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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 support wealth, capital gains, and property taxes; marginal tax brackets and increasing corporate taxes to fund public services. We must make sure that those with low socioeconomic status don't end up paying more of their income relative to the highest earners.

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 student loan forgiveness programs and expanding them, including loan representatives who could help advocate for people and navigate the system.

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 support reducing the teacher to student ratio, giving more time for teachers to prepare their material and interact with families, allowing for school leadership to craft culturally accurate curriculum, having a loan forgiveness program, increasing the minimum wage to livable wages for ESPs, amending the Tiered Licensure Law to include Tier 1 teachers in the teacher bargaining unit, providing paid family leave, getting rid of barriers to licensure for those who already have college education, among others.

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

Note: If the goal is to attract and retain more educators, particularly teachers of color, then

Standardized testing

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

Schools rely on funding based on students' performance on standardized tests, but test results don't necessarily measure how much students have learned or have been prepared for further education. If anything, standardized test results might show gaps in access to test preparation, in which case individuals or schools showing low standardized test scores should receive more support. We should supplement standardized testing with other measures, such as portfolios, that show learning over time and showcase students' real life experiences.

Honesty in Education

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

I would oppose Florida-style bans on teaching ideas related to critical race theory. I would support providing teachers the resources they need to facilitate honest conversations with students about the history of the United States. I support passing ethnic studies as a graduation requirement for all MN students.

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. I attended Minneapolis public schools from K-12, including South High School. Most neighbors will know that South is a school that is distinctive for having no windows. But when I think of my time as a student in Minneapolis public schools, I often say that I attended schools that also did not have mirrors. The curriculum, the teaching staff, the policies, the practices of the schools I attended all did not provide mirrors for students of color like myself to see ourselves reflected, and as a result our city and state have terrible gaps in educational outcomes. I believe that students are more engaged in school when they see themselves reflected in the curriculum. I have been pushing for this type of programming as the Executive Director of an education non-profit that partners with public schools for the last five years, and I would continue to push for this type of curriculum and programming at the legislature.

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’m honored to receive the endorsements of local unions such as MAPE, SEIU MN State Council, LiUNA, AFL-CIO and MNA. As a state legislator I would support collectively bargained state employee contracts that have been agreed upon and ratified by respective union memberships. I would oppose any attempt to erode collective bargaining rights for Minnesota workers.

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?

Access to healthcare is a human right, and we need to fight to make healthcare more accessible, culturally informed, and affordable. Our healthcare system is currently driven by market incentives that favor corporations instead of communities. We need a healthcare system that centers our needs, not the profit margins of insurance companies and pharmaceutical companies. I support Sen. John Marty's single-payer proposal, the Minnesota Health Plan.

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?

I have been working in public schools for the last eleven years. For the last five years, I have been Executive Director of education non-profit 826 MSP. The organization offers free in-school and out-of-school writing programs to youth in the Twin Cities. We have a program at South High School called the Writers' Room, which is modeled after a college or university writing center. The program is open to the 1800 South High students to come and receive targeted writing support and access to the literary arts. In my role, I would visit or volunteer in the program 1-2 times a week. This year, I observed that things were very unstable at the school and the climate of the school suffered. Teachers were overburdened and students did not have the supports they needed. This was the most difficult year in education I have seen in my professional experience.

I will bring my experiences in direct service to my work as a legislator by first and foremost listening to students, families and educators about what they need from educational institutions and how the state can play a role in making that happen. As a legislator I plan to continue to visit schools and meet with key stakeholders to inform my policy-making. I hope to serve on the education finance committee and will be advocating for fully funding public schools at every opportunity. As a former Minneapolis Public School student, current community partner, and future Minneapolis Public School parent, I know our district is in a very difficult position. There is no reason the district should be so under resourced when we know our students have had such a challenging last few years, and our state is sitting on a 9 billion dollar surplus.

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 become informed on issues in education through my work, through meeting with stakeholders, and most importantly through listening and amplifying youth voice. For information I turn to the local union MFT, non-profit organizations such as 826 MSP or MNEEP of which I am a board member, and student groups such as Coalition of Student Leaders.

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?

If elected, I hope to be in relationship with Education Minnesota through meeting, learning together, and being in dialogue. If we disagree, I will be transparent and accountable to Education Minnesota.

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

If elected, I know there will be competing priorities amongst education groups. I believe that most of the time I will be most aligned with Education Minnesota, because my number one priority is strengthening and protecting public schools. And, I know there will be issues of conflict or competing priorities. In those instances, I vow to listen and be in dialogue with various groups, and to be honest and transparent about my perspective. I have done this in my previous role as Executive Director where I worked with many BIPOC families who had left the public school system for charter schools. I listened and learned from these families' experiences, and participated in a family leadership cohort with Great MN Schools. I have also had conversations with organizations such as Ed Allies, and have agreed with some of their positions on things like data disaggregation.