

Scott Dibble, Senate District 61

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?

We should find alternative dedicated sources of revenue for other pressures on the general fund for things like affordable housing. We can also take a comprehensive look at business activities that are tax exempt and other tax loopholes. We should eliminate corporations' ability to hide assets and profits offshore. We should aid schools' ability to eliminate their utility bills by siting solar energy on schools.

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 support federal programs that would forgive student loan debt, whether universal or targeted. At the state level, we can assist with refinancing to obtain lower interest, create loan / tuition forgiveness programs for students entering certain professions, expand tax credits to help offset debt payments, and ensuring students have as much information as possible both before and after taking out a loan.

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?

Programs to encourage TA's and other paraprofessionals to become teachers, better pay for beginning teachers, pay for time spent as a student teacher, create and strengthen mentoring relationships, programs to expand the number of teachers of color, student loan forgiveness programs, improve on-site and district management, more professional collaboration, share decision-making, ensure tools and materials and technology are readily available.

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?

If tests are used to inform students and their teachers about what they need to ascertain their individual progress, that would be an important service. I am dubious of using tests as an overarching focus so as to distort what highly capable educators and gifted teachers might otherwise be able to design and offer for their classes. Likewise, it is not fair to base career and personnel decisions for a teacher based on tests that are influenced by factors and variables totally out of their control. Likewise, punitive measures imposed on districts and schools like funding sanctions would be self-defeating.

Honesty in Education

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

First and foremost, it is important to oppose legislation that would emulate Florida's "Don't Say Gay" law and numerous laws that ban teaching of the red herring critical race theory. It is vital to create and pass a proactive policy agenda reestablishing respect for the profession of teaching, a culture of collaboration among teachers and administration, and recognizing the authority of teachers in their classrooms who know best how to teach given the specific circumstances, setting and student cohort they have.

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 agree. First and foremost, Black people and other people of color are not some sort of "add on" in an otherwise by default white country. This country has been and will remain heterogenous, formed, founded, shaped by all kinds of people and failure to learn and understand that is to distort what our country and its history are. Issues of racial disparity and discrimination continue to be enormous problems of incredibly negative consequence, not just to those who experience it, but to everyone and to the very foundation of our shared aspirations of being a country where everyone is equal and deserving of opportunity. We can only figure out how to solve those problems when we understand their origins. Preventing teaching the truth of our history is dishonest and will only exacerbate our country's and democracy's shortcomings.

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?

Limit time windows in which public workers can opt out of membership, assist unions in promoting their value, support striking workers including walking the picket line, ease ability to organize presently unorganized workplaces and inhibit employers' ability to thwart, oppose all anti-labor, anti-worker, anti-fair pay, anti-qualified employee legislative measures, fight to defend Minnesota's PELRA.

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?

I was the successful author of the PEIP to allow school employees to opt into the state employees' health plan (and combat inappropriate benefits for district leaders by agents for plans they select). Fully funding the state's public health investments. Many reforms to combat the grotesque profiteering by the pharmaceutical industry. Ultimately universal, comprehensive, single payer coverage is the solution.

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 have visited a number of my schools. I particularly like visiting where my niece teaches kindergarten, Bancroft Elementary. My observations are only enthusiastically positive...the kids, as always, were spectacular, the teachers so warm and engaging, the parents so committed and involved.

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 talk a lot with my niece who teaches kindergarten at Bancroft Elementary, as well as three cousins and a number of very good friends who teach. I interact with a lot of high school students, including my great niece who just graduated from Southwest High School and her friends. I also meet a lot of young LGBTQ and BIPOC people—especially as the chief author of both the bullying bill, the Homeless Youth Act and conversion therapy ban. I go to my friend and constituent, Dave Aron, when I have questions about current issues and debates. I read a lot of information about other states' approaches from organizations like the National Conference of State Legislatures. I often search for topic on AFT's website. I have a strong relationship with EdMN's lobbying team.

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?

As I have for the entirety of my time in the legislature, I am always available to serve as the chief or co-author for policy proposals that EdMN is bringing to the legislature. For other matters that I champion, I've always asked and been grateful for EdMN's willingness to come on board as a coalition partner. I am also grateful for EdMN's willingness to take the time to provide excellent information, analysis and perspective on the array of issues and opportunities we grapple with every year.

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

I believe we should always lead with our values...in particular those that we've articulated when seeking to be elected to represent my constituents. With regard to education, the highest value that we serve is to level the playing field and eliminate barriers so that everyone has an opportunity to live a life to which they aspire and so that our democracy is fueled by intelligent, thoughtful and informed people. When any interest is coming forward with an idea for education that is self-serving, profit motivated, excludes those different from themselves, or otherwise undermines the public good, I will oppose them. I appreciate that EdMN puts students and their educators at the center of everything they do.