

SD 57B – Erin Preese (D)

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.

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?

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?

Besides raising revenue from the wealthiest individuals and corporations in Minnesota, the state and federal government also need to put an end to tax loopholes that allow huge companies to not pay their fair share of taxes. In 2018, 91 of the Fortune 500 companies paid \$0 in federal taxes. This is not only unfair to middle class families who pay a large portion of their income in taxes, but it also shortchanges our public education system. If these companies want us to train their future employees, they need to contribute to the costs of public education.

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?

We need to create incentive programs for students to choose careers in industries that need more workers. There is a projected shortage of future workers in healthcare, IT, and engineering . We could create loan forgiveness programs for students who go into these types of careers. But we also expect a shortage of skilled labor jobs, such as plumbers and electricians. We know that a four year degree is not right for everyone and we should encourage high school students to consider technical schools as well as universities.

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

10. What will you do to help recruit and retain high-quality educators in our classrooms?

Many people who consider a career in teaching decide not to pursue that choice because they can make a much higher salary in another career. Likewise, many new teachers leave during the first five years of teaching because we expect so much from them with so little pay. In addition to paying teachers more, we also need to make sure there are enough student support workers, such as counselors, social workers, behavior specialists and psychologists. Expecting classroom teachers to take on all of these responsibilities leads to burnout and is unsustainable.

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?

X Yes No

Teacher licensure

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

X 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?

X 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?

I believe that tests should always be used as formative assessments, and not as punishments for schools. Test results can be useful if they provide feedback that is specific and timely. Teachers can use this information to adjust their teaching plans and target specific skills that need to be retaught. However, the MCA tests results arrive in the summer, which is too late to help inform our teaching and seems to only be used to penalize schools.

Honesty in Education

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

As a teacher, I depend on my local union to support me if a parent complained about what I was teaching. But teachers also need to feel that their district leadership fully supports equity. At the legislature, we need to ensure that our social studies standards reflect an honest and full understanding of our past.

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, teaching history shouldn't be political. Our students deserve to have a full understanding of our country's history. It would be doing our future generations a disservice to under educate students about our past.

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

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

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?

As a member of Education MN, I will protect our right to organize. Unions create safer working conditions and ensure fair wages for employees, which is the backbone of the middle class.

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

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?

School districts should be able to join together to bargain as a group for better insurance rates. We could also participate in programs that promote healthy living as a way to save costs on premiums.

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?

I currently teach English as a Second Language at an elementary school in my district. I also have previous experience as a long-term sub in a preschool and have student taught at the high school level. I hold a current teaching license in K-12 ESL and a master's degree in teaching.

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 a part of the union and I attend all my local union meetings. I have also lobbied at the state capitol on behalf of Education Minnesota. I plan to continue teaching while the legislature is not in session so I can stay informed of the current issues facing public education.

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 remain a member of Education Minnesota and will regularly meet with leaders from the district. Fully funding public education is one of the main issues I'm running on for my campaign and it is a commitment I take seriously.

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

As a current teacher, I have a strong understanding of which proposals will actually make a positive difference for students and teachers. I also have a large network of educators from other districts who I can reach out to with questions.