

Patty Acomb

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

I believe a strong early education is important for all kids. My concern isn't the goal, it is the additional expense when K-12 public schools are already underfunded. Many parents currently are financially able to provide their children with early education opportunities. I would like to see us work toward fully funding K-12 education first while initially focusing a state-funded high-quality pre-K program toward those who cannot afford it.



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

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?

I believe that everyone should pay their fair share and am not sure that I have any additional suggestions at this time.

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 would like to see an expansion of college in the high schools and more opportunities for PSEO to lower higher education costs. I would also look at opportunities to adjust interest rates, loan forgiveness options, reduce or eliminate loan origination fees, make more grant aid available, lower tuition and fees at public institutions, and other innovative interest deferral and repayment options.

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 that appropriate compensation/benefits are always important and would also look at options to ensure that class sizes are not too large, special education is fully funded and supported, teachers receive regular training, adequate support services are in place for teachers (para or aide in classrooms, prep time available), and allow teachers flexibility to meet the needs of their specific students. I have also seen the value of mentorship & “master” teacher efforts in the schools.

I am also an advocate for programs like Black Men Teach that identify high school students with an interest in teaching. I believe it is valuable to support and mentor them through college, and then bring them back them back to teach in their home districts.

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

I don't know enough about the issue and would need to learn more.

Standardized testing

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

I am unsure of the effectiveness of standardized test scores in evaluation and decision-making, as tests may only reflect a particular moment in time rather than a more comprehensive assessment of progress. I am also unsure if any real-time data is available to make needed adjustments throughout the year. I would need to learn more about how these scores are currently used in decisions.

Honesty in Education

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

Minnesota has a long-standing process for establishing state and local academic standards, with educators making decisions on how to deliver instruction. I see no reason for this to change.

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 do believe both a historical and contemporary understanding of DEI issues are important for students. I support addressing deficiencies in our academic standards to ensure updates are implemented in classrooms statewide.

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?

Teachers are so important! I will work to maintain and support collective bargaining and PELRA. I will also advocate for teachers to earn a competitive wage for a high quality of life.

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

I do not know enough about this issue, and I would have to learn more.

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?

The cost of health care is a deep personal concern, & I believe access to affordable quality healthcare is a right shared by all. Some of the initiatives that I support are price transparency for pharmaceuticals and expansion of MinnesotaCare.

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

I am not sure.

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

I assume these two questions are about the proposed amendment to the education clause of Minnesota's constitution, which I do not feel is needed at this time. However, something more certainly needs to be done to ensure our students of color are achieving. I believe the achievement gap has gone unchecked for too long. I am interested in hearing from Education Minnesota what initiatives the organization is currently undertaking to address our disparities in standardized test scores, graduation rates, and indicators of college readiness.

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 have regularly visited all three of my district high schools; Hopkins, Minnetonka, and Wayzata, as well as our local ISD287 campus West Education Center. I have also been to Hopkins and Minnetonka's ECFE buildings to learn about early education programing. I have seen how each district is addressing education delivery and other critical issues from mental health to food insecurity. These interactions give me valuable perspective on local needs and emerging issues.

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?

Both of my children are products of the Hopkins school district, so I have had the chance to experience first-hand local public education from ECFE through high school graduation. I also engage with the Legislative Action Coalitions from my school districts to better understand what they are advocating for.

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?

Education is an important issue to me and my constituents. I hope to continue working with Education Minnesota to find tangible and scalable solutions to the achievement gap. All our kids deserve a high-quality education.

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

As a current elected official, I believe that governing is about balancing competing priorities. I have had past success bringing together disparate groups on issues of importance to our community and would hope that I will continue to find compromise or common ground between various education proponents.