

# 2024 Education Minnesota Screening Questionnaire

## Our top priorities are supporting educators with professional pay, pensions and health care.

Students learn best when they can develop a trusting relationship with their educators, but what happens when there aren't enough educators?

From the statewide shortage of teachers, licensed school staff, substitutes and education support professionals to burnout among state college faculty, it's clear Minnesota must improve the financial well-being of its educators to address the labor crunch in public education. Nine out of 10 schools in Minnesota are significantly affected by the educator shortage, which harms students of color, students with disabilities and students from rural areas the most.

Understaffing accelerates burnout, low pay forces educators to work multiple jobs, and spiraling health insurance costs encourage educators to work sick. Add in broken pension plans, and it's no wonder educators are reluctantly leaving their students for higher wages outside public education.

Educators are worth more—and they know it. That's why Education Minnesota, a union of more than 84,000 educators in E-12 and higher education, supports a package of bills designed to recruit the next generation of passionate and knowledgeable educators, and retain the best group of education professionals in America. To offer our students the highest-quality education, employers must pay their educators fairly from day one through retirement, show them the respect they deserve and reduce burnout. Together, these proposals are a responsible reaction to the staffing crisis. Our students, and educators, have waited long enough.

## 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  No

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  No

## Pensions

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

Yes  No

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  No

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

**One of the biggest impediments to equitable pensions for our teachers is a lack of dedicated revenue within the state budget for pensions and retirement needs. I support and will advocate for dedicated state revenue (likely from taxing wealthier Minnesotans and getting a global corporate tax rate that works) to reducing the early retirement penalties and strengthening the teaching profession in Minnesota.**

## Health Care

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

Yes  No

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  No

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  No

## Education Funding

9. Please indicate your support or opposition to the following components of our full-funding agenda.

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

Yes  No

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

Yes  No

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

Yes  No

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

Yes  No

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

Yes  No

f. 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

g. 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  No

h. 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

i. 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

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

Yes  No

## 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  No

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?

**Raising tax revenues on the wealthiest corporations and richest households in our state is a great way in which to provide Education funding, and I would love to learn more about how best to shift the conversation on raising revenues together.**

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  No

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  No

## Higher Education

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

Yes  No

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

Yes  No

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

Yes  No

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

**I strongly support the North Star Promise that will ensure more Minnesotans and their children are able to attend college. As someone who graduated with their Associate's Degree at Century College in White Bear Lake, I value what my degree has given me and the opportunities it affords me. I would support covering more education expenses (such as books, parking, and other expenses) via grants. And I would support expanding the North Star Promise to more families.**

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?

**I would support more staffing across our campuses that are specifically committed to counseling these students on how to transition to college and then transition into the workforce successfully. This includes courses and guidance on financial literacy as well as job search and career discernment activities. Especially in a time of workforce shortage across a variety of jobs, we should ensure that our students get the comprehensive support that they need to graduate from college and enter the workforce prepared for the future.**

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?

Yes  No

## High-Quality Professional Educators

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

**I will continue to support everything we can do to support aspiring educators and give them what they need to transition from school to the classroom. This includes supporting student loan forgiveness plans for educators and providing funding for student teachers across the state.**

## Standardized Testing

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

**I believe standardized tests can be used to get a foundational idea of where students are at in their educational journey, whether it seems to be in alignment with goals, and whether students overall seem to need additional support in specific areas. I do not believe standardized tests should determine a school's funding (or lack thereof) or be used as a tool to evaluate educators.**

## 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 did provide a ban on book bans, and we should back up that decision by further solidifying support for all kinds of books and education materials that will prepare Minnesotan children for a diverse and inclusive world.**

23. Education Minnesota believes all students should have the freedom to feel safe and welcome in

their public school, not matter what they look like, where they're from, how they pray, transgender or not. Do you agree?

Yes  No

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  No

## 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  No

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  No

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  No

## School Safety

Parents and educators are growing more concerned about the safety and well-being of students and educators in Minnesota's schools. As the educators of Education Minnesota develop proposals to ensure a peaceful and productive learning environment in schools, would you support:

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  No

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

Yes  No

## 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  No

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  No

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

**I will continue to listen to our union partners and support worker power across the entirety of Minnesota's workforce. I have walked picket lines with striking workers, and I will continue to be a strong advocate for protecting workers.**

## Privatization

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

Yes  No

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  No

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

Yes  No

## 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?

**Yes, I participated in Principal for a Day at the Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District in White Bear Lake and attended the final day and graduation of the AFSA High School in Vadnais Heights.**

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 rely on families and educators in my district, legislators with experience in education, and organizations like Education Minnesota to keep me informed of public education issues.**

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 keep a close working relationship with Education Minnesota to ensure I understand their priorities and perspective on the variety of legislation we work on at the State Capitol. I am**

**comfortable explaining what I hear from other groups and constituents so we can maintain an open conversation about policies that benefit the most Minnesotans. When I feel disagreement, I like to talk through it to better understand and look for common ground.**

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

**I believe it's important to listen to multiple perspectives and work toward compromise when there are competing priorities. I trust and value Education Minnesota's stance. While I do listen to what other education groups have to say, there are not many other education groups I can say I fully trust as much as I trust Education Minnesota. I find Education Minnesota's values to be in alignment with my own, and most importantly, in line with the majority of constituents I hear from on education issues.**