

Mary Frances Clardy HD53A

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.

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 am open to working with members of Education Minnesota and my colleagues in the tax committee to look at meeting the needs of our education system. In particular, looking at taxes on corporate windfalls related price gouging and the creation of a tax bracket for those Minnesotans at the very, very top tier that have been discussed for Minnesotans making more than \$10,000 a week. All of these seem to be more than reasonable, and I am open to discussing more options with my colleagues.

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?

We should be looking in to what we can do as a state to help make sure students in the future don't go in to debt by increasing the number of free or very low cost higher education options for Minnesotans that want to pursue degrees in our state college and university system. We should also consider programs that allow individuals with substantial debt to be able to make the interest tax deductible, and explore forgiveness and repayment programs for those in areas of critical need, for example, to expand our pool of educators of color. I know I have more to learn about this issue, and I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues on the Higher Education committee and Education Minnesota to help shape these policies.

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'm in strong agreement with many of EPIC's policy recommendations. We need to do more do identify, nurture, and build a pipeline of individuals interested in teaching as a profession, and in particular, make financial assistance and incentives available to those that are attracted to this calling. We also need to do more to make teaching attractive to retain talent, including giving current teachers the support they need in and out of the classroom. I know how stressed our education professionals are now first hand, and they deserve our support in the legislature. We also need to make sure that we are paying our teachers a competitive wage, giving them competitive benefits, and offering professional development.

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?

Standardized tests can give us some useful information about systems and students, but they do not present the whole picture, nor are they the ultimate goal of our education system. They can be useful to identify where inequities in our system are, and what communities in our schools need the most help, both inside of school and out. In terms of the knowledge they assess, they are only as good as the instrument is itself. Often, these tests do not measure higher level skills and show a cultural bias. To the extent that they do measure progress and they provide feedback for students and teachers, they can be useful, but they need to always be considered in context.

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 know that we are professionals, and we deserve to be treated as such. Our teachers deserve the academic freedom to use their training and professional judgment. Especially in this political climate, it is important for people to see a teacher in the legislature countering the narratives that have recently been portrayed in the media.

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. Our students from all backgrounds benefit from hearing about all parts of our history – the good and the troubling. It also benefits our students from disenfranchised communities to know that their histories are taught, valued, and respected in our classrooms.

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 am a proud member of SPFE, and I have made it a point to learn about the issues of other unions throughout my campaign so far. I know I have a lot more to learn about other issues, and I will continue to reach out to my partners in Labor to make sure that I am a good partner at the Legislature.

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?

Accessible and affordable healthcare is a priority for me. I believe that there are many steps that could be taken to achieve that, ranging from opening MinnesotaCare as a public option to everyone to the Minnesota HealthPlan. I believe as long as we are moving closer to the goal of making care more affordable, we are moving in the right direction, and I'm open to any legislation that moves the ball forward.

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?

Yes, I teach at The Heights in St. Paul. My experience teaching for the last 26 years is at the core of who I am. I take away every day that we have so much more to do in not just supporting our teachers, but our parents and our students as well. We need to make sure that all families have the support and stability they need to have a chance for them to thrive.

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 gathered a number of sources in my 26 years teaching. As a teacher in an urban elementary school and a school board member in a suburban district, I get to see a lot of our public school settings first hand. I'm also active in a number of education organizations, including the Board of School Administrators, the Association of Metropolitan School Districts, and the Minnesota School Board Directors of Color. I also have turned to members and leaders of Education Minnesota, including Denise Specht.

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 develop a cooperative relationship with Education Minnesota. As a teacher, I know the values we share, and I know the importance of fighting for them in St. Paul. I know that building power takes open and honest communication. On policy matters impacting education, I want to proactively stay informed with Education Minnesota leaders and members. I want to be able to have honest, open dialogue. If we disagree on issues, I want to talk about them to better understand them, and respectfully come to a resolution, always knowing that we will always have more in common in fighting for our teachers, students, and parents, than any temporary disagreement.

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

I know that our teachers and school professionals are the backbone of our educational system. While there are many groups out there, I think it is unwise to not strongly consider the perspective of the union voices of those professionals. I believe in listening to others, finding common ground, and building power together. I'm also happy to defend my values as an educator and as a union member.