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### **Educator Pay**

**1. To help attract teachers to the profession, will you fund a starting teacher salary of at least \$60,000 and an \$80,000 minimum salary for licensed teachers with 10 years of experience and a master's degree?**

**Answer:**

Yes. I support funding a starting teacher salary of at least \$60,000 and a minimum salary of \$80,000 for licensed teachers with 10 years of experience and a master's degree.

Based on my experience working alongside educators over the years, I believe these salary levels are reasonable, necessary, and long overdue to recruit and retain quality teachers. Educators are asked to do far more than just teach curriculum. They manage classrooms, support students emotionally, handle increasing administrative demands, and too often end up subsidizing their classrooms out of their own pockets.

If a police officer doesn't have to pay for the lead in their bullets, a teacher should not be expected to pay for the lead in their pencils.

As governor, I will work to ensure schools are funded so teacher salaries are true compensation for the professional work educators do—not a partial reimbursement after covering classroom expenses. I will also support efforts to strengthen the educator pipeline so teachers are not stretched as thin as they are today, because burnout and understaffing hurt both educators and students.

### **Educator Pensions**

**2. Are you committed to improving teacher pensions in the next two years to be competitive with other states around us and to bring pensions back to being a recruitment and retention tool for the teaching profession?**

**Answer:**

When I was in high school, I depended deeply on my teachers not just for education, but for my mental well-being. My home life was unstable, and my teachers understood that. They stepped in where they didn't have to. They coached, they guided, they protected, and they cared.

Some of my teachers went so far as to buy me birthday and Christmas gifts during multiple school years, and they even purchased my class ring for graduation. They didn't do that because it was their job. They did it because they believed in me.

Because of that lived experience, I believe teachers deserve a pension they can retire on with dignity. Educators do far more than teach. They often provide parental guidance, counseling, and emotional stability when students don't have it elsewhere. Minnesota's retirement system should be a recruitment and retention tool, not a deterrent.

While I cannot guarantee exact timelines before reviewing fiscal realities, I am committed to doing everything I can within the time I'm given to make teacher pensions competitive nationwide. Teachers should want to come to Minnesota not just because of our values, but because we honor their service with real retirement security.

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

#### **Answer:**

Yes. I support increasing state funding to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of public pension funds, including educator pensions.

My broader vision is to move Minnesota toward long-term self-sufficiency. I believe the state should explore and develop state-owned enterprises that participate in the free market. By responsibly using state surplus funds to invest in revenue-generating ventures—such as manufacturing, services, or other enterprises—we can create sustainable income streams.

My goal is to eventually reduce the need to raise taxes while still fully funding pensions and public services. If the state can generate its own revenue, pension obligations can be funded reliably without placing additional burden on workers or retirees. Educators kept their word to the state by serving—Minnesota must keep its word to them in retirement.

### **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?**

#### **Answer:**

Yes. I not only support exploring these benefit improvements, I believe it is necessary.

Educators put in far more than their fair share—long hours, emotional labor, and personal sacrifice. Once someone has given years of service, there should be a path to retirement that doesn't punish them for needing to step away early.

Reducing early retirement penalties, lowering retirement age thresholds, and reassessing career benchmarks should all be on the table. Some professions, including military service, allow retirement after 20 years. Expecting educators to work 30 or more years before retirement without flexibility is excessive.

If you can read this, thank a teacher. If it's in English, thank a soldier. That old saying exists for a reason. Educators are foundational to society, and retirement systems should reflect that reality. Anything that helps educators feel secure, respected, and valued in retirement deserves serious consideration.

## **Health Care**

### **5. Do you support legislative proposals like the statewide health insurance bill that would create a new mandatory pool for K-12 school employees to lower costs starting January 1, 2027?**

**Answer:**

Yes, I support legislative proposals that help make health care more affordable for K-12 school employees.

That said, I also want to be transparent about timing. The governor elected in November 2026 would not take office until January 2027, which means implementation dates matter. A proposal with a January 1, 2027 start date would be in its earliest stages as a new administration begins. Even with that consideration, I support efforts to reduce health care costs for educators. Teachers and school employees should not be choosing between health care and basic necessities. Any legislation that responsibly lowers costs, improves access, and protects educators' health deserves support and serious consideration.

**Higher Education**

**6. As the legislature deals with another projected shortfall in the State Grant Program, it has become clear that tuition increases have driven the growth of that program over the past two decades; resulting in Minnesota being a high tuition/high aid state. How would you address reversing this trend, and will you commit to public dollars for public institutions?**

**Answer:**

Minnesota has hundreds of colleges, universities, and higher education institutions, and I believe tuition costs have grown beyond what is reasonable or sustainable. Higher education today has become what a high school diploma used to be—a basic requirement for many careers. Because of that shift, we need to rethink how higher education is funded. Tuition increases drive higher aid costs, and that cycle hurts both students and the state. I support using public dollars for public institutions, but I also believe we must explore long-term solutions that reduce reliance on tuition hikes. My broader vision includes developing state-owned enterprises that participate in the free market. If successful, these enterprises could generate revenue to help offset state grant costs and reduce pressure on tuition increases. If the state can help fund itself, we can support higher education without constantly asking students to shoulder more debt. The goal should be affordability, access, and sustainability—not pushing costs down the road.

**7. Minnesota State's mission includes a promise of affordability and access – with “access” always being defined as a campus within 60 miles of every Minnesota community. The Minnesota State Board of Trustees are openly talking about system contraction. Do you remain committed to physical access to college and university campuses for every Minnesota student?**

**Answer:**

Yes, I remain committed to maintaining physical access to colleges and universities across Minnesota.

Many students—including myself—learn best in different ways. Some subjects require in-person instruction, while others can be done successfully online. Education is not one-size-fits-all, and eliminating physical campuses removes options for students who need or prefer in-person learning.

Because higher education is now the modern equivalent of what a high school diploma once was, colleges and universities should be accessible in the same way high schools are—within local

communities. When campuses are nearby, students are more likely to attend, especially those who cannot afford to relocate or take on housing debt.

Maintaining physical campuses encourages participation, supports local economies, and ensures students have real choices in how they learn. I support flexibility in delivery models, but not at the expense of access.

### **Higher Education (continued)**

**8. There are growing pressures in the state around dual enrollment, and it is widely accepted that PSEO financially disadvantages high schools while concurrent enrollment hurts colleges. How can the state address this situation and how would the conversation shift if we made two-year college free?**

**Answer:**

I believe that if my plan for state-owned enterprises participating in the free market is successful, the state could eventually offset the cost of programs like two-year free college.

Granting two-year free college immediately may not be feasible, but if Minnesota is able to generate sustainable revenue through state-owned enterprises, we could revisit this conversation in a serious and responsible way. If the state is able to write the check rather than shifting costs between high schools and colleges, it changes the entire dynamic.

Making two-year college free would reduce pressure on both PSEO and concurrent enrollment systems and allow students to pursue education without forcing schools to compete financially against one another. The long-term goal should be expanding access without disadvantage to any part of the education system.

**9. St. Paul Federation of Teachers recently released a statement declaring that Artificial Intelligence should not supplant teacher jobs. Do you think Minnesota State should issue a similar statement relating to higher education faculty?**

**Answer:**

Yes, I would support making a similar statement.

AI should be used as a tool or an aid—not as a replacement for educators. Artificial intelligence cannot think the way a teacher does. It cannot recognize when a student is struggling, emotionally or academically. It cannot adapt to the human side of learning.

I was a struggling student myself, and I know firsthand that replacing teachers with AI would have harmed me, not helped me. AI should remain a support system, not a substitute. The moment we allow AI to go beyond being a tool, we risk losing the human connection that education depends on.

### **Education Support Professionals**

**10. Do you agree that education support professionals play an important role in helping students learn at school and deserve to be paid a living wage of at least \$25 per hour?**

**Answer:**

Yes, I agree.

I have personally worked as a substitute teacher, a substitute paraprofessional, and a school security officer. Based on that experience, I believe education support professionals play a critical role in student success.

A living wage of at least \$25 per hour is reasonable and justified. These professionals support teachers, support students, and help keep schools functioning safely and effectively. They deserve to be compensated accordingly.

#### School Safety

11. What will you do to ensure that educators get full pay for missing work due to an injury on the job?

Answer:

Educators should not be financially punished for being injured while doing their jobs.

School safety incidents—whether related to violence, special education needs, or workplace hazards—are not the fault of educators. If an educator is injured on the job, they should receive full pay while recovering.

I support policies that ensure injured educators are protected financially and are not forced to choose between healing and paying their bills. Taking care of educators after an injury is part of taking school safety seriously.

Education Funding and Policy

**12. As you are aware, funding for education has not kept pace with inflation. In 2023 the Minnesota Legislature changed course and linked the per pupil funding formula to inflation. This automatic increase has provided much needed stability to school district budgets as they begin to catch up with decades of underfunding. Will you defend this inflationary increase?**

Answer:

Yes, I will do everything in my power as governor to defend this legislation.

Teachers should not have to suffer because of funding shortfalls, and schools should not be forced to operate without stability. Linking education funding to inflation provides predictability and allows districts to plan responsibly.

I firmly believe that if a police officer does not have to pay for the lead in their bullet, a teacher should not be expected to pay for the lead in their pencil. This increase is necessary, and it is long overdue.

At the same time, I believe the state must take inflation seriously. If wages increase but prices are allowed to rise unchecked, the burden still falls on working people. Funding education properly is not optional—it is foundational.

#### Education Funding and Policy (continued)

**13. Will you support legislation that changes school funding so that low property wealth districts are not disadvantaged in passing local levies?**

Answer:

Yes, I support this legislation.

Any student, regardless of where they live or how much property wealth exists in their district, deserves equal access to quality education. Schools should not be penalized because their community has fewer taxable resources.

If my plans for state-owned enterprises participating in the free market are successful, the long-term goal would be for the state itself to fund education directly, reducing or even eliminating the need for local levies altogether. Until then, I fully support measures that ensure low-property-wealth districts are not disadvantaged and that education funding is fair and equitable across Minnesota.

#### **Question 14a**

**14a. Reverse Minnesota’s perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula.**

##### **Answer**

I support this. Minnesota has underfunded education for decades, and schools have been forced to do more with less year after year. Increasing the per-pupil funding formula is necessary to stabilize school budgets and ensure students receive the education they deserve.

I also believe that if my plan for state-owned enterprises participating in the free market is successful, education funding will eventually no longer be dependent on constantly raising taxes or passing levies. Schools should have a reliable, predictable funding stream that allows them to plan long-term instead of operating in survival mode.

If a police officer does not have to pay for the lead in their bullet, educators should not be expected to pay for the lead in their pencil. Schools should be funded properly so teachers can focus on teaching, not fundraising or subsidizing classrooms out of their own pockets.

**14b. SPED cross subsidy: The state must fully fund special education costs instead of relying on school districts to pay for them.**

##### **Answer:**

I fully support this. I have worked as a substitute paraprofessional, and I have seen firsthand what happens when special education is underfunded. Students who need individualized attention and specialized services often do not receive what they need, not because educators don’t care, but because the resources simply are not there.

When special education is underfunded, it places an unfair burden on school districts and educators, and it creates unsafe and unsustainable environments. I have personally experienced situations where students with significant communication or behavioral challenges became physical because they did not have adequate support. That is not a failure of the student or the teacher — it is a failure of funding.

Special education should never be funded by pulling resources away from general education. The state must fully fund special education costs so districts are not forced to make impossible choices. Programs like Intermediate School Districts, including ISD 917, are already stretched thin and should be expanded to serve more students across Minnesota. Fully funding special education is not optional — it is a responsibility.

**14c. EL cross subsidy: Fully fund the costs districts pay to provide quality English learner programs and instruction.**

##### **Answer:**

Yes, I support fully funding English Learner (EL) programs. Students who are learning English deserve the same opportunity to succeed as any other student, and that cannot happen if districts are forced to underfund or patch together services.

I believe we should be able to hire TEFL-certified individuals here in the United States to support English learners in our schools. These professionals can serve as instructional aides, language supports, and cultural bridges for students who are still developing English proficiency. This not only helps students learn faster, but it also supports classroom teachers who are already stretched thin.

Underfunding English learner programs hurts everyone involved — students fall behind, teachers burn out, and districts struggle to meet legal and ethical obligations. Fully funding EL instruction ensures students receive consistent, high-quality support while allowing teachers to focus on teaching rather than compensating for missing resources.

English learners are not a burden on the system — they are an investment in Minnesota’s future. Proper funding is how we make sure that investment pays off.

**14d. Lower class sizes: Lower class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need and deserve.**

**Answer:**

Yes, I support lowering class sizes. Smaller class sizes allow teachers to give students the individual attention they need to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally. This is especially important for students who struggle, students with disabilities, and students dealing with trauma outside the classroom.

However, lowering class sizes cannot happen by mandate alone — it requires creating real, workable pathways to bring more qualified educators into the system. I do not believe the solution is simply raising barriers higher and higher. Instead, we need to build pathways for people who may not currently have the financial means or life circumstances to immediately pursue a traditional four-year degree.

Other states allow individuals with a high school diploma to serve as substitute teachers, and I support that approach. I also believe the state and school districts should offer structured pathways — including coursework, mentoring, and licensure tracks — that allow people to work in schools while progressing toward full licensure. This creates opportunity, grows the educator pipeline, and helps schools staff classrooms responsibly.

I am not advocating for lowering standards. I am advocating for creating access. By building pathways into the profession, we can increase the number of licensed educators, reduce class sizes, and improve outcomes for students — all without burning out the teachers we already have.

Lower class sizes are achievable, but only if we pair them with smart workforce development and realistic entry points into the teaching profession

14e. Full-service community schools: Expand access to full-service community schools across the state.

Answer:

Yes, I support expanding full-service community schools across Minnesota. Schools do not exist in a vacuum, and neither do students. Many students come to school carrying challenges related to housing insecurity, food insecurity, mental health, family instability, or unmet medical needs. Expecting teachers alone to solve those problems is unrealistic and unfair.

Full-service community schools work because they bring resources directly to where students already are. By integrating social services, health care, mental health support, family outreach, and after-school programming into schools, we remove barriers that prevent students from learning and teachers from teaching.

I believe this model strengthens not only students, but entire communities. When families can access support through schools, attendance improves, behavior improves, and academic outcomes follow. Teachers are then able to focus more on instruction rather than crisis management.

If Minnesota is serious about addressing achievement gaps, supporting working families, and improving long-term outcomes, expanding full-service community schools is one of the most effective investments we can make. Schools should be places of learning, safety, and stability — and community schools help make that possible.

14f. 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.

Answer:

Yes, I support funding programs to significantly increase the number of teachers of color in Minnesota classrooms. Representation matters — not as a slogan, but as a lived reality for students who need to see themselves reflected in positions of leadership, authority, and care.

Students come from diverse cultural, racial, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and when educators reflect that diversity, it strengthens trust, communication, and engagement. Teachers of color often bring cultural understanding, lived experience, and perspectives that help reach students who may otherwise feel unseen or misunderstood in the education system.

This is not about lowering standards — it is about removing unnecessary barriers and creating fair pathways into the profession. That includes targeted scholarships, mentorship programs, alternative licensure pathways, paid student teaching, and recruitment efforts focused on communities that have historically been underrepresented in education.

I also believe retention is just as important as recruitment. Teachers of color should not be brought into a system only to be isolated, under-supported, or pushed out. Strong mentorship,

professional development, supportive school climates, and fair compensation are all necessary to ensure long-term success.

As governor, I would support sustained investment in these efforts so Minnesota’s educator workforce better reflects the students it serves — not as a political talking point, but as a practical strategy to improve outcomes, trust, and opportunity for all students.

**14g. 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.**

**Answer:**

Yes, I strongly support continuing and expanding funding so school districts can hire more student support staff. I say this not just as a candidate, but as someone who has personally worked in schools as a substitute paraprofessional and as a school security officer. I have seen firsthand how critical these roles are to student success and school stability.

Teachers cannot do everything alone. Students come into classrooms carrying trauma, mental health challenges, medical needs, family instability, and learning differences. When schools lack counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses, and trained support staff, those burdens fall on teachers — and ultimately on students who do not get the help they need.

I know from experience that when adequate support staff are present, classrooms are safer, learning improves, behavioral incidents decrease, and teachers are better able to focus on instruction. When support staff are missing or stretched too thin, everyone suffers — educators burn out, students fall through the cracks, and small problems turn into major crises.

As governor, I would advocate for sustained, predictable funding streams that allow districts to hire and retain student support professionals, not just through short-term grants but as permanent positions built into school budgets. Supporting students means supporting the whole child, and that requires a full team — not just a teacher standing alone.

**14h. 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.**

**Answer:**

Yes, I support fully funding the Teacher Development and Evaluation (TDE) law and lifting the cap on the Q Comp program. If the state tells educators and school districts, “This is the standard we expect you to meet,” then the state has a moral and legal responsibility to fully fund it.

I believe strongly that the state should keep its word. If I tell you I am going to give you \$100, I will do everything I can to make sure you get that \$100 — even if the funds fall through, even if I have to donate plasma to make it happen. Government should operate the same way. When the state makes a promise, it should not walk it back or leave districts scrambling to cover the cost.

Unfunded mandates place an unfair burden on school districts and educators, forcing them to choose between compliance and quality. That is not acceptable. Teacher development, evaluation, and compensation systems should be tools that support educators, not punish them or drain district resources.

Fully funding TDE and Q Comp strengthens teacher quality, improves retention, and builds trust between educators and the state. As governor, I would defend full funding of these programs and work to remove artificial caps that limit participation, so districts that want to invest in their educators are able to do so without penalty.

**14i. Professional development: Provide professional development to all staff around cultural competency and trauma-responsive classrooms with aims of closing the discipline disparity gap.**

**Answer:**

Yes, I support providing professional development for all school staff focused on cultural competency and trauma-responsive classrooms. This is not about blaming teachers — it is about equipping them with the tools they need to succeed in today’s classrooms.

I was a student who carried trauma into school with me, and I know firsthand how behavior that looks like “defiance” or “disruption” is often a signal that something deeper is going on. When educators are trained to recognize trauma and cultural differences, discipline becomes more effective, more humane, and more equitable.

Cultural competency training helps educators understand students’ backgrounds, communication styles, and lived experiences. Trauma-responsive practices help educators respond in ways that de-escalate situations rather than escalate them, keeping students in class and learning instead of pushing them out through suspension or exclusion.

This kind of professional development should be ongoing, practical, and embedded into the workday — not a one-time seminar that checks a box. When done right, it improves classroom climate, reduces discipline disparities, supports mental health, and allows educators to focus on teaching rather than crisis management.

As governor, I would support sustained funding and thoughtful implementation of these programs so educators are supported, students are understood, and schools become safer, more effective places for learning.

**14j. Education debt relief: Provide debt relief to retain teachers so they can afford to stay in the classroom.**

**Answer:**

Yes, I support education debt relief as a retention tool for teachers. We ask educators to get advanced degrees, certifications, and continuing education, then saddle them with debt that follows them for decades. That is backwards. If we want teachers to stay in the classroom, we have to make it possible for them to live, not just survive.

Teacher debt relief should be targeted, meaningful, and tied to service. If someone commits their life to educating Minnesota’s children, the state should commit to helping relieve the financial burden that came with earning that education. Otherwise, we are training talented educators only to push them out of the profession when the debt becomes unbearable.

I also believe the state must honor its commitments. If we promise debt relief, it must be real relief — not paperwork hoops, partial forgiveness that never materializes, or programs that run out of funding halfway through. A promise from the state should mean something.

As governor, I would support debt relief programs that are stable, transparent, and adequately funded, and I would explore long-term solutions — including my vision for state-owned enterprises participating in the free market — to ensure these commitments are sustainable without shifting the burden onto taxpayers. Retaining teachers is not a luxury; it is a necessity for a strong education system.

**Educator burnout**

**Question 15:**

**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?**

**Answer:**

Yes. I will support adjusting this statute. In my opinion, staff meetings are overused and often end up overworking educators instead of helping them. Teachers need more protected time to actually do their jobs—planning lessons, preparing materials, and meeting the individual needs of students.

If meetings are necessary, I believe they should be structured and limited. For example, one full staff meeting per week, department meetings another day if needed, and the remaining days reserved for prep time without meetings. Educators should not be pulled in ten different directions after student contact hours.

We should trust teachers to be professionals and give them the time they need to prepare, rather than filling their schedules with meetings that could often be handled more efficiently. Less bureaucracy, more teaching.

Special education workload

**Question 16:**

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

**Answer:**

Yes, absolutely.

I was a special education student myself, and I know firsthand that special education teachers carry far more than an average workload—even when they have smaller class sizes. The paperwork, the meetings, the compliance requirements, and the individualized attention required all add up quickly.

Special education teachers already give more than their fair share. Expecting them to complete extensive paperwork and attend required meetings on their own time only contributes to burnout and turnover. Dedicated, paid time outside of student contact hours is not a luxury—it is necessary for the system to function properly and ethically.

If we want quality special education services, we need to support the educators providing them.

**Privatization / Federal voucher program**

**Question 17:**

**A new national school voucher program, sometimes called a federal tax credit scholarship program, takes effect January 1, 2027. Critics point out the program will cost the federal government billions of dollars in lost revenue while providing scholarships for private and religious schools to families earning up to three times the area’s median income—which could be nearly \$500,000 in some parts of Minnesota. Do you believe Minnesota should opt into this federal voucher program in 2026, and if elected governor, will you commit to keeping Minnesota out of it? Why or why not?**

**Answer:**

I believe Minnesota should opt out of this program, and yes, I will commit to keeping Minnesota out of it.

I am a Democrat, but that does not mean I support reckless spending. Less money being drained from public education is better, not worse. Pouring billions of dollars into a federal voucher

program that primarily benefits higher-income families does not solve the real problems facing our public schools—it adds fuel to an already burning house.

I do not believe this level of federal spending aligns with responsible governance, especially under the current federal administration. If we are bleeding money on programs like this, it weakens public education instead of strengthening it.

Once again, I believe the long-term solution is for Minnesota to become more self-sufficient. If my plan for state-owned enterprises participating in the free market is successful and generates the revenue, I believe it can, then Minnesota could explore its own state-based solutions without burdening taxpayers or undermining public schools.

Until then, the responsible choice is to opt out.

Charter school accountability

**Question 18:**

**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?**

**Answer:**

Yes, I support stronger accountability and oversight. Not just for charter schools—but for every state-funded education system.

Given all the recent issues around waste, mismanagement, and fraud—whether alleged or proven—it is clear that better oversight is needed. Public dollars demand public accountability. That applies to traditional public schools, charter schools, and any institution receiving taxpayer funding.

I believe transparency, clear reporting requirements, and consistent enforcement protect students, educators, and taxpayers alike. Oversight should not be punitive—it should ensure quality education and responsible stewardship of public funds.

**Moratorium on new charter schools**

**Question 19:**

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

**Answer:**

**Yes, I do support a moratorium until proper accountability systems are fully in place.**

If a house is on fire, you do not pour gasoline on it hoping it will go out. Adding more charter schools without first fixing oversight, reporting, and accountability only adds to the problem instead of addressing it.

We need to stabilize and strengthen the system we already have before expanding it further. Once strong accountability is established and proven to work, then and only then should expansion be reconsidered.

## **Attacks on public education / book bans**

### **Question 20:**

**Across the country, we've seen efforts to ban books and restrict honest teaching about American history, including the role of racism and discrimination in shaping our nation. As governor, how would you protect Minnesota students' freedom to learn accurate, age-appropriate history while ensuring that every student—regardless of their race, religion, gender identity, or family background—feels safe, welcomed, and valued in their public school?**

Answer:

I do not believe in banning books, and I do not believe in whitewashing history in hopes that it will simply go away.

We are not World War II-era Germany. Banning books does not erase ideas—it only makes people want to read them more. Honest, age-appropriate education is how we help students understand the world they live in, not fear it.

Students deserve access to accurate history, even when that history is uncomfortable. At the same time, schools must remain safe, welcoming places for every student. Those two goals are not in conflict—they go hand in hand.

## **21. Federal threats to education / role of Minnesota**

### **Question 21:**

**President Trump and Republicans in Washington, D.C., are dismantling the Department of Education, including student loan forgiveness and special education protections. This endangers federal funding for education and protections for our students. What do you see as the role of Minnesota in safeguarding education under the Trump administration?**

Answer:

I want to see Minnesota not only off the state tax teat eventually, but off the federal tax one as well—by becoming self-sufficient, self-supporting, and capable of handling our own educational system.

Donald Trump is temporary. His administration is temporary. What we need are permanent solutions.

I do not support dismantling the Department of Education. I have student loans myself, including loans tied to a college that later became involved in a major scandal for misleading students. Federal protections matter.

That said, the stronger Minnesota is on its own, the better protected we are from federal instability. The more we safeguard ourselves at the state level, the less vulnerable we are to changes in Washington.

If my plan for state-owned enterprises participating in the free market reaches the scale I believe it can, Minnesota could eventually offset not only the need to collect state taxes, but potentially even write an annual check to the federal government to cover Minnesota's federal obligations—freeing our citizens while protecting our programs.

Most importantly, we must strengthen Minnesota's own education system so that, if the federal government pulls back, Minnesota still has strong legs to stand on and can continue moving forward without interruption.

## **Taxes / revenue fairness**

### **Question 22:**

**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. Would you commit to raising revenue to ensure the wealthiest corporations and richest households pay what they truly owe in taxes?**

### **Answer:**

Yes, I am in favor of ensuring the wealthiest corporations and richest households pay their fair share.

That said, I want to be clear and honest about my approach. While I support exploring ways to raise revenue fairly, I am cautious about relying solely on tax increases as a long-term solution. Corporations do not truly pay taxes—their customers do. When taxes go up, prices go up, and working people feel it first.

My long-term goal is to reduce reliance on taxes altogether by building state-owned enterprises that participate in the free market. If successful, this approach would allow Minnesota to fund schools and public services without continually raising taxes on anyone. In the near term, however, I will absolutely explore and support revenue measures that ensure fairness and stability for education funding.

## **Progressive taxes / specific revenue sources**

### **Question 23:**

**Progressive taxes are a Minnesota value, and yet we know that the wealthiest Minnesotans are earning more than ever while schools and other public services face cuts. What revenue sources would you pursue to ensure the wealthy are paying their fair share? Please be specific.**

### **Answer:**

I support progressive taxation as a Minnesota value and will work to ensure the wealthy are contributing fairly to support our schools and public services.

At the same time, my primary long-term focus is on creating revenue through state-owned enterprises participating in the free market—such as manufacturing, service industries, or other viable ventures—so that Minnesota generates its own income rather than constantly increasing taxes.

By doing this, we reduce pressure on taxpayers, avoid passing costs onto consumers, and create a more stable funding source for education. Until those enterprises are fully operational and successful, I am open to specific, targeted revenue measures that ensure fairness without placing undue burden on working families.

## **Sales tax base / exemptions**

### **Question 24:**

**Compared to other states, Minnesota raises less revenue for every percentage-point of sales tax because of our high number of large exemptions. Will you support expanding the state sales tax base by ending some of these exemptions? Please include specific examples.**

### **Answer:**

Yes, I support examining and, where appropriate, expanding the sales tax base by ending certain exemptions if it helps stabilize education funding.

That said, my broader goal is to eventually eliminate tax burdens altogether through successful state-owned enterprises participating in the free market. In the short term, I will do what I can to support responsible revenue measures that protect schools and public services.

However, I believe the ultimate solution is not continually adjusting taxes, but building a system where Minnesota can pay its own bills. My focus is on moving the state toward financial independence so that education is funded reliably without constantly revisiting tax increases or exemptions.

## **Opposition to tax cuts and carve-outs**

### **Question 25:**

**Will you oppose tax cuts and carve outs that lower tax collections or narrow the tax base?**

**Answer:**

Yes. I oppose tax cuts and carve-outs that lower tax collections or narrow the tax base until Minnesota reaches a point where we can fully support ourselves.

Right now, we still have bills to pay. Cutting revenue before we have a reliable alternative only shifts the burden elsewhere and puts schools and public services at risk. Until we are able to offset our tax obligations through state-owned enterprises participating in the free market, I believe maintaining the current tax base is necessary.

Once Minnesota is able to cover its obligations—once we can truly pay our bills without relying on taxpayers—I am open to responsibly walking taxes back. But until that point, I believe maintaining stability is the responsible path forward.

**Labor freedom and pro-worker laws**

**Question 26:**

**Since 2023, Minnesota has made significant progress strengthening workers' rights, including banning captive audience meetings, giving teachers the explicit right to bargain over class sizes, and improving the Public Employment Labor Relations Act to support public sector collective bargaining. Meanwhile, we're seeing aggressive anti-union efforts at the federal level and in other states aimed at weakening workers' power to organize and bargain collectively. As governor, how will you defend Minnesota's pro-worker laws against legal challenges or federal preemption attempts, and what additional steps would you take to strengthen workplace protections for educators and all public employees?**

**Answer:**

I believe we need to strengthen unions, not weaken them. So-called “right-to-work” laws do not truly help workers—they make it easier to terminate people without cause and weaken collective bargaining power.

Stronger unions come with stronger responsibility and accountability, but they also provide stability, fairness, and protection for workers. I believe Minnesota should continue defending its pro-worker laws and push back against efforts to roll them back through federal pressure or legal challenges.

I also believe we should explore additional protections that favor employees while still protecting employers from bad-faith actions. Workers have a right to work, a right to organize, and a right to fair treatment. We are the only species on this planet required to pay simply to exist, and that reality makes it even more important that labor protections remain strong and enforceable.

Interagency coordination and transparency

**Question 27:**

**Will you commit to ensuring the Minnesota agencies that most impact working educators—such as the Department of Education, the Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Department of Labor and Industry, and Management and Budget—share policy information that impacts the educator workforce in a prompt and transparent way?**

**Answer:**

Yes, I fully support this.

Educators and education support professionals should not have to navigate a maze of disconnected agencies to understand policies that affect their livelihoods. Departments that impact the educator workforce must communicate clearly, promptly, and transparently—not just with each other, but with the people doing the work in our schools every day.

As governor, I would push for stronger coordination between these agencies so policy changes are shared openly, implementation is consistent, and educators are not caught off guard by decisions made in silos. Transparency builds trust, and trust is essential if we want to retain and support the people who educate our children.