

**2024 Candidate endorsement questionnaire : Entry #
1498**

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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - Mankato office

Candidate name

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Election district

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Party endorsement

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Educator Pay

1. ESP living wage: Will you support legislation to ensure that all education support professionals earn a living wage of at least \$25 an hour?

Yes

2. Due to significantly below-market compensation for teachers, most school districts in Minnesota are having difficulty filling teaching jobs, and state colleges report a continued decline in the number of graduates from teacher preparation programs. Would you support creating a minimum salary for all licensed Minnesota teachers of \$60,000 a year and an \$80,000 minimum salary for licensed teachers with 10 years of experience and a master's degree?

Yes

Pensions

3. Will you support increasing state funding to ensure the financial sustainability of public pension funds?

Yes

4. Will you support exploring the necessary benefit improvements in order to provide educators with a secure retirement, including reducing early retirement penalties, lowering the normal age of retirement and a career threshold that will help recruit and retain educators?

Yes

5. How will you support efforts to lower inequitable penalties in the Teachers Retirement Association in order to expand retirement options?

The penalties associated with early retirement under the current plan are draconian. I would support legislation and policy that restores Tier I pension plans for all teachers. The differences between Tier I and Tier II educators in pension reductions for early

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retirement devalue the work our teachers do daily in the classroom, and what we currently pay our teachers does not reflect the value they produce. We expect our teachers to work a decade longer than teachers in surrounding states, threatening their retirement security if they refuse to keep working. It's an unconscionable way to determine pensions and damages the ability of Minnesota schools to recruit and retain highly qualified educators. This harms Minnesota teachers, students, our communities, and our state.

Increasing the contributions of currently employed teachers is not how we rectify the issues caused by bad financial management in the past. The employer, in this case, our state, must make up those losses while fully funding future teachers' pensions. While increasing taxes is never popular, those of us who are in a position to shoulder an increased tax burden must do so to ensure the quality of education in Minnesota remains world-class for our students and create retirement security for the teachers who educate future generations.

Health care

6. Do you support educators having access to a mandatory statewide health insurance pool, just like other state workers?

Yes

7. 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

8. All Minnesotans deserve access to affordable health care and publicly managed plans like MN Care and Medicare are some of the most efficient plans out there. The legislature is currently seeking a federal waiver to expand MN Care to more residents. Do you support expanding all public health care programs to include more working people?

Yes

Education funding

9a. Reverse Minnesota's perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula.

Yes

9b. SPED cross subsidy: The state must fully fund special education costs instead of relying on school districts to pay for them.

Yes

9c. EL cross subsidy: Fully fund the costs districts pay to provide quality English learner programs and instruction.

Yes

9d. Lower class sizes: Lower class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need and deserve.

Yes

9e. Full-service community schools: Expand access to full-service community schools across the state.

Yes

9f. 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.

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Yes

9g. Student support: Continue providing additional resources for school districts to hire more student support staff, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses and other job classifications.

Yes

9h. 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

9i. Professional development: Provide professional development to all staff around cultural competency and trauma-responsive classrooms with aims of closing the discipline disparity gap.

Yes

9j. Education debt relief: Provide debt relief to retain teachers so they can afford to stay in the classroom.

Yes

Taxes/revenue

10. 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

11. 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?

No

12. Fully funded schools require adequate and stable revenues. Will you oppose tax cuts and carve outs that lower tax collections or narrow the tax base?

Yes

13. A balanced tax code draws revenue from a mix of income, sales, and property taxes. Will you support policies that maintain both adequate funding and a sustainable balance between revenue sources?

Yes

Higher education

14. Do you support increasing the state's direct investment in public higher education to significantly reduce institutions' reliance on tuition?

Yes

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15. Will you support investments in capital bonding projects that preserve buildings, remodel classrooms and keep our technology assets current?

Yes

16. Do you support DEI efforts on our college campuses and universities?

Yes

17. What would you do, as a state legislator, to help with the cost of higher education?

Education is the great equalizer. It provides upward mobility for individuals and families, or at least it should. The truth is that crippling student debt keeps many people from realizing their true potential. We must create sustainable funding streams to ensure that tuition does not burden students.

I support expanding the North Star Promise program and additional state-funded grants in areas where we see a clear need for educated professionals in the workforce, such as teaching and healthcare. Lowering the overall tuition burden on students and their parents would be my primary goal in considering policy regarding financing public higher education. Public education is truly a public good of benefit to society as a whole, and as such, it should be funded as a public good. A combination of progressive tax policy, fiscal responsibility, wise investment, and controlling compensation upper-level management in our institutions of higher learning can help create a brighter future for all Minnesotans through education.

18. The North Star Promise is expected to result in an increase in enrollment on our campuses. Many of these students are projected to be disproportionately first-generation students and students from historically underserved communities. As a legislator, what would you do to ensure these students had the support they needed to be successful?

While providing financial support for students is essential in making post-secondary education accessible to all Minnesotans, additional supports such as student advising, community support, and childcare access are equally important to student success. Education does not happen in a vacuum; it happens in life. To fulfill the North Star Promise, we need to ensure students are supported socially in the way they need to be. Each student's experience entering college will be unique. We need processes, staff, and funding to develop and provide support to ensure every student has access to the tools and foundations needed to succeed.

19. There are efforts to expand the North Star Promise to Minnesota's private colleges and universities. This would dramatically increase the amount of public money going to private institutions. Do you support the expansion of the North Star Promise to include private colleges and universities?

No

High-quality professional educators

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

State grants, student teaching that pays a living wage, and paid internships help defray students' educational costs.

The Student Teaching Stipend Pilot Program has started this process, but it's insufficient to help our student teachers stay afloat. As a small business owner, I've employed student teachers part-time, and I've seen how exhausting it is for them to try and support themselves while also fulfilling their educational obligations. This is not a way to recruit and train new teachers. I would support the expansion of the Student Teaching Stipend Pilot Program into a program that guarantees all student teachers can financially support themselves without having to work two or three extra jobs.

I'll support policies that help marginalized populations enter the teaching field and keep them in our schools. Whether it's racial or ethnic diversity, neurological diversity, or diversity of physical abilities, our students need to see educators who reflect their

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experiences.

I will support legislation and policy that increases salaries for our teachers across the board. I will work to fix the overly complex teacher pension system and ensure that all teachers are provided a pension that allows them to retire with dignity and the support they need as they age. I'll work with other legislators to create laws that honor the value our educators bring to the classroom and support legislation that keeps class sizes low to ensure teachers are not overwhelmed, and students get the individual instruction so vital to their future success.

Standardized testing

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

Very few system-level decisions should be made based on standardized test scores. Standardized tests are only one tool in the assessment toolbox. Test scores are a small snapshot of one point in time and cannot take into account the multiple variables that may be affecting scores. Tying school funding or teacher compensation to test scores creates a competitive educational environment that does a disservice to our teachers and our students.

On an individual level, standardized tests can be a useful tool in determining which kids need extra support and helping ensure that the curriculum remains challenging for those who excel.

Honesty in Education

22. Most educators believe students should have access to a wide range of age-appropriate books that include relatable characters and situations that reflect the diversity of Minnesota families. However, certain politicians and big money groups are trying to remove books from school libraries across America, particularly books with LGBTQ+ characters or those that deal with racism in America. How should Minnesota protect its students' freedom to read?

Minnesota has banned book bans, a massive step towards protecting our children's reading freedom. I will defend our children's right to see themselves reflected in the materials they read and protect teachers' ability to select materials for their classroom lessons. Our teachers are the experts in educating an increasingly diverse student population, and I will work tirelessly to ensure that experts make the decisions about educating our students.

23. Education Minnesota believes all students should have the freedom to feel safe and welcome in their public school, no matter what they look like, where they're from, how they pray, transgender or not. Do you agree?

Yes

24. Students bring many needs into their public schools, but our union believes they all deserve the freedom to grow with the help of support for their mental health and with lessons in how to recognize and control their emotions, which is sometimes called social-emotional learning. Do you support increasing support for students' mental and emotional health in public schools?

Yes

Time to Teach

25. 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

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26. 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

27. Do you support paid, dedicated time outside of student contact time for special education teachers to complete their paperwork and attend required meetings?

Yes

School safety

28. Creating incentives for school administrators to enforce districts' codes of conduct without bias and/or creating accountability measures for those who don't?

Yes

29. Increase reporting and transparency in worksite safety when reporting physical injuries and emotional trauma in the workplace?

Yes

Union Rights

30. The ability of workers to come together in union and bargain collectively has been vital for reducing wage gaps by gender, building the middle class, and limiting wealth inequality in Minnesota. Do you support expanding and strengthening workers' rights to join a union and bargain collectively?

Yes

31. 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

32. How will you support unions as a state legislator?

I'll fight for funding that ensures our teachers' and support professionals' pay is commensurate with the enormous responsibilities they take on every day. I'll fight to fully fund our public schools and protect workers' bargaining rights. It is every worker's right to join a union and collectively bargain, and I'll work to protect that right for all workers, regardless of their profession.

Privatization

33. Do you oppose state tax credits for private K-12 education tuition and expenses?

Yes

34. 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

35. Will you support a moratorium on new charter schools until such changes are made?

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Yes

Your role as a legislator

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?

Due to my job, I've been to multiple schools in our district in the past year, including Le Sueur/Henderson and Cleveland public schools. However, I've not had the opportunity to tour a school in the district, as we live in ISD 77 and our daughter attends school in Mankato.

I would appreciate any visits you can help arrange. I would love to see the many current and recently completed projects in our district's schools. I'd also like to meet with educators in our district, as the needs of rural schools and districts can differ greatly from those of school districts with higher population density.

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 follow legislative agendas and keep up to date on happenings in ISD 77 through their school board and mailing lists. I spend time on school district websites and reading news releases and reports from individual districts. I also try to keep current with events by talking to teachers and administrators at every level of education. I have the Education Minnesota website bookmarked and try to stay abreast of current issues affecting our educators, support professionals, and administrators. I try to keep up with school board meeting minutes and pay attention to local levy issues on the ballot each year.

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?

The first thing I'll do is listen. Public Education is something I value highly, as I am the product of the public education system myself. However, I am not an educator and do not have the on-the-ground experience to make decisions that affect our educators and students without expert input. If I disagree with a policy priority or a piece of legislation I'll do the work to understand different perspectives and work with Education Minnesota to try and find common ground from which to move forward.

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

I'll listen, consider the different perspectives, and do my best to make decisions that support Minnesota's students and educators. I pledge to fight for equitable education policies that give every child the tools, support, and environment they need to succeed. I'll work to ensure our educators, school counselors, and support professionals receive the funding and support they need to provide a world-class education. From early childhood education to affordable college tuition, I'll champion policies that level the playing field and empower our youth to shoot for the stars.