. I also want to continue to help bring testifiers from my community and Greater MN to the Community Hearings. Our voices matter.....YOUR voices matter. I will fight to get your concerns heard at higher levels, as I know my voice is just one in a tank of many. And I will continue to help carry your bills that truly improve the quality of teachers.**

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

**The only competing group is our Tribal Nations, I hope we can continue to all work together to include more than exclude our cultural teaching ways. Outside of that, I always have your back. My background in education is one of my top reasons why I'm in this work.**