

Erin Maye-Quade for Senate 56

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

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.

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

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?

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 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?

Yes! I support raising revenues from Minnesotans who have more wealth, including the fifth-tier income tax, and a wealth tax for those who have the very most. This is a great way to ensure that those who have benefited most from our public goods (like education) pay back and support those goods and services at a higher level.

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?

Reducing education debt will take a joint effort between our national and state leaders. At the state level, I support the creation of a state bank that could finance student loans and forgive them altogether moving

forward. I also support capping tuition at public colleges and universities, and funding tuition-free community and technical education. At the federal level, we need to fully forgive student loan debt to lift that massive burden off of so many young adults who carry it. I intend to work with and pressure our members of Congress to support cancelation of student loan debt

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?

We *must* raise teacher salaries across Minnesota. This is the single most important thing we can do to show current and prospective teachers that we value their work, literally. We have to center this work in paying teachers the wages they deserve.

Beyond salary, there are several things I value in recruiting and retaining teachers. We should invest deeply in recruiting, training, and paying for the education of more indigenous teachers and teachers of color. This will result in more diverse perspectives in schools, allow our increasingly diverse population of children to see themselves reflected in their teachers, and help support BIPOC Minnesotans with jobs that will be well-paying when we choose to invest.

We also need to make clear that our government trusts teachers and will allow them to be themselves in their classrooms. I support measures to proactively ensure teachers can display pride flags talk about their identity, teach accurate information about history around race in our country, and so many more things to fight back against the attacks we see against teachers across the country right now.

While there are so many more things I want to mention, the last I'll elaborate on is funding non-teacher school resources to give our educators a much needed reprieve. When kids know they have food to eat at school, teachers don't need to worry about ensuring their kids are fed before they can learn. When we invest in mental health professionals, teachers can rely on their expertise instead of having to fill in as a counselor for their students. Teachers have become a catch-all for so many school and childhood needs, and we can ensure they have the resources around them that they need if we choose to invest our money appropriately.

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 system-level decisions in education do you believe are appropriate to make based on standardized test scores?

There are very few decisions we should be making solely on standardized testing. Decisions and analysis of teacher performance and pay should never be based on standardized testing, as they don't accurately assess what students are learning in a classroom setting. Curriculum should also not be decided based on testing scores. Standardized tests don't reflect skills that students may learn in school because of the artificial environment that they are administered in. Teaching to this testing style could have adverse impacts on students. One of the only decisions that should be made based in part on these tests is where additional money to increase educational opportunities and equity should go. Schools that have lower standardized test scores likely have larger populations of learners who need additional support, whether that be due to income, language barrier, family support, or anything else.

Honesty in Education

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

I mentioned this a bit earlier, but we can pass protective laws now to ensure that educators have the freedom to teach accurate information about history and other subjects, and the ability to express their authentic selves while teaching.

In terms of actually setting expectations and learning standards for their own classrooms, we have a lot of work to do to support teachers. We need to make sure that policymakers and education administrators are working collaboratively with teachers to set expectations about what teaching looks like, rather than penalizing and holding teachers to a specific timeline or curriculum that might not work for or serve their students.

From the legislature, this can take the form of supporting teachers' unions adamantly, funding additional school resources so teachers can focus more on teaching and less on paperwork and student data, and limiting our use of standardized tests so teachers can focus elsewhere. This also involves bringing teachers into the initial conversations about any policy that will impact them and their classrooms. By having teachers' voices present at every step, we can empower them to create systems that will work best for their 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?

Absolutely. The attacks on truth and learning about race in the United States are abhorrent and quite frankly terrifying. Rather than pretending slavery, Jim Crow, school segregation and others didn't happen,

we need to teach our youth the mistakes of our past and how to actually talk about those failures moving forward. Empowering our youth with accurate information and skills to navigate conversations about race and racism will serve them much better than ignoring those conversations altogether.

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?

Unions are one of the most important tools we have to empower Minnesotans, and I will oppose any legislation intending to weaken them. As a legislator, I will use my voice and presence to advocate for unions, both in the halls of the Senate, with my platform online, and at the picket line. I believe everyone deserves access to a union, and I would support legislation to allow all Minnesotans to unionize their workplace if they choose to. For teachers' unions specifically, we can support unions by funding education at a much higher level. When teachers can focus on better standards for teaching and learning, not only on class sizes, pay, and other essentials, we empower them to look beyond their current scope and create improvements throughout our school system and their workplaces.

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? Where do you stand on health care for all?

I am a strong supporter of universal public health care. Between now and when that vision is actualized, I support expanding MinnesotaCare to ensure that everyone can access health insurance at a *deeply* affordable rate. We have the ability to fund this and ensure everyone has access to the care they need, and we need to follow through on these values.

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 a legislator? If not, when did you last visit a school? Would you like us to help arrange a visit?

Physically, no (I was pregnant and wasn't doing in-person events) but I did attend virtual events through ISD196 in 2020 and 2021, many centered around race equity (held by EVHS, RHS, and EHS). Through my work at Gender Justice, I've visited more than 15 schools, including 2 in ISD196, in the last year to talk to their GSA's. Through that work, I've also worked with teachers to learn more about the censorship and surveillance efforts. Additionally, I worked with EDMN to set up more than 60 visits with educators during my time in the State House. I spent each Friday during session with an educator in their classroom. I learned so many things by being IN the schools and working alongside teachers as they went about their day. I saw how morning breakfast in Kindergarten classrooms was filling bellies AND helping kids develop motor skills as they learned to open their bags of apples. I learned from Ms. McMurchie Pasch that special education teachers have to adapt the curriculum for their students, it's not provided. In Ms. Milliman's gym class, I saw how social dynamics change when one student simply offered to partner with a student who seemed to be bullied by others during a simple game of partner tag. In Mr. Wessel's class, I met more LGBTQ students than I could have imagined who felt seen and represented by having a gay

state representative. In Mr. Schultz's class, I learned that two students' father's had passed away that year and saw how it impacted their ability to learn. In Mr. Murray's science class, I saw how much money he spent out of his own pocket to have all the supplies he needed to teach. As a State Senator, I will once again offer to visit any classroom in the district and look forward to working with EDMN to set up those visits!

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?

This is a huge part of my work as the Advocacy Director at Gender Justice. As the right-wing moves to take over schools boards and pass legislation that seeks to demean the profession of teaching, as well as censor, surveil and punish teachers for teaching the truth about our history, affirming the existence of LGBTQ students, much of my work has been focused on combating these attacks. Additionally, I am still subscribed to EDMN emails and follow you all on social media. I maintain strong relationships with educators in my district and have them as part of my campaign team, follow them on social media, and engage with them as friends and community members in my regular life. Similarly, I've engaged young people and students on the campaign. As a voracious reader, I also read long and short-form articles that cover education issues in media, including Washington Post, New York Times, Slate, Vox and ProPublica.

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 look forward to a strong partnership with EDMN that includes re-instating my weekly visits to schools, and working with leadership to thwart attacks on teachers and students in schools. EDMN is the subject matter expert and I will look to you as such on education related matters. I believe that it is vital to communicate early and often; if I were to disagree with EDMN on an issue, I would reach out to discuss the issue and communicate both to EDMN leadership in my district and in the state about votes and motions I plan to take.

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

Not all education groups are created equal. During my time at the Capitol, I was dismayed to see education groups trot out students of color and their families to justify horrific policy initiatives, including private school vouchers, censorship and surveillance bills, dominionist legislation and anti-LGBTQ policies. My strong relationship with and deep respect for the work Education Minnesota does means I will rely heavily on your expertise to focus fully on the real work that is ahead of us: fully funding our public schools, increasing teacher pay, recruiting top talent with high standards for licensure, supporting our students, and defending teaching as the very real (difficult) and immensely important profession that it is.