Walz

Education Minnesota 2018 gubernatorial endorsement questionnaire

Funding a high-quality public school system

1. “Do you intend to increase school funding to ensure Minnesota educators are adequately paid and compensated, class sizes are manageable, programs which enhance learning can be maintained, and Minnesota remains as one of the leading education states in the nation?”
– Angela, Jackson County Central

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes: “How will you pay for more funding for education?” – Mary, Spring Lake Park

The focus of our education plan is simple: fully and equitably fund our schools. To do that, every option for paying for our schools has to be on the table. Governor Dayton’s approach has been the right one: progressive taxation that ensures the wealthiest Minnesotans pay their fair share. We will take that approach as Governor and Lt. Governor. A fully and equitably funded education system in Minnesota is an investment every Minnesotan can be proud of.

2. “How can we fund more support staff in all schools? There simply aren’t enough of us to meet the demands of all students. Increased school funding will help class size, student support services and workload issues.” – Lori, Dakota County United Educators

The short answer is that Minnesota should increase state school funding overall—our top priority is to fully and equitably fund our schools. More specifically, one of the challenges in providing sufficient resources for support staff is that support staff needs vary from school to school and district to district. Dedicating funding to support staff would decrease the ability of schools and districts to meet unique needs. We strongly support more funding for public school districts that would enable them to provide sufficient support staff while keeping class sizes low. We would work with teachers and school employees to identify ways to ensure that support staffing is adequate, but at this point prefer keeping education funding as flexible as possible.

3. “Do you support funding for providing more onsite mental health services?”
– Patty, Dakota County United Educators

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes: How will you accomplish this?

Many initiatives and research reports have demonstrated the value of integrating mental health services with schools. We also know that too many children in school have experienced trauma at home or in their neighborhoods and are suffering from these adverse childhood experiences. I
support funding for onsite mental health services, and our administration would seek to maximize the funding available from health care programs and use those resources to increase the availability and capacity of onsite mental health services. We should not be using education dollars to pay for health services that should be provided through our health care programs. I support increasing the number of full-service community schools across the state through financial incentives to districts. It is a model that works. Governor Dayton had a great approach in creating a Children’s Cabinet to improve coordination of services at the state level. We would work to continue the coordination of service at the district and school level.

4. “Will you support funding for every district that wants to establish full-service community schools?” – Deanna, Deer River
☑ Yes ☐ No

5. “How will you partner with schools, educators and communities to improve equitable funding for students no matter where they live?” – Tim, Mounds View

We support increased levy assistance for areas/districts with low property wealth. This helps level the funds between metro and greater Minnesota and provides property tax relief for homeowners. School districts with lower tax bases require a higher effort from families in the form of higher property taxes. This can be done through direct appropriation or through equalization of tax levies.

6. “What do you know about real-life classroom issues? What increases are you supporting in general per-pupil funding?” – Susan, Minneapolis

As a high school geography teacher for 20 years, I know what real life looks like in classrooms and what teachers, students, and families need to succeed. I’ll bring my experience as a teacher to the Governor’s office and draw on it every day.

For per-pupil funding, we must have an automatic annual inflation increase based on CPI for each biennium (at current rates puts 2.5% and 2.5% on the funding formula). In addition, we would like to move 1 to 2% higher to help schools stem off budget crisis. This approach will provide schools with stability, and allow them to make long-term budgeting decisions.

We will also provide funding to buy down the special education class subsidy gap in Minnesota over time, with the goal of eliminating the gap by 2024. We will work with Education Minnesota to support and expand full service community schools at a state-wide level.

7. “How can we move to a more stable and consistent school funding source?” – Nate, Waconia

Our current system of school funding—drawing on levies, revenue, and state aid—is a recipe for instability from community to community and school to school. Increasing the state’s share of funding is key to making sure we have stability in funding for education. Things have improved significantly over the past four years, but we are still far below the 2003 levels adjusted for inflation. Moreover, as discussed above, we need to tie per-pupil funding to inflation (and more) to give school districts the ability to do long-term planning.
8. “Will you oppose policies that permanently dedicate general fund dollars to government expenses not authorized under the current Minnesota constitution?” – Mark, St. Francis

☒ Yes ☐ No

9. “Will you commit to increasing educational funding every year?” – Justin, Dassel-Cokato

☒ Yes ☐ No

10. “Do you support a tax system that provides equitable, sustainable and sufficient funding for public schools that allows for regular increases to the general education formula that, at a minimum, keeps pace with inflation?” – LeMoyne, Anoka Hennepin

☒ Yes ☐ No

11. “In what circumstances, and from what sources, should Minnesota tax revenues be raised to increase funding for public education?” – LeMoyne, Anoka Hennepin

We support a progressive tax system in which the wealthiest Minnesotans pay their fair share. We will continue Governor Dayton’s progressive approach to taxes, and make sure funds are given to schools across the state. We must fight to even the playing field between property-rich districts and districts that are not as property rich.

12. “I see a huge need for equity in education funding. It is not right that property-rich districts can bring in more per pupil in local levies than neighboring areas that are not as property-rich. Will you fight to level the playing field?” – Cathy, Rockford

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes: “What policies do you support to reform the current property tax school levy system to equalize funding for all school districts?” – Tim, Brainerd

I support increasing levy assistance on areas/districts with low property wealth. This helps level the funds between metro and greater Minnesota and provides property tax relief for homeowners. (School Districts with lower tax bases require a higher effort from families in the form of higher property taxes.) We can and should do this leveling through a variety of approaches, including through direct appropriation or through equalization of tax levies.

13. “Will you support dedicated funding that begins to address the special education cross-subsidy funding deficiency?” – Heather, Dakota County United Educators

☒ Yes ☐ No

14. “Do you support ongoing funding that allows high quality, public school-based early childhood and voluntary pre-K programs taught by licensed educators to be available to all Minnesota students?” – Carol, Osseo

☒ Yes ☐ No
If yes: “How can Minnesota achieve universal, free pre-K for all students?”
— Kelli, Roseville

We support universal pre-K for Minnesota’s kids. The research is clear that universal pre-K dramatically boosts opportunities for kids who participate. To achieve it, we need to build a broad and diverse coalition across Minnesota. Peggy and I will pursue a two-generation strategy so that we are supporting kids and their families together. Early learning should also be better integrated with Minnesota’s child care assistance programs. And we need to be targeted in developing qualified teachers to work in the pre-K space. We know opportunity gaps begin early. By addressing education equity early we will provide all of our kids a chance to succeed.

Higher education

15. “Do you support free, public higher education?” — Matt, Minnesota State College Faculty

☒ Yes ☐ No

If no: “What percentage of higher education costs should be paid for by the state of Minnesota and what percentage should be student responsibility?”
— Matt, Minnesota State College Faculty

We support providing 2 years tuition-free education at Minnesota state institutions for individuals whose families make less than $125,000 a year. I also support tuition waivers for Native American students at all land grand universities, modeling the current system and the University of Morris.

Additionally, for all Minnesotans, we support a move back to the State paying two-thirds the cost of attendance at a state college or university. The goal of paying 2/3 tuition is in state law, Minn. Stat. 135A.01, and Minnesota met that goal until Tim Pawlenty was governor. The State disinvested and tuition rose sharply, and students and families were left with the bill. This led to a dramatic rise in student loan debt and set an entire generation of young people behind. Under Tim Pawlenty, tuition at a state college or university more than doubled. We must move back to a system that gives all Minnesotans access to a high-quality education.

16. “What kind of funding will you work for public college students?”
— Sherry, Minnesota State College Faculty

Low and middle income families must have access to a robust State Grant Program that helps students graduate without student loan debt. We will target families making less than $125,000 a year and pay the first two years of college at Minnesota state institutions. We also need to make sure the dollars spent on higher education help students and families of traditionally marginalized communities access higher education. These are the next generation of teachers, tradespeople, nurses, professors, etc., and we need to make sure they have access to a world class higher education. However, subsidizing college attendance for Tim Pawlenty’s and other millionaires’ kids is bad public policy.
17. “Will you support investments in higher education capital bonding projects that preserve buildings, remodel classrooms and keep our technology assets current?”
   – Mark, Minnesota State College Faculty
   ☑ Yes ☐ No

Maintaining a high-quality educator workforce

18. “What will you do to guarantee high standards for teacher licensure?”
   – Joyce, New London-Spicer

Content knowledge is important, but there’s so much more involved with being a teacher. Training and a robust licensure system is vital to maintaining the professionalism of the calling that we’ve devoted our lives to, along with improving student achievement. I disagree with the actions taken by the legislature during this past session that aimed to lower licensure standards. Peggy and I spoke out against the changes publicly and will continue to fight against them if these attempts are made in the future.

When students attend school to become teachers, they do more than learn content - they learn about child development. They learn about working with students from diverse backgrounds. They learn how to teach conceptually, so that students don’t just memorize dates and names but learn how to learn.

Last year’s legislation was a “solution” in search of a problem. In terms of concrete steps on licensure this is what I support:

- Teacher preparation is key. Any candidate who wants to attain a Tier 3 license should have to complete it before the license is granted.
- Retain the best of the best by creating a Tier 5 license.
- Tier 1 teachers should be allowed to be part of the teacher bargaining unit.
- Only those who are actively working toward a Tier 3 license should get Tier 2 designation.
- Summative evaluation should not be tied to licensure status.

19. “Do you support deleting the option in teacher licensure tier three that allows a person to receive a full professional license without completing a teacher preparation program?”
   – Mary, Dakota County United Educators
   ☑ Yes ☐ No

20. “Will you support full funding for QComp and teacher development and evaluation programs?” – Sara, Centennial
   ☑ Yes ☐ No
21. “What is your plan to keep and recruit educators to this profession over the next 10 years?”
   – Rebecca, Lakeville

   We need to treat teachers like professionals. Rather than focusing on laying off teachers, we need to focus on incentivizing new teachers into the field and retaining teachers from leaving the profession. We can attract professionals from high-need fields, like career and technical education, without lowering teaching standards. Finally, increasing teacher pay will help recruit and retain teachers.

22. “How will you support educators in rural Minnesota?” – Amber, Grand Rapids

   As someone who graduated from a class of 24 students in my high school and as a teacher in Mankato, I have a good sense of the unique challenges rural educators face. We must ensure our schools are fully funded with flexible dollars and that teachers receive the support they need. I also support expanding the state refinance program to include areas where there are shortages of educators.

   **Racial justice in our schools**

23. “What will you do to decrease the achievement gap for students of color and English language learners?” – Christy, St. Paul

   We know our achievement and opportunity gaps begin early and need to be addressed early. If all kids had access to high-quality early education, we could reduce achievement gaps before they begin. That is why we will fight to have universal, all day Pre-K across the state that is affordable and accessible.

   We also think it’s important that students have educators who look like them. That’s why we support targeted loan forgiveness programs that remove barriers and help attract more people of color to become teachers and help improve teacher retention. And that’s why we need to fund and expand equity coaching—giving teachers the tools and baseline cultural competence they need to have honest and courageous conversations about race.

24. “I want to know how the candidates plan to address racial inequality in schools and how they plan on addressing the school-to-prison pipeline.” – Abigail, Education Minnesota Student Program

   One of the most important things that we can do is to recruit and retain more teachers of color in the classroom. That’s why, as we discussed above, we need to target aid that will attract more people of color to the classroom.

   We also need significant state investment in equity coaching. We need to give teachers help in developing baseline cultural competence, and we need to help educators develop racial consciousness in an effort to break down systemic racism.

   Schools and educators also need support and training to focus on restorative practices, as opposed to excessive penalization.
25. “Will you support policy and funding changes to ensure that all educators are trained in restorative practices and trauma-informed instruction?” – David, Mounds View

☒ Yes ☐ No

26. “What action will you take in ensuring that more teachers of color are being given the ample and barrier-free opportunities to be trained and licensed as educators?” – Elizabeth, St. Paul

We support the creation of a teacher residency program to attract teachers of color and incentivize teachers to teach in hard to staff areas. The program would offer student loan forgiveness, housing allowances in certain areas, and higher salaries. These incentives would ideally be tied to the duration of teaching in a certain area.

27. “Will you support policy and funding changes that will incentivize education support professionals and others working in education to join the teaching profession, especially for persons of color, with the goal of diversifying our teacher workforce?” – Marcell, Intermediate District 287

☒ Yes ☐ No

**Safety**

28. “What do you think is the solution to making our schools safer for both students and educators?” – Peter, North Branch

Preventing violence—particularly gun violence—in schools is our top priority. We support outlawing bump stocks, an assault weapons ban, and well-funded studies on gun violence. We also support universal background checks, and we strongly oppose stand-your-ground and conceal-and-carry laws.

29. “What REAL solutions/plan of action do you have regarding gun safety and gun education for our students and staff?” – Sara, Minneapolis

The solution is not arming teachers. That argument is a distraction. Schools are meant to be safe places for our children. Bringing more guns into schools is not the answer. Keeping dangerous weapons out of the hands of dangerous people is the answer. We need universal background checks, a ban on bump stocks, and an assault weapons ban. We will unite Minnesotans across the state to fight for safe schools.

**Standardized testing**

30. “How are you going to reform our standardized testing to reflect how children show their learning best and keep their developmental needs at the forefront while also measuring school success?” – Elisa, Burnsville

We need fewer tests, not more. Students need the time, tools and one-on-one attention necessary to succeed, and standardized tests take away from this. While data from tests can be useful, they are
only one indicator of a school’s success. With ESSA, Minnesota now has the flexibility to design new accountability systems that don’t rely solely on student test scores. Students deserve a robust curriculum. Assessment should reflect what students are learning in classrooms and measure individual student growth over time.

A move to grade span testing would provide similar, if not better information, and allows for better quality and reduces the substantial negative impact on instruction time endemic in the current system. Teacher assessments should not rely on standardized test data alone.

31. “What individual or systems-level decisions in education do you believe are appropriate decisions to make based on standardized test results?” – Lori, Albert Lea

It is not necessary to test as extensively as the United States does to identify system-level trends and concerns. Identifying districts and schools for attention and supporting system-level testing can help to shed light on the opportunity gaps that hurt Minnesota’s children of color and Minnesota’s children from low-income families.

Standardized tests do not provide a full enough analysis of an individual teacher’s skills, those sources of data should not be emphasized in the teacher evaluation process without looking at multiple sources of data.

**Union rights and freedoms**

32. “Do you support collective bargaining rights?” – Ron, Elk River

☑ Yes ☐ No

If yes: “Will you unequivocally oppose any legislation or constitutional amendments that would weaken collective bargaining rights, the right to strike, automatic payment of union dues, union access to workplaces or other anti-union policies backed by anti-worker groups?” – Sara, Sauk Rapids-Rice

☑ Yes ☐ No

33. “How do you support unions?” – Teresa, Southern Plains Education Co-op

As a former teacher and union member, I know how vital unions are to ensure workers are treated fairly. Throughout my time as a teacher and union member, and throughout my time in Congress, I’ve made my support for organized labor clear. I’ve contributed, organized, and repeatedly voted against Republican efforts in Congress to attack unions.

34. “Do you oppose ‘right to work’ legislation?” – Ron, Elk River

☑ Yes ☐ No

35. “How will you improve the rights of workers in Minnesota?” – Ron, Elk River
We will improve the rights of workers in Minnesota by being a fierce advocate for them and making sure they come first in the policies my administration enacts. We will make sure they have a seat at the table before any decisions are made that affect them so that we can ensure their voices are heard and needs are met.

36. “Will you support legislation to give public employees greater freedoms to join together in union activities after the Janus vs. AFSCME case is decided?” – Joe, Plainview-Elgin-Millville

☑ Yes  ☐ No

37. “Do you support teacher tenure and due-process rights so the experts who work the most with students have the support to stand up for them?” – Ron, Elk River

☑ Yes  ☐ No

38. “Do you support allowing tier one-licensed teachers to join the teacher bargaining unit?” – Angie, Eden Prairie

☑ Yes  ☐ No

39. “Do you support changes to current law to include our fully licensed early childhood family education and adult basic education teachers into the continuing contract law?” – Kimberly, Waubun-Ogema-White-Earth Schools

☑ Yes  ☐ No

**Economic and health security**

40. “What legislation could you introduce or support that would reduce the cost of health insurance to school districts? Where do you stand on health care for all?” – Bob, Burnsville

As Governor, I will fight to have MinnesotaCare opened to all Minnesotans. This will help significantly reduce the cost of health care for all Minnesotans and help cover everyone. Eventually I would like to see universal health care in Minnesota and across the country.

41. “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?” – Janelle, Caledonia

☑ Yes  ☐ No

42. “What is your plan for raising wages and securing the future for public school educators?” – Levi, Isle

We will build a broad coalition, much like we did in 2014, to raise the wage to $15 an hour and keep it tied to inflation. We will also stand with educators during negotiations when they say they need higher salaries and better benefits. All too often teachers go without raises to ensure their colleagues...
don’t lose jobs or programs for students aren’t cut. We must start fully funding our education at the every level and raise the wages for our teachers.

43. “What will you do to ensure educators can afford a home, car, childcare and college debt?”
   – Maria-Renee, Eden Prairie

We will always protect bargaining rights and support teachers during their negotiations. I will also fight to make childcare affordable and accessible throughout Minnesota and fight for, and support, programs that lower college tuition and help people who are already in student loan debt.

44. “Do you support giving paraprofessionals a living wage?” – Teresa, Southern Plains Education Co-op

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes: “What policies do you support that will accomplish this?”

No one should have to choose between caring for a loved one and putting food on the table, and no one who works full time should live in poverty. I support raising the minimum wage to $15 and working on a plan for a living wage policy. I also support paraprofessionals having the right to collectively bargain for higher wages.

45. “Does the state of Minnesota have a responsibility to ensure that universal, affordable health care is available to all working Minnesotans, including education support professionals and other low-wage, hourly workers?” – Linda, Triton

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes: “What policies do you support that would accomplish this and what is your plan to enact them?” – Le, Roseville

All Minnesotans should have access to affordable, high-quality health care. Regardless of political party - ensuring a system that provides this right to a goal we all must work towards. Health care is a right. This is why I support opening up MinnesotaCare for all Minnesotans. The MinnesotaCare Buy-In would allow individuals struggling to afford health insurance -- including those living in areas where there aren’t any private insurers available on the marketplace – a more affordable option.

**Education debt**

46. “What will you do about student loan debt?” – Jody, Cass Lake

We need to approach student loan debt on both sides of the issue. For those who currently have it, we need tax deductions and to expand the state refinance program to include areas where there are shortages of educators, counselors, therapists, licensed nurses, etc. For those going into college, we need to fully fund higher education so that tuition goes down and that the state moves back to the target of funding 2/3 of higher education costs for Minnesotan students. Additionally, we will make
the first two years of college free at Minnesota state institutions for families making less than $125,000 per year.

47. “Do you support adequate and sustained funding for state-run loan forgiveness programs to attract more people into the teaching profession?” – Sarah, Anoka Hennepin

☒ Yes ☐ No

Pensions

48. “Will you support keeping a sustainable defined benefit public pension system?” – Joan, retired educator

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes: “Will you support providing the necessary state funding to ensure sustainability of public pension funds?” – Joan, retired educator

☒ Yes ☐ No

49. “What ideas do you have for retirement security for all Minnesotans?” – Joan, retired educator

Nearly 900,000 current workers in Minnesota are provided no opportunity by their employers to save for retirement, with nearly all having to rely almost entirely on poverty-level Social Security income in retirement, if they are able to retire at all. This is why we support a low-fee, state managed, retirement savings plan for all Minnesotans without employer-sponsored plans that maximizes participation through automatic enrollment and payroll deduction by employers and allows for easy opt-out by employees.

Creating just and inclusive Minnesota communities

50. “What are you going to do to actively disrupt injustice in local and national institutions, policies, laws and practices? What evidence/track record do you have for being a leader in racial equity and social justice issues?” – Cameron, St. Louis Park

In Congress and as a candidate for Governor, I strive to disrupt injustice when I see it. That’s why I’ve spent my entire career working to fix our broken and inhumane immigration system. That’s why I said I’d boycott the Humphrey-Mondale dinner last year over driver’s licenses for undocumented immigrants. That’s why, just this past week, I spoke out against the bill that would have increased penalties for people marching against systemic racism on our highways, and why I spoke out from the position of an educator after the not guilty verdict in the Philando Castile case last year. As Governor and Lt. Governor, Peggy and I will work to build a diverse cabinet, with leaders who represent Minnesota’s many communities. By expanding access and bringing more people into power, we can reduce systemic injustice and racism.
51. “What will you do to protect immigrants?” – Valerie, Willmar

In the age of Trump, I will protect the statutes of all sanctuary cities, but we need to go further than that. Minnesota should be a sanctuary state - it’s not the job of our state patrol to enforce immigration laws and they shouldn’t be responsible for that. Our undocumented communities should not have to live in constant fear of deportation - that’s why I’ve always fought for a path to citizenship in Congress.

I also support undocumented immigrants having the right to have driver’s licenses. In addition to being a moral imperative and letting people live their lives outside of the shadows, it just makes sense from a public safety perspective.

Privatization

52. “How do you feel about charter schools and voucher schools versus the public system?”
– Pamela, Minnesota State College Faculty

Minnesota’s public schools have proven time and again to be exceptional and the backbone of this state. I will do everything in my power to protect them from voucher and charter schools.

53. “Do you support a free public education system?” – Linda, Intermediate District 917

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes: “How will you protect it from privatization?” – Linda, Intermediate District 917

As Governor I will fight against vouchers and public funds going to private schools. Minnesota has exceptional public schools that are the backbone of this state. As a former public school teacher, I will always do everything in my power to protect our public education system from privatization.

If yes: “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?” – Alex, Minneapolis

☒ Yes ☐ No

If yes or no: “Do you oppose state tax credits for private, K-12 education tuition?”
– Chris, Sartell

☒ Yes ☐ No

Governing

54. “What are some non-negotiable areas of education that you are unwilling to relent on and how will you ensure that policies are passed that aren’t at the expense of students, families and educators?” – Maria, Roseville
We unequivocally oppose vouchers and any restrictions on educators’ rights to collectively bargain or advocate for their students. We will make sure good policies pass by talking with educators and making sure they are at the table when decisions are made that impact our schools.

55. “What are your non-negotiable positions on union and worker rights issues around which you are unwilling to compromise?” – Heather, Dakota County United Educators

We will never allow Minnesota to become a “Right to Work” (for less) state. We cannot become Wisconsin and we will do everything in my power to prevent the devastation Right to Work has brought to that state. We also must continue to have defined benefit pensions and well funded public schools.

56. “How will you truly get the voice of educators involved in decision making?” – Corey, Litchfield

We will make sure educators are at the table for all decisions that will affect them to ensure their voices are heard and needs are met. We will work closely with Education Minnesota on policies and initiatives they support and help make those realities.

57. “How can you influence Minnesota government towards a standard of public good versus party politics?” – Valerie, Worthington

We need a Governor who can work with both sides of the aisle but also stand firm when hard decisions need to be made and advocated for. I strongly believe in building broad coalitions to help pass policies that are for the public good rather than play into party politics.