

# Judy Seeberger SD 41

## 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.*

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.*

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 \$25 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: Provide debt relief to retain teachers so they can afford to stay in the classroom.*

Yes     No

*Higher education: Renew Minnesota's commitment to invest in the state's future by fully funding public higher education in Minnesota.*

Yes     No

## **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?

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

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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?

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 also believe in the importance of fully funding Minnesota's schools, and I support progressive and equitable taxation to achieve that goal. I think we need to emphasize state funding to reduce the gap between districts with strong property values and those in less affluent areas and/or smaller districts.**

## 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?

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 am committed to only supporting University of Minnesota Board of Regents candidates that understand the need to reduce reliance on tuition increases year after year to fund operations. In addition, I believe strong PSEO opportunities for students can help additional students finish college in fewer semesters, and that targeted loan relief for high demand fields and especially for underrepresented students in those fields is a critical investment.**

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

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

**I strongly support increasing teacher pay, providing teachers additional classroom supports in the form of paraprofessionals, literacy or math specialists, mental health professionals, and more. In addition, I think we need to strengthen the funding behind the Increasing Teachers of Color Act, invest in Grow Your Own programs, and more. I also think we can identify tweaks in the tiered licensure system (like enabling Tier 1 teachers to join the teacher bargaining unit) to make it work better for educators so that they can focus on what is best for their students.**

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

## 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?

**I believe standardized tests can play a role as one data point among many in evaluating statewide or schoolwide performance over time, and as one aspect of understanding a child's educational progress. I oppose high stakes testing for use of evaluating whether a student is ready to advance to the next grade level, to determine educator salary or retention, or as the sole determinant in allocating school resources. I spent 5 years in the classroom in a mid-career change, and I know firsthand that there is so much more to learning and potential than a student's ability to perform well on a high stakes, high pressure standardized test.**

## 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?

**As an educator, I know that it is vitally important for students to have access to literature and content which provides viewpoints and perspectives beyond those of White men from previous generations. Unfortunately, that approach to teaching, along with teaching a full picture of American and World History, has come under attack in recent years. I am committed to being a voice for the expertise that educators bring to their classroom, to supporting evidence-based practices in education, and to ensuring that teachers are protected from attacks for simply doing their jobs and advocating for 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?

**I strongly agree that Minnesota's students deserve an honest and accurate education about race. Ignoring or lying about our history only leads us to repeat it, and will never work because our structures and culture have been shaped by every aspect of that history. Minnesota ranks amongst the worst states in our nation in racial disparities, and that did not happen by accident. We have an immense amount of work to do to eliminate those disparities, and that starts in the classroom by honoring the experience of every student and identifying the past examples and ongoing effects of racism, slavery, discrimination, and genocide on the Minnesotans of today.**

## 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

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

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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?

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?

**As a member of the paramedic's union, IAEP Local 167, I strongly support the rights of all employees to collectively bargain and advocate for themselves and their peers. Teachers take that a step further by advocating for their students as well. I will always support collective bargaining rights, close any loopholes allowing for free-riders, and be a partner to union members seeking a voice at the state capitol.**

## 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?

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 strongly support health care for all, and for reducing the cost of healthcare. It happens all too often to me as a paramedic- I respond to a call and ask a patient why they didn't call until their blood pressure was at a crisis level, or until their pain or illness is forcing them to an emergency room. Time and time again the reason I hear is that they do not have health insurance, or that despite their insurance their care still costs too much. It should never be that way.**

**As far as reducing the cost of health insurance, I believe the most important approaches would be lowering the cost of prescription drugs, and meeting school district's broader budget challenges so that they aren't operating on a knife's edge with their budget.**

## Privatization

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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

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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?

**Until 2021, I was a middle and high school English teacher at Math & Science Academy in Woodbury. This past academic year I worked as a substitute teacher, filling an urgent need for qualified substitute teachers. As a Tier 4 licensed teacher, I knew I could make a difference in the classroom, even as a substitute, given the dire need for qualified professionals. My two sons were also in the public school system this past academic year – my older graduating from Math & Science Academy, and my younger (who is in special ed) completing his junior year at Stillwater Area High School. I am in schools frequently and have ongoing first-hand knowledge of their operation. At every school I have been in, I observed teachers working harder than ever before to prepare high quality lesson plans, meet students where they are, differentiate their teaching, advocate for students, and build a strong culture given all of the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**Those collective experiences, along with my 5 years of experience as a classroom teacher and time on a school board make me intimately familiar with the challenges facing our public schools- the tight budgets, the continuously growing class sizes, and the lack of sufficient school support personnel. I am committed to fighting for historic investments in our public schools every day that I am in office because every student deserves the opportunity to receive a high-quality public education, no matter who they are or what they look like.**

**On a personal level, I am glad to see this question. People *think* they know what goes on in our public schools, but until you are “in the trenches” day after day, I would argue you have no idea the challenges teachers and paraprofessionals face.**

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 bring firsthand classroom experience, but I am also reaching out to my fellow educators and parents. I hope to rely on Education Minnesota and especially my local EdMN units for information, as well as folks like the Association of Metro Schools Districts and the Minnesota Association of School Administrators.**

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 want to have open and frequent communication with Education Minnesota, as I do hope to serve on the Education committee and bring my experiences and passion to the legislature. That experience and passion do bring a point of view that I believe in strongly, but I recognize the need to expand my knowledge base and understanding of the challenges districts, educators, and kids are facing statewide. If I disagree with Education Minnesota on an issue, I hope to have the opportunity to discuss the issue and understand if it is a difference in information or approach that can be solved through dialogue. I am committed to proactively reaching out to Education Minnesota leaders to discuss any legislative priorities or bills that Education Minnesota supports where I have concerns.**

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

**As a civil mediator, I am trained and experienced in bringing parties to the table to find a resolution that works, and I hope to bring those skills to the table. I also recognize that Education Minnesota is the strongest voice for educators at the state capitol, and understand the importance of prioritizing educator’s perspectives and expertise. I am committed to supporting students and educators every day that I serve in the Minnesota legislature.**