

Liz Reyer for House 52A

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?

Ensuring that the wealthiest individuals and corporations pay their fair share is the “low hanging fruit” of progressive tax reform. However, it is not the only way to raise revenue. Legalization of cannabis is an excellent option, and the bill passed last session should deliver helpful tax revenues. As I move into my second term, I will continue to explore additional options.

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?

I continue to hope for federal action to address the broad issue of out-of-control student debt. But as a state legislator I will continue to support education debt forgiveness programs for certain professions, including educators. I also will strongly advocate for legislation that helps prevent excessive debt in the first place, such as tuition-free options at community colleges and sliding scale tuitions at state 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?

Yes No

High-quality professional educators

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

We need to take both financial and cultural steps to recruit and retain high-quality educators, especially educators of color. Using a major infusion of ongoing state funds, we should be able to provide the pay, benefits, training, and support that educators deserve. We also must ensure that educators of color have a safe, supportive, and respectful environment in which to work so they can thrive without daily confrontations with endemic racism.

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?

As a mom of four adult kids, all of whom were educated in public schools, I see little value in standardized tests and am hard-pressed to see any important decisions that should be made based on these test results. In fact, they seem to provide disincentives to quality education. However, as a non-educator, I would defer to educators to provide guidance on how to best use these and other inputs to guide the education of our children.

Honesty in Education

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

We need to ensure teachers' physical safety in schools. This includes protection from gun violence through better gun control and legislation that prevents further proliferation of weapons of war in our communities. It also includes tending to the mental health needs of students and teachers alike, as well as the most basic solutions of providing appropriate staffing and compensation levels.

Educators need to see that their administrators—superintendents, school board members, and principals—will support them, especially as controversies related to curricula are created by the far right. As a legislator, I have done this by showing up at school board meetings to demonstrate my support for teachers. To be honest, I don't know the legislative solution to requiring leadership courage, but it is the most important thing.

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?

100% yes. Failing to teach candidly about the reality of racism and the experiences of enslaved and indigenous people (among others) dishonors their experiences, thereby harming children of color. It also harms white children by misleading them and giving them a false view of our country's past. We all benefit when we can take an honest look at how we arrived at our current situation, and successful solutions to the issues of race that we face can only come from understanding their underlying causes.

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?

I will continue to support unions as a state legislator through legislation I author or support, through verbal and written advocacy, and through joining actions to show my support when union workers are standing up for their rights. Overall, I see it as my responsibility to:

- *Stand up for collective bargaining rights and resist attacks on contracts negotiated in good faith.*
- *Ensure that workers receive living wages and benefits that provide for them/their families’ needs.*
- *Work hard on important family policy areas, such as paid family medical leave, child care access and affordability, and universal health care.*

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?

Access to affordable healthcare for all Minnesotans is one of my top priorities and has been a major focus in my first term. I'm co-chair for the Minnesota Health Plan caucus, which advocates for universal coverage in Minnesota. At the same time, as an intermediate step, I have been a supporter of the Minnesota Care public option. I have also been carrying legislation that addresses specific pain-points in our health care system to increase access, for example, to dental care for Medicaid members and to out of network providers for rare disease diagnosis and treatment. I'm encouraged by federal action on prescription drug prices and am committed to addressing this problem at a state level, as well.

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?

I toured Two Rivers High School in ISD 197 earlier this year. I was impressed by the work that has been done on the school's facilities and in my conversation with the superintendent and staff. However, it was not an in-depth visit with classroom time or conversations with educators. Apart from my years as a parent with four kids in public schools, my prior experience in classrooms came from a job early in my career evaluating self-esteem and drug use prevention curricula for the company I worked for. I would be very interested in school visits moving forward.

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 gained information about public education issues from a variety of sources. My professional background includes time working at a curriculum development company. As part of this role, I was responsible for grant-funded research and program evaluations. Through this position I was onsite at many schools and in conversation with districts across the country about their needs. I also learned a great deal working on a campaign for a school board race in St. Paul in 2019. As a legislator, I have gotten to know colleagues who are educators and/or who have worked intensively on education policy issues, reaching out to them to get informed about issues on votes I'd be taking or to respond appropriately to constituents. I've also sought information from Education Minnesota's website, the MN Department of Education, and from the school districts that I currently represent.

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 would look to Education Minnesota to be a partner and source of information on education-related issues. I hope you would bring me legislative proposals and other suggestions on what I could do to make schools better for students and teaching better for teachers. I would hope to meet with and talk with representatives from Education Minnesota regularly to help me assess how proposed legislation on any topic would affect education and educators. I have seen in my first term how much good work gets done through partnership and am committed to collaborative action.

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

I will always want to hear from Education Minnesota and will always work to find solutions that include your needs and priorities. Balancing them with the priorities of others may sometimes come down to my judgment as to what is most in the interests of my district and the state. If other groups are advocating positions that I think take us in the wrong direction, my stance would be clear. However, in a case where the goal is shared but there are different ideas on how to achieve it, I'd search for the most beneficial ways to get there, looking for creative and pragmatic solutions that everyone can live with and using equity as my usual lens for resolving differences. The key will be communication to understand not just "what" a group wants, but "why" in order to find common ground, where possible. In general, I believe that teachers know best what works for schools and what works for teaching, so Education Minnesota's perspective will always inform my choices.

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