

# Education Minnesota

## 2021 legislative positions

*Legislative Action Committee*



**THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL  
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS**



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# I. Student success

## Class size

### Principles

Education Minnesota supports class sizes that allow teachers to provide individual attention to students and that increase parent-teacher cooperation, build self-confidence among students, foster effective teaching and learning, allow students more access to classroom technology, and promote safe and orderly schools.

### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Ensuring sufficient funding for the following research-based maximum number of actual students per classroom:
  - A. *Kindergarten through third grade* – 17
  - B. *Fourth through sixth grades* – 19
  - C. *Seventh through ninth grades* – 21
  - D. *Tenth through 12th grades* – 23
2. Disclosing the number of students per classroom as of Oct. 1.
3. Establishing caseload caps for special education in all disability areas that consider the student population and interventions an educator is providing.
4. Requiring the same student-teacher ratio for all specialists' instructional classes, such as art, general music, physical education and media, as for regular classroom teachers.
5. Establishing ratios of students for all grade levels and curricular areas, as well as licensed school guidance counselors, licensed school psychologists, licensed school social workers and licensed public school health care professionals, not to exceed the recommendations of their national organizations.
6. Revising the official definition of "student-teacher ratio" so it includes only the ratio of core subject teachers to actual students in grade-level and subject areas. Teacher specialists in other areas such as art, music, physical education, special education, etc., should not be counted when calculating this ratio.

## Standards

### Principles

Education Minnesota believes in maintaining rigorous standards for students and supports ongoing review of student standards, with teacher participation.

### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Streamlining and improving paperwork and record-keeping, especially in special education, to increase instructional time.
2. Creating an efficient statewide electronic record-keeping system that is easily understood by parents, students and educators for the purpose of day-to-day record-keeping of student progress (e.g., attendance, standardized test scores, graduation standards) and to facilitate mandated state reporting.
3. Providing time, tools and training necessary to integrate standards into the curriculum with appropriately aligned assessments.
4. Establishing and maintaining a workable number of educational standards distributed in a developmentally appropriate way across grade levels.

5. Addressing funding and supports services for unique and specific student populations such as special education, English learners, Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate, Area Learning Center and Adult Basic Education students.
6. Using data-based decision-making practices that utilize district-adopted measures to assess student performance and identify ways to improve instruction and increase student achievement. These measures should be used as part of a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) to drive student instruction on individual and group levels.
7. Substituting the current standardized assessment protocol with a better one that is administered less frequently. By better, we mean an assessment that is valid, reliable, and aligned with standards. Also, shift the focus on standardized test results from a measurement of success or failure to an evaluation of need for additional levels of support for schools.
8. Providing staff in priority/high-needs schools with adequate training, funding and resources to improve results and providing incentives for experienced staff to teach in those schools.
9. Reporting school performance data to the public such as transitory student population, absenteeism, free and reduced lunch counts, English learners, special needs groups, class size and safety.
10. Providing adequate resources for priority and focus schools under the Multiple Measurement Rating (MMR) system.
11. Including all stakeholders in setting the course for improvement for all schools that are priority and focus schools for comprehensive and targeted support.
12. Promoting parent and community partnerships with teachers and schools to help ensure student success.
13. Informing teachers, parents and students of the content, standards and skills measured prior to administering mandated tests.
14. Informing teachers of the results of mandated tests in a timely manner, prior to informing students, parents, community and media.
15. Requiring the Minnesota Department of Education to develop and distribute criteria and tools for districts to use to evaluate online programs, provide an assessment service to districts to ensure quality online instruction and require accountability of appropriate rigor in the online environment.
16. Requiring that committees for development and review of K-12 academic standards be composed of a majority of public school teachers from appropriate content-specific and grade level areas.
17. Requiring the reporting of public school data for students who are transitory, absent frequently, receive free and reduced lunch, speak English as an additional language, belong to a special needs group, experience trauma, or enrolled in classes that exceed state recommendations.
18. Access to opportunities for learning and acquiring literacy in more than one language for all students K-12.
19. Advocate for changes to Minnesota's accountability system under the Every Student Succeeds Act that promote education equity and include the voice of educators. This includes reducing the role of high-stakes testing and giving schools more credit for fulfilling the unmet needs of students.

## Early childhood, families and communities

### Principles

Education Minnesota believes in school-based and community programs that support families and enrich students' lives.

### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Funding programs to ensure access to care and education and the co-related integrated services for all Minnesota families, including funding to childcare programs, both center based and home based, so that they can increase compensation, improve classroom spaces, and cover the costs not covered by the maximum CCAP allowance.
2. Funding a Minnesota Department of Early Care and Education, as well as Regional Centers of Early Care and Education.
3. Funding Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs within the public school system with dedicated funds allocated for compensation and benefits.
4. Funding programs that allow pregnant and parenting students the opportunity to complete their education with appropriate support services.
5. Funding public school learning readiness programs for the birth to 5-year-old population.
6. Assisting families to ensure students attend school when families move from one school and/or district to another.
7. Providing affordable housing through the bonding bill and other funding mechanisms to prevent homelessness and create stable housing for students and families.
8. Encouraging active participation of all stakeholders, including parents, in each child's education.
9. Providing resources to coordinate school district and community education programs.
10. Funding a system of preschool that is offered through a mixed delivery system overseen by a Minnesota Department of Early Education and operated through Regional Centers of Early Care and Education.
11. Expanding early childhood and development screenings.
12. Providing adequate staff development funding for Adult Basic Education, Early Childhood Family Education, School Readiness, intermediate school districts and cooperative units.
13. Requiring all early childhood and parent educators to be appropriately licensed.
14. Raising the minimum wage to a livable wage to allow families and community members to have a voice in how their schools are shaped.
15. Reducing truancy of students staying home to care for siblings by requiring employers to offer paid sick leave and other child care options for parents.

## Safe and healthy students and staff

### Principles

Education Minnesota believes in a school climate that provides a safe, financially stable and healthy learning environment for students and staff.

Education Minnesota believes in affordable health care for all.

Education Minnesota supports funding for the infrastructure of schools to assure that students and staff are safe and buildings are structurally and environmentally sound and comply with state statutes regarding fire and occupancy codes. Adequate space and resources must meet the changing demands for teaching and learning.

### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Supporting initiatives that expand affordable health care coverage to all.
2. Requiring appropriately trained and licensed staff, with appropriate staff- student ratios, for classrooms, playgrounds, lunchrooms and other school- related activities.
3. Supporting educator health by establishing and maintaining reasonable, manageable workload responsibilities to ensure and preserve effective teaching.
4. Requiring local monitoring and systematic review of district student behavior practices.
5. Training students, parents and staff in trauma-informed practices, restorative process, conflict resolution and peer mediation.
6. Addressing the disparity in suspension rates among racial groups through culturally responsive teaching and effective, equitable disciplinary practices such as restitution, restorative justice, peer mediation, trauma-informed practices, removal to an appropriate in-school alternative program and other research-based, culturally respectful strategies to create productive classroom climates.
7. Providing appropriate interim alternative education settings, including care and treatment facilities, based on best practices and research- validated student-staff ratios and comprehensive professional development opportunities.
8. Providing comprehensive student health programs for secondary and elementary students. These programs should be supported by mental and physical health services and counseling by licensed school professionals.
9. Increasing access to mental health and other community services for students, families and educators.
10. Creating more full-service community schools that offer services such as health clinics, parent education and food shelves, etc., under one roof to help meet the needs of students and families.
11. Supporting anti-bullying policies so all children feel safe and supported in their schools.
12. Offering in-service education, health services and student support services to counteract the effects of issues encountered in the school environment, such as bullying, child abuse and neglect, lack of self-esteem, disruptive behavior, mental health challenges and suicide.
13. Examining practices of local law enforcement agencies and the courts, including timeliness of actions taken, that affect classrooms through placement of students with a history of violent behavior.
14. Establishing school-based clinics staffed by appropriately-licensed professionals and funded by public health revenues with support from appropriate agencies.
15. Establishing and reviewing district policies for the administration of medication to students and the performance of medical procedures on students by school personnel to safeguard students' health and safety. Medical procedures should be performed under the supervision of a licensed school nurse.

16. Requiring that only licensed health care professionals perform nursing procedures such as gastrostomy feedings, tracheal suctioning or administering rectal or IV medications.
17. Inspecting and upgrading all public school buildings and property regularly for the safety and well-being of students and staff.
18. Requiring districts to develop “healthy schools” policies that address such issues as indoor air quality and ergonomics.
19. Requiring school districts to request records from new students’ former school districts within two school days of enrollment.
20. Requiring school districts to forward records within two school days after notification that a student is enrolled in another school district.
21. Increasing the communication among schools, social services and law enforcement agencies about inappropriate behaviors so that a comprehensive program will benefit students.
22. Investing in sufficient numbers of school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, speech language pathologists, and school social workers to adequately address student needs, and ensuring that enough educational programs exist for the training of these educators.
23. Returning to 2002 Minnesota statutes regarding the right to carry concealed handguns that gives final authority to local law enforcement officials in issuing gun permits.
24. Prohibiting guns on any school or higher education campus property, with appropriate exceptions. Those include gun safety training in schools and on remote school property, if supported by law enforcement officials.
25. Investing in proposals that help keep students and educators safe and that support teaching and learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and the different learning models it brings with it. This includes expanding broadband access and mental health services and helping educators, especially in special education, with increasing workloads.
26. Promoting equity-driven, school safety trainings and drills that are sensitive to trauma-informed teaching practices and socio-emotional wellbeing of all students.

## **Equity in education**

### **Principles**

Education Minnesota supports legislative policy that eliminates barriers to quality education based on economic status, disability, race, religion, gender identity, ethnic origin or sexual orientation.

Education Minnesota supports diversity, equity and inclusion in education to maximize success for all students.

### **Strategies**

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Developing and implementing integration/desegregation plans.
2. Eliminating racial and cultural biases in testing that create barriers for our students.
3. Creating culturally responsive schools that ensure racial equity practices are embedded throughout our school systems so that each and every educator and student of color feel welcome.
4. Providing funding to address student needs due to disadvantaged socio- economic status including high mobility situations.
5. Providing training for students, parents and staff, plus time and resources to facilitate multidistrict cooperation and implementation of equity programs.
6. Providing adequate resources for programs, transportation, facilities, equipment and staff development to assure success for students, parents and staff.

7. Invest in eliminating barriers and providing recruitment incentives for teacher candidates of color.
8. Upholding the Minnesota Human Rights Act of 1993, including nondiscrimination in the area of employment in education.
9. Disrupting and ending the discipline gap that leads to students of color, LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities receiving a disproportionate number of exclusionary interventions.
10. Identifying and working to end the structures, curriculum and processes of schools that marginalize students of color, LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities.
11. Dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline to prevent students of color from disproportionately ending up in the criminal justice system.
12. Providing access to more affordable broadband services and devices for students and families.

## **Instructional time**

### **Principles**

Education Minnesota supports the most effective use of learning time with minimal interruptions in the instructional day and year.

Education Minnesota supports responsive and family-friendly learning schedules with alternative day, week and year options.

### **Strategies**

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Developing flexible use of staff and student days.
2. Developing varied models of attendance for staff and students.
3. Providing productive teaching and learning environments.
4. Addressing the issues of student work hours and family time.
5. Ensuring that facilities allow for changes in the learning environment and time of year.
6. Allowing local decision-making by school districts to begin school before Labor Day.
7. Ensuring any e-learning programs are transparent and accountable, and that educators' intellectual property is protected.

## II. Education funding

### Equity in funding

#### Principles

Education Minnesota recognizes that educational excellence is the best means of protecting public education. To ensure excellence, Education Minnesota supports equitable, sustainable, predictable and sufficient funding as the foundation for funding quality public schools.

#### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Providing equitable, sustainable, predictable and sufficient funding to support a public school system our students deserve.
2. Lowering class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need and deserve.
3. Ensuring full funding for comprehensive, research-based curricula and essential programs and services.
4. Providing full funding for state-mandated programs, such as the Teacher Development and Evaluation law, English language learners, special education, etc.
5. Recognizing the critical underfunding of special education programs and fully funding the needs of special education students.
6. Ensuring districts' access to local, state and federal revenue sources that increase current funding.
7. Providing funding equity across all measures of equity, including race, ethnicity, gender, language and geography.
8. Providing educational services for lifelong learning, including early childhood and adult education.
9. Providing funding for uncontrollable and/or unforeseen expenses.
10. Providing funding levels for state programs approved by legislative action rather than by dedication of funds through constitutional amendment.
11. Creating a new racial equity funding stream and increase American Indian aid so schools can better serve students of color and Indigenous students and parents and educators have a voice in how money is spent.

### Basic funding program

#### Principles

To maintain and promote healthy communities, Education Minnesota supports committing a significant portion of the state's revenues, including its reserves and surpluses, to all levels of E-12 public education, including public state residential schools.

#### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Reversing Minnesota's perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula and tying it annually to inflation.
2. Providing full funding for special education programs.
3. Maintaining the funding link between compensatory funding and the general education formula.
4. Providing funding to attract and retain educators through professional salaries and benefits commensurate with the professional stature and responsibilities of educators.
5. Fully funding universal access to child care and early learning.

6. 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 and to end the school-to-prison pipeline.
7. Recognizing the importance and providing additional funding for student support staff, including counselors, social workers, psychologists, nurses and other job classifications necessary for meeting the comprehensive educational needs of all students.
8. Providing funding for continuous professional development defined by educators in order to successfully implement academic standards.
9. Providing funding to ensure that students and staff have the most current and relevant technology and training needed to succeed, including communication, technology upgrades and maintenance.
10. Recognizing the importance of meeting the needs of all students by increasing funding for alternative settings for learners with disabilities, mental health concerns or exceptional needs that cannot be met in the mainstream classroom or district. This includes state residential programs and intermediate education districts.
11. Providing permanent full funding dedicated to secondary vocational/career and technical programs.
12. Providing funding for programs that provide equitable, differentiated learning opportunities for students identified as exceptional learners. These programs must assess and identify all students in ways that account for the racial bias that has too long tracked children of color out of gifted education.
13. Providing funding for public school adult education programs.
14. Providing funding for 21st century learning environments, including new construction and technology.
15. Providing full funding and staffing for any state-mandated additional days to the local calendar.
16. Providing direct state funding to school sites only in a manner agreed to by the district, all exclusive representatives and site-based teams.
17. Providing adequate funding for districts with declining enrollments without taking funding from stable or growing districts.
18. Providing adequate funding for transportation with sparsity considerations.
19. Providing funding beyond the per-pupil funding formula for programs that are proven to lessen racial and socioeconomic achievement gaps.
20. Funding to implement robust data-driven teacher preparation programs in order to maintain and/or expand Minnesota's high standards for teacher licensure.

## Vouchers/tax credits/privatization

### Principles

Education Minnesota opposes the diversion of local, state or federal tax dollars to E-12 private, for-profit or religious schools or educational programs through a voucher system, an income tax credit for tuition and fees, or income tax deductions for tuition and fees for education programs.

### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Removing the provisions in the education tax deduction/education tax credit laws that allow deductions and credits for private and religious school expenses.
2. Prohibiting for-profit organizations from running public schools.
3. Preventing efforts by the state of Minnesota or any local school district to contract for services with private individuals or companies to provide instructional or support services for E-12 students that are now provided by public school districts.
4. Rescinding the current statute that requires public schools to provide services such as transportation, textbooks, testing, health care, guidance counseling and special education services to private and home schools, which diverts critical financial resources from public school students.
5. Requiring private and home schools to pay for services provided by public schools.
6. Preventing ongoing efforts to fund early learning or "opportunity" scholarships at the expense of public learning opportunities.
7. Prohibiting charter schools from billing school districts for unfunded or under-funded mandates such as special education services.
8. Holding private and home schools to the same standards and levels of service required of public schools.

## Educational structures

### Principles

Education Minnesota encourages innovation within the public school system.

Education Minnesota supports development of program and service delivery options through joint-powers agreements, cooperation or appropriate consolidations with other public entities. These entities should operate under the direction of locally elected officials, with union representation.

### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Reorganizing school districts, if needed, to provide a quality comprehensive curriculum for all students.
2. Requiring that charter schools be sponsored only by local school boards.
3. Encouraging integration of the public, E-12 public school and higher education library systems with full funding provided.
4. Directing the Minnesota Department of Education to monitor charter schools and online learning communities to assure compliance with laws, rules and their charter contracts and to report annually to the Minnesota public.
5. Requiring charter schools to report annually to their sponsors, defining roles, responsibilities, accountability measures and public reporting requirements to the local school districts, the Minnesota Department of Education and the public.

6. Enforcing the legal obligation that charter schools and online learning programs be staffed with appropriately trained teachers licensed by the state of Minnesota.
7. Requiring the legislative auditor to regularly study and report on Minnesota charter schools and online learning programs. The study must include at least an analysis of student enrollment and retention, demographics, financial history and fiscal responsibility, progress toward and attainment of goals, and public reporting obligations and accountability issues.
8. Reinstating a cap on the number of charter schools in Minnesota.
9. Requiring a sponsor of a charter school to have fiduciary responsibility for the financial and management practices of their charter school.
10. Encouraging the unionization of all alternative education systems, including charter schools and online learning.
11. Supporting innovative programs to close achievement gaps by supporting the principles of the Education Minnesota Governing Board.
12. Supporting a statewide moratorium on new charter schools.

## **Tax policy**

### **Principles**

Education Minnesota seeks to ensure the state meets its constitutional requirement to fully fund public education through a state tax policy that is fair, understandable, competitive, stable and broad-based.

### **Strategies**

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Maintaining a 5 percent reserve fund for the state of Minnesota.
2. Maintaining a tax policy that does not require a super-majority for a tax increase.
3. Funding public services with state revenue and making the wealthiest Minnesotans pay their fair share.
4. Safeguarding a representative and democratic form of government. Education Minnesota opposes laws or amendments to the Constitution of Minnesota that would enact initiative and referendum.
5. Providing school districts with the ability to schedule a levy referendum vote on a date that fits the needs of the community.
6. Requiring the Legislature to regularly conduct and publish studies on the status of adequacy and equity of school funding, on the equity and progressivity of state and local taxes, and on tax expenditures related to business tax incentives and abatements.

## III. Employment standards

### Bargaining rights

#### Principles

Education Minnesota supports uniform and comprehensive employment and termination rights for all public and private employees, including pension benefits, livable wages, health and hospitalization coverage, and due process rights.

Education Minnesota supports the right of all employees and their employers to mutually determine the structure and design of salary compensation packages and the terms and conditions of employment through the collective bargaining process.

Education Minnesota supports the right of all education employees to organize and be included in a bargaining unit.

Education Minnesota believes that any legislation addressing reorganization of any type of school districts or multi-district cooperatives must provide the following: job protections for employees, specifically maintenance of seniority and continuing contract/tenure status; position-claiming rights; maintenance of employee salary and benefits; continuity of the exclusive representative; and provisions for significant voter input.

#### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Attracting and maintaining the highest-quality education employees through competitive salaries, benefits and continuing contracts.
2. Establishing regional bargaining for education employees to ensure efficiency in the use of scarce public dollars and to achieve and maintain parity and equity in education employees' salaries and retirement.
3. Expanding the list of mandatory subjects of bargaining to include topics like class sizes and setting safe student-to-staff ratios for educators who work with students.
4. Providing incentives to encourage local districts and exclusive representatives to explore alternatives to the current salary schedule structure through the collective bargaining process.
5. Allowing the exclusive representative and the employer to negotiate terms other than a two-year contract if both parties agree.
6. Maintaining the right to strike at the termination of the master contract with no requirement for binding arbitration prior to the right to strike.
7. Prohibiting the employment of long- or short-term substitutes during a legal strike.
8. Empowering bargaining representatives and all other stakeholder groups to determine the method by which their members are selected for district site- based or shared decision-making teams.
9. Creating incentives for districts and local unions to negotiate and ratify labor contracts in a timely manner.
10. Allowing local units of government to include domestic partner benefits for employees.
11. Maintaining the integrity of the bargaining unit by prohibiting school districts from hiring employees who are not eligible for inclusion in the collective bargaining unit.
12. Prohibiting education employees' salaries from being tied primarily to student test scores.
13. Seeking ratification, in unaltered form, of state employee collective bargaining agreements.
14. Allowing state employee collective bargaining agreements to be automatically implemented after ratification by the exclusive representative and the employer representative.
15. Seeking salary and benefits for licensed ECFE and ABE teachers comparable to K-12 teachers.

16. Reinstating a 60-day probationary period to avoid penalizing teachers who experience serious illness or pregnancy at the start of their teaching career.
17. Permit Tier 1 teachers to join the bargaining unit so that they may negotiate together for the time and resources to get the training they need at the local level.

## **Employment security**

### **Principles**

Education Minnesota supports seniority, due process and continuing contract/tenure protections for all education employees.

Education Minnesota supports seniority as the basis for determining employment status for all education employees.

Education Minnesota supports providing safeguards for fair treatment of probationary teachers.

Education Minnesota supports providing safeguards for fair treatment of all educators regarding the use of technology.

### **Strategies**

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Reducing the current three-year probationary period to two years and providing probationary teachers the right to a hearing before the school board prior to the nonrenewal of a contract if supported by a local mentoring team.
2. Ensuring that licensed educators who are coaches have the right to due process.
3. Developing a joint seniority list for layoff and recall when two or more districts enter into an agreement for secondary education.
4. Providing equitable access to benefits as part of Minnesota's re-employment insurance law for education support professional staff who are laid off, and requiring that the employer give formal notification of re-employment, layoff or continuing contract.
5. Requiring a June 1 deadline for providing all nonrenewed teachers with written notice that their contract will not be renewed for the following school year.
6. Amending Minnesota Statutes Section 122A.41 to include arbitration hearings for probationary teachers upon discharge.
7. Requiring administration to inform a teacher or school employee within one business day of any investigation or potential disciplinary action resulting from a complaint or injury.

## Health care

### Principles

Education Minnesota supports establishing a state-funded or state-supported affordable health care program for all Minnesotans that provides for universal coverage, cost containment, access, consumer choice and quality.

Education Minnesota supports legislation that provides all education employees access to affordable health care programs.

Education Minnesota supports providing procedures to assure affordable health care coverage for all retirees.

### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Helping educators get quality, affordable health care through innovative, cost-sharing initiatives and allowing all Minnesotans to take advantage of any affordable public option.
2. Preventing interest arbitration on the negotiated retirees' group insurance.
3. Allowing school districts to levy for retiree health insurance.
4. Allowing school districts to levy for their portion of employee health care expenses.
5. Maintaining the exclusive representative's right to seek a bid and opt into the Public Employee Insurance Program (PEIP) without approval by any other entity or individuals.
6. Maintaining an open and transparent process in bidding and decision-making on all school employee health care programs.
7. Providing up to 12 weeks of paid family and medical leave for all workers through a payroll deduction and employer tax.

## Retirement

### Principles

Education Minnesota supports public employees receiving adequate and livable pension benefits upon retirement, along with appropriate postretirement adjustments based on cost of living and investment performance.

### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Requiring full actuarial funding of all plans.
2. Requiring full funding of all benefit improvements.
3. Requiring the employer or state to pay for existing unfunded liabilities, with amortization not to extend beyond 30 years.
4. Maintaining a defined benefit plan for school employees in the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA), St. Paul Teachers Retirement Association (SPTRA) and Public Employees Retirement Association (PERA).
5. Requiring that pension funds are for pension purposes only.
6. Finding ways to reduce retirement income disparities for career members of plans within the same job types.
7. Monitoring and adjusting the earnings cap so members retain their annuity while still having the flexibility to work after retirement in some capacity.
8. Enhancing opportunities to phase into retirement.
9. Allowing a district to contribute directly to 403(b)/457 plans.
10. Allowing Individual Retirement Account Plan (IRAP) higher education members the same access as TRA members to the teacher mobility and phased retirement benefits and allowing retirees to buy into the state health plan.
11. Allowing higher education faculty who selected IRAP to buy back into the TRA program at full actuarial cost.
12. Allowing school employees to purchase up to full service credits at a cost competitive with other public employee pension plans across the country for time covering any approved public employment leaves, out-of-state public employment, active military service and sabbaticals.
13. Opposing any increase to the membership eligibility threshold in the Public Employee Retirement Association.
14. Supporting changes in the Statutory Interest Assumption rates that are data driven and reflect fiduciary responsibility.
15. Continuing to ensure equity in pension benefits for all active and retired members.
16. Encouraging the state board of investment to divest pension funds from fossil fuels.

## IV. Investing in professional educators

### Professional competence

#### Principles

Education Minnesota seeks to assure the quality and competence of all who work with students.

#### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Requiring that all E-12, vocational/career and technical and Adult Basic Education (ABE) students be taught by state-licensed instructors.
2. Requiring that teachers practice in their areas of licensure.
3. Requiring teacher members of the state Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) to be licensed public school educators.
4. Requiring substitute teachers to be fully and appropriately licensed by the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB).
5. Requiring districts to notify students and their parents when instruction is being provided by other than fully-and appropriately-licensed staff.
6. Requiring each student enrolled in an online learning course to be assigned a licensed Minnesota teacher to instruct and assess learning to assure high quality.
7. Restoring Minnesota's rigorous standards for its teaching corps.
8. Preserving an independent Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board (PELSB) with a teacher majority.
9. Ensuring that any tiered licensure system creates clear requirements and avoids tying local evaluations to licensure status.
10. Ensuring all education support professionals are paid at least \$20 an hour.
11. Ensuring our hourly school workers are eligible for unemployment insurance.
12. Requiring paraprofessionals who work directly with students receive at least 16 hours of annual paid training.
13. Ensuring education support professionals have a voice in their local school district's policies and decisions by requiring representation on district committees.

## Preparation, recruitment, and retention of educators

### Principles

Education Minnesota seeks to assure that all education employees receive high- quality preparation and ongoing professional development.

### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Establishing paid student teaching, grow-your-own or residency programs that are accessible to teaching candidates throughout the state.
2. Improving teacher preparation programs to make them practical in application and relevant to the classroom, including current educational technology, cultural competency, teaching diverse learners, and trauma- informed, restorative approaches to student behavior.
3. Developing college and school district programs to help prospective teachers pass tests required for licensure.
4. Providing career change incentives for education support professionals interested in becoming teachers, including funding and other support for "grow your own" programs.
5. Developing recruitment incentives for those interested in a career change within education, with special emphasis on implementing a process of recruitment and retention of educators of color.
6. Establishing grant programs to promote the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and other programs of distinction.
7. Designating funding for mentoring and induction programs for probationary and Tier 1 teachers to provide them with support, professional development and training.
8. Maintaining a loan forgiveness/tuition reimbursement program to attract postsecondary students to teaching in teacher shortage areas. Such programs should be available to new teachers, current teachers seeking new licenses and education support professionals seeking teacher licensure.
9. Maintaining a tuition reimbursement loan forgiveness program for current members seeking advanced degrees and certifications germane to their employment.
10. Supporting adequate funding for resources and programs for all teachers and education support professionals required to meet federal requirements.
11. Increasing preparation time to make it adequate and equitable for all licensed staff.
12. Attracting and retaining teachers of color by increasing starting salaries and creating loan forgiveness, mentoring and other programs and protections to support educators on the job.

## Continuous professional development

### Principles

Education Minnesota supports an educational environment of continuous improvement through ongoing, funded professional development that empowers all education professionals to take ownership in enhancing and building their instructional knowledge and skills.

### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Establishing a separate categorical fund for all school districts, including intermediate school districts, cooperative districts and state residential schools, in addition to the general education amount, for the professional development of teachers and education support professionals that clearly delineates the authority of the staff to design, budget, implement and evaluate the program.
2. Providing appropriate and equitable funding for the implementation and improvement of the 2011 teacher evaluation law.
3. Monitoring implementation of the Teacher Development and Evaluation law and making recommendations for legislation based on the experience of educators and school districts.
4. Expanding opportunities for National Board Certification and other equivalent programs of distinction for educators.
5. Recognizing and providing compensation for National Board Certified licensed professionals and other programs of distinction as a measure of mastery in their specialty area.
6. Providing statewide mentoring and aid for school districts to enable and reward teachers who choose to obtain National Board Certification and other equivalent programs of distinction.
7. Reimbursing the application fee for an educator who is accepted as a candidate for National Board Certification and other equivalent programs of distinction.
8. Providing appropriate time, funding and training for teachers to be mentors, resource colleagues and peer coaches to improve teaching and learning.
9. Establishing action research grants aimed at improving instruction.
10. Ensuring and monitoring a 2 percent set-aside of general education revenue for the purpose of providing staff development for school employees.
11. Including additional staff development funding for any new state and federal initiative.
12. Developing career options that permit personal and professional development and leadership opportunities designed by teachers while protecting contractual, retirement and other employment rights. Among these should be opportunities for:
  - A. *Extended leaves of absence*
  - B. *Sabbaticals*
  - C. *Part-time or shared-time assignments*
  - D. *Exchanges with districts and businesses*
  - E. *Peace Corps, VISTA or other public service options*

## V. Higher education

### Funding

#### Principles

Education Minnesota believes investing in public higher education is essential to ensure that Minnesotans will have the education and skills to fulfill future workforce needs. After years of neglect characterized by a steady decline in state appropriations to higher education, it is time to renew our commitment through (1) increased revenue, (2) a stable budget process for the state, and, (3) an increased investment in our public colleges and universities.

#### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Renewing Minnesota's commitment to public higher education through increased revenue and a stable budget process. This includes addressing the state's current appropriation approach which perpetuates the "high tuition-high aid" funding model.
2. Funding the backlog of Higher Education Asset Preservation and Renewal Account (HEAPR) request of both higher education systems.
3. Funding directed at providing relief for students adversely affected by COVID 19.
4. Supporting Minnesota State's budget requests.
5. Advocating for changes to the current "high tuition/high aid" model of funding.
6. Investing in infrastructure, technology and training to promote campus security.

### Financial aid and tuition

#### Principles

Education Minnesota supports family income based federal/state financial aid grants, loans and tax credits, while opposing any public money for private and for-profit colleges and universities.

#### Strategies

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Basing any state and federal financial aid grants, loans and tax credits on family income to make public higher education affordable to all citizens.

## **Instructional excellence**

### **Principles**

Education Minnesota supports a stable and credentialed faculty, protection of academic freedom and intellectual property, and faculty control of curriculum.

Education Minnesota supports legislative policy and action that eliminates barriers to quality education by addressing inequity and exclusion. We believe in cultural equity, having a diverse and qualified workforce, and in recruitment, retention and training efforts that focus on developing the capabilities of underrepresented groups working in and attending public higher education institutions.

### **Strategies**

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Creating clear guidelines for eligibility of high school students to take PSEO, concurrent enrollment or online post-secondary courses – ensuring rigor while promoting student success.
2. Attracting and maintaining the highest-quality education employees through competitive salaries, continually adjusted for inflation.
3. Promoting equity and diversity through workforce recruitment and retention.

## **Pensions and benefits**

### **Principles**

Education Minnesota believes in preserving and improving pensions and benefits to retain and attract the highest quality faculty.

### **Strategies**

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Protecting pension funds for pension purposes only.
2. Allowing the same access to the combined annuities program, whether higher education faculty participate in Individual Retirement Account Plan (IRAP) or in the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA).
3. Continuing progress toward equity in state contributions between TRA and IRAP.

## **Public sector unions**

### **Principles**

Education Minnesota believes all faculty have the right to organize and determine the terms and conditions of employment through the collective bargaining process.

### **Strategies**

Education Minnesota supports:

1. Protecting collective bargaining rights and enhancing working conditions for faculty.
2. Ensuring safe and healthy instructional spaces for faculty and students.



**THE VOICE FOR PROFESSIONAL  
EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS**

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*Education Minnesota is an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers,  
the National Education Association and AFL-CIO.*

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