

# Lindsey Port (SD55)

## 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 believe that the wealthiest Minnesotans and large corporations should be paying their fair share in taxes to fund the State. Our state's general education funding formula is over thirty years old; it should be revised to better account for inflation and increased costs due to mandated services. We should also look at revenue that would come from legalizing adult use cannabis as a future source for education funding.

## 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?

At the state level, we should be looking at greatly reducing tuition in our state colleges and universities as well as community colleges to limit the amount of new debt that is needed to be taken on. For Minnesotans who are already struggling with the debt they have, we should be looking at debt forgiveness, especially in places where people are providing needed public services, like teaching, nursing, and medical care.

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?

We need to look at new ways of bringing in teachers. I believe that student debt forgiveness for teachers is a great way to incentivize new teachers. We should also reduce the burden on teachers by lowering class sizes and increasing wages while consistently 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

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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 don't think any decision should be made based on any one test score.

## 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?

Parents already have many opportunities to engage on their childrens' education. That engagement is to be lauded, but interference in educators' abilities to teach under the guise of parental rights must be curtailed. I voted against such bills, and will continue to do so.

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 agree, we can not shy away from these topics as a society. They are apart of our history and students deserve an opportunity to learn these things. We must boldly talk about the vision of justice and equity that we are working towards for all Minnesotans, black, brown, and white.

## 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?

My job as a legislator is to ratify the contracts negotiated by unions and protect their rights to collectively bargain. I also think, especially in this time of health and economic crisis, that unions will be the backbone of the rebuilding that will need to be done after this pandemic, and I will champion their work and the need of our society for unions to be strong.

## 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 support and have stood for single payer healthcare during my first term in the MN Senate. This would remove the burden of health insurance costs from school districts.

## 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?

Yes, I visited Vista View elementary, and spent time with kindergarten students and their teachers. I learned that the students were engaged, and both a ton of fun and also exhausting! The educators I spoke with were worn out, afraid of the future in the profession, and begging for help. It was inspiring and heart-breaking.

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 have continued to build relationships with educators during my first term. I have strong relationships with teachers in my district, both from my kids' school, and other schools. I have very good relationships with the superintendents from the Burnsville and Apple Valley districts. I have honest conversations with



educators about what they are facing right now. I turn to them and to people like Paul Winkelaar, who I have worked to build relationships with over the last 5 years on issues of education.

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 believe in building lasting partnerships with the organizations that I seek endorsements from. I will not be shy about asking questions when I don't understand something, seeking help in connecting with experts from classrooms around the state, and staying in close conversation to work together on sponsoring and championing bills that will see education once again fully funded at the state level, and guided by our educators here in Minnesota.

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

While I understand there may be competing opinions, my trust lies in the people who are closest to our students, and in Minnesota, that means trusting the largest union of educators in Education Minnesota.