

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? **Yes, this puts more money in the hands of communities across the state which is good rural development policy.**

### **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? **Yes, teachers deserve to be free from worries about retiring when they devote their lives to educating our youth.**
3. Will you support increasing state funding to ensure the financial sustainability of public pension funds? **Uncommitted, but amenable. The budget landscape is uncertain with budget cuts from the OBBB, and this campaign will need to closely examine how we move forward with state finance and thus education finance.**
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? **This campaign is committed to exploring the necessary benefit improvements that support teachers should they stay or leave the profession early.**

### **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? **Yes - I am a proponent of single-payer healthcare across the state for all individuals.**

## 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? **As a former PSEO student myself, expanding access, eligibility, and support for students to utilize dual enrollment options will help consolidate classrooms and reduce the amount of aid needed to finish their degree. If a student graduates high school with two years of college completed, that cuts the amount of aid needed per student long-term assuming they finish in 2-4 years. I also think it is necessary to codify caps on tuition increases; I am uncommitted to any certain percent cap at this time.**
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? **Rural communities are hit hardest when it comes to access to campuses. The state should look at ways we can expand virtual learning tools to fill the gaps when in-person learning is less practical. One example from the post COVID-19 pandemic: Hamline University offered many virtual classes; however, some students had just one required class for their program that was only offered in-person, so these students had to move back to campus for the one in-person class. This increased costs for students in the form of housing and the required meal plan.**
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? **I am fully supportive of dual enrollment programs. Higher education is difficult to pursue in the 21st century for students considering cost of living for students and tuition prices. By the time that students graduate after 4 years of higher ed (assuming no college credit when they leave high school), they will have been in school 17 years straight. That is exhausting for students, and the goal is to get our students to finish their programs. I am sooner to provide additional funding to bridge the gap of funding for high schools and higher education facilities than reduce access to the PSEO program.**

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 support the prevention of AI in education. The point of our higher education is to challenge students to think for themselves and to do their own research to come to their own conclusions. Artificial Intelligence is antithetical to higher education.**

### **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? **Yes, I am committed to ensuring that we get money into the hands of local communities and that there is dignity of work in our schools.**

### **School safety**

11. What will you do to ensure that educators get full pay for missing work due to an injury on the job? **I would like to explore options for expanding short term disability for educators.**

### **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? **Yes.**
13. Will you support legislation that changes school funding so that low property wealth districts are not disadvantaged in passing local levies? **Yes, many urban and rural districts struggle to finance through property taxes, and schools should be supplied funding from the state to bridge these gaps.**
14. Do you support state education funding increases for the following:
- Reverse Minnesota's perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula. **Additional funding is necessary and I will pursue this; however, I cannot commit to any particular rate increases at this time.**
  - SPED cross subsidy: The state must fully fund special education costs instead of relying on school districts to pay for them. **Special education is important to fund to ensure all students have better educational outcomes. I cannot commit to any specific rate at this time.**
  - EL cross subsidy: Fully fund the costs districts pay to provide quality English learner programs and instruction. **I am supportive of funding**

**English language learning programs; however, I cannot commit to any particular funding increases at this time.**

- d. Lower class sizes: Lower class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need and deserve. **Yes, burnout in the profession is a very real issue, and class sizes must be smaller for safety of students and to allow more attention per pupil.**
- e. Full-service community schools: Expand access to full-service community schools across the state. **I support increased aid for full-service community schools.**
- 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, I am supportive of exploring options for investing in teachers of color.**
- 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, support staff are crucial to students' education.**
- 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 support professional development for educators and putting some funding to support these endeavors.**
- 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, but the development should center the students and be led by culturally competent individuals to eliminate bias in these areas.**
- j. Education debt relief: Provide debt relief to retain teachers so they can afford to stay in the classroom. **I support looking at initiatives that can help reduce the burden of debt on teachers.**

### **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? **Yes, I believe in the phrase “if we’re not good to ourselves, we’re no good to anyone.” Teachers deserve the time to prepare lessons, and school districts should be more attentive to that goal.**
- 16. Do you support paid, dedicated time outside of student contact time for special education teachers to complete their paperwork and attend required meetings? **I am amenable to this, but I cannot commit at this time.**

## 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 commit to keeping Minnesota out of this voucher program. Our public schools are the backbone of our education system, and they deserve the funding.**
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? **Yes, if we're funding charter schools instead of putting those funds to public schools, they must be accountable to the results they are premised on.**
19. Will you support a moratorium on new charter schools until such changes are made? **Yes, funding priorities are for public schools, and I support a moratorium for new charter schools.**

## 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? **I believe teachers have the competency to discern what is age-appropriate when it comes to telling the history of our nation. Knowledge is power, and students deserve to know the realities of our history. I support codifying protections for teachers to tell the real history of the US and the world.** 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? **The state needs to ensure we are adequately funding our education system. The alternative is allowing the federal government to hollow out our education system, and that is unacceptable.**

## Taxes/revenue

21. 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? **Yes, I support raising income taxes on the wealthiest families, and increasing the corporate franchise tax.**
22. 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 support raising income taxes for individuals making more than \$200,000 per year and raising the corporate franchise tax. The exact rate is uncertain at this time. I leave it up to local school districts to assess whether or not to raise property taxes.**
23. 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. **Yes. I am considering taxing clothing and professional services such as accounting and legal services.**
24. Will you oppose tax cuts and carve outs that lower tax collections or narrow the tax base? **Yes, education deserves to be funded, and tax cuts are ineffective at spurring growth and development in this area.**

## Labor freedom

25. 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? **Codifying language in statute that protects labor unions in their ability to bargain is imperative; this could look like ensuring civil rights of action are available for attacks on workers rights. I will also work with our federal legislators to ensure we are strengthening workers rights at the federal level.**
26. 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, I think knowledge is power and silo-ed information only hurts collaborative efforts.**