

Heather Edelson

50A - Edina / Bloomington

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

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?

Answer: I need more details on who we would be raising taxes on - when our state has 9 billion for a surplus, unless I have all the details agreeing to a tax increase without all the details is not realistic unless we have the trifecta (gov, senate and house).

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?

Answer: I am open to exploring many options including fair tax codes and referendum fairness as well.

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?

I am 100 percent behind debt forgiveness after so many years of service. Say after 5 years we forgive half of your debt and over 10 you would be able to have the remainder of debt forgiven. We have a shortage of teachers and need to explore many ideas and 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?

X Yes No

Yes, and we will have to figure out how we can increase our population to ensure we can get someone to fill the role.

High-quality professional educators

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

I will work on legislation at the capitol that seeks to help but also in my own community but engaging as I have over the past 10 years in our schools serving on SEAC and other education committees to hear what is directly happening in my 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 want to hear more about what Ed MN thinks about this.

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 strongly opposed to MCA's and have carried legislation to have MAP testing replace the MCA's which are just a federal requirement at the end of the year that are time consuming for staffing – and serve little to no benefit for students.

Honesty in Education

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

Stand up for our educators – they need more freedom to teach. We DO NOT always need to micromanage what is taught in the classroom and should allow educators the ability to be creative and change to react to their classroom and students needs.

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 percent agree. While our history has a painful past – we must all acknowledge it and be honest with the facts to ensure such horrific acts never happen again. Because all of the stories deserve to be told and our students deserve to hear them.

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?

I will continue to meet and work with them – we may not always agree but I am committed to staying at the table to negotiate deals that will be us move things forward to help people.

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?

I would support and have been a co-author of expansion of Minneosta Care – we can make this an option for Educators as well.

Healthcare for All – I would say single payer sounds good, but the reality is I have not heard a strong path to actually pass this legislation. We would have to change an entire system – not impossible but it would require changing higher education costs, how much doctors, nurses and support staff get paid – it is complicated and I am not prepared to say I support without seeing the totality of the plan and how it would impact the larger system.

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

Potentially.

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?

Southview Middle School and Concord Elementary. I have kids at both and am active in the school. My experience is always positive but staffing was short and we lacked subs and bus drivers. The workforce shortage is rough across the state.

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 mom with two sons that have special needs, dyslexia –so I get how critical some education issues get and the complexities of IEP’s and services. I volunteer in our schools, host nonpartisan policy internships all year long with high school students from my district and love engaging with our youth and educators. I am friends with our superintendent and all the school board members. Education in my community is a number one issue why people move to Edina and have their kids attend the schools.

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 have a good working history with Education Minnesota and will continue to work hard to foster that relationship.

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

This is an area I do very well in – taking varying interest and finding common ground. That will not change.