

Carlie Kotyza-Witthuhn 49B

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. 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 PreK: Provide universal half-day 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 the teacher providing instruction better reflects the students in the classroom.

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 \$20 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: Make Provide debt relief to retain teachers so they can afford to stay in the classroom.

Yes No

Higher Education: Renew Minnesota's commitment of investing 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 equity to the state tax code by raising revenue from the very wealthiest Minnesotans and the largest corporations. Calling on your experience and expertise, are there other progressive, equitable ways to raise revenue that you would recommend the union consider? (This is an open-ended question.)

One option to consider in order to provide additional investment in our public education system would be taxing foreign operating profits (foreign profits currently kept in tax havens should be taxed here in MN). This loophole creates a lack of revenue and is also a detriment to our local businesses.

Additionally we could review the current equalization formula to ensure all districts are supported financially, no matter how large or small the local tax base may be.

Higher education

6. Do you support increasing the state's direct investment in public higher education to significantly reduce the institution's 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 loan debt?

I think it's important to continually review options for student borrowers, whether lower interest loans could be accessible or if certain professions have access to more forgivable debt. I've also supported tuition freezes, co-authored the student borrower bill of rights, and would be open to all options in order to curb the student loan debt crisis.

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?

I think both TOCAIT and Grow-Your-Own programs could exponentially increase recruitment and retention efforts in local districts. Ensuring that our districts have the support and funding available in order to successfully implement these programs could make a big impact.

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

Standardized testing

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

I think considering funding allocation based on lower test scores could be appropriate in order to invest in the students that need the most help. I used to work closely with the Supplemental Education Services program that was a part of federal No Child Left Behind legislation and while it was a finance mandate for individual districts that were flagged as “failing,” I think there could be a way to revamp that program to help support students in schools or districts that are continually in need of wrap-around services or tutoring.

Honesty in Education

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

First - I lead by example. I work with local teachers, I develop supportive relationships with the classroom teachers of my own children, and I believe that our educators know how to do their job. Second, having worked as support staff in a classroom previously, I know how difficult it can be to manage a classroom AND support each student where they are and one of the most important ways we can support our teachers is by providing additional funding to hire the necessary support staff. I strongly disagree with some out-of-state proposals that would installing computer cameras in each classroom to monitor teachers and 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 No

History repeats itself so it's important to me that my children have a strong understanding of past and current events and the environmental circumstances surrounding those events (including political/social/racial, etc.) so as they grow, they can contribute in healthy ways to their family, friends and communities.

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?

Open to this – need additional info/context 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?

In addition to supporting the above and voting for labor-supported proposals like Paid Family Leave, Earned Sick and Safe Time, etc., I’ve participated in picket lines and elevated various issues and stances that are priorities of the labor movement via social media and in conversations with constituents and fellow legislators.

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?

Working to expand PEIP flexibility would be one option. I continue to learn about the challenges of providing healthcare access and am open to a variety of proposals that would help our school districts reduce costs while providing access to high quality and affordable care. As the Vice-Chair of the Commerce committee, I work closely with professionals in the insurance industry and would welcome the opportunity to brainstorm and create a proposal that would adequately support our educators and their families and also lower the cost of health insurance for local districts.

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

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 legislator? If not, would you like us to help arrange a visit?

Yes, I've visited as a parent and as a legislator and I welcome the opportunity to do so again when schools resume in the fall. I look forward to much more frequent visits in a post-covid landscape.

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've learned a lot from my colleagues who are also education professionals and from the number of testifiers who share their personal and professional stories with us in committee. Education Minnesota has done a great job at sharing the views of those who have the most consistent contact

with students and the potential impact of legislation from a classroom perspective and I appreciate that insight. I also serve on two PTOs in the Eden Prairie Schools and hear firsthand from teachers and support staff in my own district.

35. How do you envision working with Education Minnesota if you are elected/ re-elected?

It's important to me to learn from the insight of those who have day-to-day contact with our students and families and can share their recommendations. Bringing our educators to the table and hearing their stories, inviting them to testify, etc. are ways that I will continue to work in partnership with our teachers and the union.

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

The feedback of classroom teachers and other education support professionals is critical in our quest to provide a student-centered learning environment and beginning with the input of members of Education Minnesota is a great start. Continuing the dialogue and getting questions answered by other education organizations is also important to me in order to make the best decisions possible. I don't necessarily believe in a one-size-fits-all solution, particularly when it comes to early childhood education but I believe in working together to provide options for each student and their family - while supporting our educators and support professionals.