What we’re fighting for at the Capitol and the bargaining table

Fully funding public education. Improving the living and working conditions for education support professionals. Raising teacher licensing standards. Protecting workplace freedoms.

Educators are the experts on what happens in classrooms, lunchrooms, busses, hallways and college campuses across Minnesota. Together, we are ready to advocate for the policies and laws that improve our schools, profession and the lives of our students and communities.
Fully funding public schools

**Smaller class sizes. More support staff. Greater access to mental health resources.**

Educators know what works in our schools and understand what our students need. But the state has failed to make those needed investments and create a stable, predictable funding stream. Minnesota’s share of funding for public school districts hasn’t kept pace with inflation—it's now 12.7 percent less than 2003 in real dollars.

It's time for Minnesota to fully fund public education to give students and educators the safe and welcoming schools they deserve. That means the state needs to invest at least $4.3 billion over the next two years into strategies proven to help our students succeed.

**Education Minnesota is fighting for:**

- Reversing Minnesota's perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula and tying it to inflation.
- Fully fund special education costs instead of relying on school districts to pay for them.
- Ensuring all education support professionals earn a living wage of at least $15 an hour.
- Attracting and retaining teachers of color by increasing starting salaries and creating loan forgiveness, mentoring and other programs to support educators on the job.
- Lowering class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need.
- Providing additional resources for school districts to hire more student support staff, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses and other job classifications.
- Expanding mental health services and trauma-informed practices for students to ensure all schools are safe and welcoming places for students and educators to learn and work.
- Helping educators get quality, affordable health care through innovative, cost-sharing initiatives and allowing any Minnesotan to take advantage of any affordable public option.
- Universal access to early childhood and pre-kindergarten programs.
- Creating an equitable and sustainable funding stream for the 2011 Teacher Development and Evaluation law, an unfunded state mandate, to ensure teacher quality and lift the cap on the Q-Comp program.
- Making post-secondary education affordable and accessible so all students can pursue higher education free from the stress of unmanageable loans and debts. This includes expanding Minnesota’s existing teacher loan forgiveness program and creating a student loan advocate within state government to act as an advocate for consumers against abuses by loan servicers and lenders.
- Expanding access to full-service community schools.
- Invest in infrastructure and deferred maintenance so that all students – no matter what they look like or where they live – are in in quality learning environments and have access to a wide range of resources and a well-rounded education.
- Provide up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave for all workers through a payroll deduction and employer tax.
Education Support Professionals Bill of Rights

Everyone who works in public education deserves the same things. Respect for their contribution to the care and education of our students. Fair compensation for their work, including affordable health care. Safe working conditions.

Unfortunately, most education support professionals (ESPs) across Minnesota don’t get enough of any of those. All ESPs deserve the pay and benefits to sustain a family, safe work environments and a voice in their working conditions. Here is what the Minnesota Legislature can do to make things happen and some improvements we can make when we join together and negotiate.

Pay and benefits to sustain families

• Require school districts and charter schools to pay their ESPs at least $15 an hour.
• Help all educators and their families get high quality, affordable health care.
• Provide up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave for all workers through a payroll deduction and employer tax.
• Protect workers from wage theft. This means enforcing Minnesota law and cracking down on employers who circumvent wage and benefit standards and laws, don't pay overtime, etc.

Safe work environments

• Expand state law so that educators who are assigned to work directly with students with histories of violent behavior are properly briefed; current law only requires notifying teachers.
• Require paraprofessionals who directly work with students to receive 16 hours of annual paid training.

Voice and respect on the job

• Establish reporting and transparency requirements to identify issues of concern for ESPs on the worksite. This could include staffing levels, pay scale, safety, fair scheduling, etc.
• Ensure ESPs have a voice in their local school district’s policies and decisions by requiring representation on district committees.

Licensing

Teacher preparation, not just on-the-job training, is critically important to student achievement and success. Minnesotans value high standards for our doctors, nurses and accountants. The same should be true for our teachers.

But in 2017, state lawmakers drastically reduced the requirements to teach in Minnesota classrooms. This has dramatic implications for all of our students, but it will most profoundly affect those with the highest needs.

Instead of making it easier to become a teacher, let's make it better to be one. Let's restore Minnesota's high standards for a teaching license; elevate teachers and keep them in the classroom; and honor teacher preparation while recognizing different pathways into teaching.

Our proposal:

• Closes the loophole that allows a candidate to attain a Tier 3 license without any type of teacher preparation.
• Permits Tier 1 teachers to join the teacher bargaining unit so that they may negotiate together for the time and resources they need to move up the tiers.
• Ensure Tier 1 licenses are appropriately granted.
Worker freedom

Educators care about more than their compensation.

They want more control over the learning environments in their worksites and the future of their profession. They want workplace protections so they can advocate for students and their livelihood. It’s time for state law to reflect these values. Education Minnesota is pushing for:

• Expanding the list of mandatory subjects of bargaining to include things like class sizes and setting safe student-to-staff ratios for ESPs who work with students.

• Amending the Tiered Licensure Law to include Tier 1 teachers in the teacher bargaining unit.

• Ensuring that all early childhood positions in public schools require licensure, and therefore guarantee that the educators in these positions have collective bargaining rights and the opportunity to earn tenure or continuing contract rights.

• Deleting the exclusion of ECFE and ABE teachers from coverage under the continuing contract and tenure rights laws.

• Modifying the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act to make it mandatory, rather than permissive, for employers to provide bargaining teams and member rights advocates the information they need to represent their members fully in negotiations and contract enforcement matters.