

## **2026 Education Minnesota gubernatorial questionnaire**

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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?

Competitive pay is essential to recruiting and keeping great teachers in Minnesota classrooms, and I'll work with Education Minnesota and the legislature on how to get there. As a Senator, I've consistently backed federal investments in teacher pay, recruitment, and student loan forgiveness for teachers, including pushing to expand the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program that thousands of Minnesota teachers rely on.

### **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?

As Governor, I'll work with Education Minnesota, the Teachers Retirement Association, retirees, and the state legislature to make sure a Minnesota teaching career remains a path to a secure retirement.

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

A pension is a promise, and I don't believe in breaking promises to people who spent decades serving the public. I strongly supported the Social Security Fairness Act and was one of the leaders pushing alongside Senator Sherrod Brown to restore full benefits to firefighters, teachers, and public servants shortchanged for decades. I was there with

President Biden in the White House when the bill was signed into law. I also cosponsored the Butch Lewis Act with Senator Brown to rescue multi-employer pension funds and protect union retirees from benefit cuts they didn't earn. I personally intervened to fight proposed cuts to the Central States Pension Plan – because those cuts were unacceptable, and I wasn't going to let them stand. The same principle applies to Minnesota's teachers and support staff, and as Governor, I will work with teachers to make sure pensions remain secure.

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?

I'll work with Education Minnesota, teachers, and retirees to explore Teachers Retirement Association (TRA) improvements. I've strongly defended Social Security, Medicare, and pension protections at the federal level, and as Governor, I'll do the same here in Minnesota.

## **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?

Health insurance costs nationally are hurting our schools, and we need to be creative about how we solve this, including with a statewide health insurance pool for educators. Teachers and staff need stable, affordable coverage, and districts and taxpayers need predictability in their budgets. The focus of a major part of my work in the U.S. Senate has been to lower health care costs – from lowering prescription drug prices to strengthening competition in the health care market.

## **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?

Higher education is one of Minnesota's competitive advantages, and if we want to keep talent here and expand our economy, we need to stay competitive with other states on

what we invest in our public colleges and universities. I've spoken with Democratic legislative leaders about the shortfall and know they are working to address it this session.

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?

My dad grew up in Northern Minnesota and got his start at what was then Ely Junior College before going on to the University of Minnesota. That pathway shouldn't disappear for the next generation of students.

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?

Dual enrollment works when students thrive in it, and tens of thousands of Minnesota students have used it to get a head start on college. We need to keep that opportunity strong, and that means supporting the high schools and colleges that make it possible so students aren't caught in the middle when budgets get tight. I've been committed to tuition-free access to community, technical, and tribal colleges, cosponsoring the America's College Promise Act at the federal level, so cost is never the reason a Minnesota student chooses one path over another.

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?

I'd encourage Minnesota State to engage directly with faculty, students, and industry on how and when AI is used across the system, so we're protecting good jobs in the classroom, while training teachers to prepare students for the jobs ahead of them.

## **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?

Education support professionals are essential to the daily operation of our schools. They're often the first adult a student talks to in the morning, the person who knows each kid's name on the bus, the one helping a student with disabilities make it through the day. They deserve a living wage that reflects the importance of their work.

## **School safety**

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

Teachers and staff who are injured on the job shouldn't have to choose between recovery and a paycheck. As Governor, I'll work with Education Minnesota, school districts, and the Department of Labor and Industry to address the gap that forces injured educators to exhaust their own sick leave or short-term disability.

## **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 pre 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?

Minnesota teachers and support staff are doing some of the most important work in our state, and they need the resources to do it well – including a per-pupil funding formula linked to inflation. At the federal level, I cosponsored Keep Our PACT Act to fully fund Title I and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), easing pressure on Minnesota school budgets and the property taxpayers who carry the load when the federal government falls short.

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

Every Minnesota kid deserves a great public school, whether they grow up in Minneapolis, Moorhead, or Marshall. I'll work with Education Minnesota, school boards, and legislators to make sure that promise holds in every community across the state.

14. Do you support state education funding increases for the following:

- a. Reverse Minnesota's perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula.
- b. SPED cross subsidy: The state must fully fund special education costs instead of relying on school districts to pay for them.
- c. EL cross subsidy: Fully fund the costs districts pay to provide quality English learner programs and instruction.
- d. Lower class sizes: Lower class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need and deserve.
- e. Full-service community schools: Expand access to full-service community schools across the state.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- i. Professional development: Provide professional development to all staff around cultural competency and trauma-responsive classrooms with aims of closing the discipline disparity gap.
- j. Education debt relief: Provide debt relief to retain teachers so they can afford to stay in the classroom.
- k. Early learning: preserve and expand pre-Kindergarten options for all Minnesota families.

Minnesota teachers and support staff need the resources to do their work, including a per-pupil formula that is linked to inflation. I'll work with the state legislature, teachers, and unions to invest in wages, smaller class sizes, teacher retention efforts, and the services like early learning that our kids depend on.

## **Educator burnout**

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?

I'm committed to working with teachers and the state legislature to figure out what the state can do to give teachers the time they need to do their jobs well, and that includes preparation for class.

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

Special education teachers carry a huge administrative load – IEPs, evaluations, progress reports, family meetings. I'll work with Education Minnesota, teachers, and districts on solutions as to how the state can give special education teachers the time they need to do their jobs well.

## **Privatization**

17. A new national school voucher program, sometimes called a federal tax credit scholarship program, takes effect Jan. 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 you're elected governor, will you commit to keeping Minnesota out of it? Why or why not?

I will not opt Minnesota into a program that does not treat public school students fairly. In addition, the Administration has not even published final rules defining how this program would work.

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?

Minnesota's charter schools should provide consistent public reporting on academic outcomes, good financial management and governance, and meaningful enforcement when schools fall short.

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

I will work with teachers, parents, school leaders, and legislators on what reforms and additional reporting requirements should be put in place for charter schools, and I will make sure the reforms are made and the requirements are met.

### **Attacks on public education**

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?

Banning books and stripping history from classrooms leaves kids less prepared for the world they're growing up in. As Governor, I'll stand with teachers, librarians, and school boards when they're attacked for teaching accurate, age-appropriate history, defend and promote students' rights to read and learn, and make sure every Minnesota student walks into a public school that's safe and welcoming. As Governor, I'll focus on making sure Minnesota students receive an excellent education and that we see improvements across the board.

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?

Minnesota students, teachers, and schools are already feeling the impact – from nearly \$20 million in withheld Head Start funding affecting more than 10,000 Minnesota kids, to

fired staff responsible for protecting students with disabilities, to disruption of Public Service Loan Forgiveness, which I've championed in the U.S. Senate. I voted against confirming Linda McMahon and have joined U.S. Senate efforts to release the \$7 billion in K-12 funding being illegally withheld. As Governor, I'll work with the Attorney General to challenge illegal cuts and make sure our Title I schools, Head Start programs, and special education services aren't left behind.

## **Taxes/revenue**

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?

I'll work to support state-level efforts to sustainably fund our schools. We need everyone to pay their fair share, especially when working families are getting squeezed. I opposed the 2017 tax law because it created loopholes for the wealthy and added over \$1 trillion to the debt. I have favored major federal tax reform that would help working people over millionaires and billionaires.

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.

I will engage with teachers, workers, small businesses, and the state legislature on what changes make sense for Minnesota. One area I think we should explore is how large technology and social media platforms are taxed in Minnesota – making sure they pay their fair share toward the public services we all rely on. I opposed the 2017 federal tax law because it created loopholes for the wealthy and added over \$1 trillion to the debt, and I have favored major federal tax reform that would help working people over millionaires and billionaires.

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.

I will engage with teachers, workers, small businesses, and the state legislature on what changes make sense for Minnesota.

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

I won't support narrowing the tax base in ways that force schools and public services to absorb the cost. To stretch our tax dollars further, I will also take on waste, fraud, and abuse, and prioritize making government more innovative and efficient – ensuring our budget is balanced through good financial stewardship.

### **Labor freedom**

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?

As the granddaughter and daughter of union members, I know firsthand how organized labor gives American families the opportunities they need to succeed. As Governor, I'll work with the Attorney General to defend Minnesota's laws in court. I'm a cosponsor of the PRO Act at the federal level, and I will support workplace protections in Minnesota.

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 agencies share policy information that impacts the educator workforce in a prompt and transparent way?

Yes. As Governor, I'll make sure the Department of Education, Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), and Management and Budget (MMB) share information with teachers and their unions promptly and transparently – and that they coordinate so policies affecting the workforce don't fall through the cracks.

### **ICE and immigration**

28. As Governor, how would you support schools, educators and students in recovering from the trauma ICE and CBP have inflicted upon our state, especially BIPOC communities?

The recent surge of ICE enforcement in Minnesota brought chaos to our streets, made our families less safe, and resulted in two killings – Alex Pretti and Renée Good. Children shouldn't have to wonder if a parent will be home at the end of the school day, and teachers shouldn't have to be the ones explaining to a kindergartener why their best friend stopped coming to class. As Governor, I'll fight to make sure our schools are places where every child feels safe to learn – by supporting mental health care and resources for students and staff.

At the federal level, I've been unequivocal that this agency needs a complete overhaul: mandatory body cameras, proper training, and no masks, random detentions, or breaking into homes without a judicial warrant. I cosponsored the Protecting Sensitive Locations Act to prohibit immigration enforcement near sensitive locations like schools, clinics, and places of worship, and I refused to vote for increased ICE funding and have voted against it several times.

### **Paid family medical leave**

29. Will you reject all efforts to carveout, delay or rollback any aspects or benefits of the 2023 paid family medical leave law?

Minnesota's Paid Family and Medical Leave law was a hard-won victory for working families. As Governor, I'll support paid family leave and make sure it works for the state

and continues to be fiscally viable. I cosponsored the FAMILY Act in the U.S. Senate and will bring that same commitment to making Minnesota's law deliver.

30. Do you support clarifying and strengthening workers' rights and protections in the paid family medical leave program?

As Governor, I'll support Minnesota's paid family medical leave program, and I'll support strong anti-retaliation protections for workers.