

## AMSD Candidate Questionnaire 2004

The Association of Metropolitan School Districts worked with the Alliance for Student Achievement to develop a set of questions to ask legislative candidates during the fall campaign. AMSD Board Members are encouraged to share this questionnaire with your local parent and citizen groups and ask them to use it in candidate forums, debates, etc.

1. Unlike many other states, Minnesota's current education funding formula does not account for geographic, market-based labor cost differentials. Not unlike private businesses, Metropolitan school districts face significantly higher labor costs than their rural counterparts.

Do you support amending the education funding formula so that it recognizes labor cost differentials across the State?

2. Former Finance Commissioners John Gunyou and Jay Kiedrowski have written that for the first time in our state's history, the state's investment for both schools and colleges will go down for the next three years. (4/20, Star Tribune)

How will you ensure Minnesota invests in public education?

Who should be responsible for increased costs associated with all students meeting state and federal requirements?

3. We've been reading in the news about parents and others fundraising to provide basic funding for schools - money for crayons, paper and teacher salaries.

Specifically, what should an adequate public education include? Arts? Foreign language? Advanced Placement Courses? Gifted and talented? Technology?

How much should parents be expected to pay out-of-pocket for their children's public education?

4. The state recently provided local property tax relief by assuming full responsibility for funding the general education formula. This cost the state about \$1 billion a year. However, the legislature did not identify a permanent way to fund this commitment. As a result, we face a \$2 billion shortfall every two years.

What is your strategy to cover this ongoing shortfall?

How would you provide more stability to public education funding?

5. The Taxpayers League has asked candidates to sign a No New Taxes Pledge.

Have you signed the No New Taxes Pledge?

If revenues are not enhanced and, given the expected budget shortfall, what programs and services would you cut?

6. Currently, private and religious schools receive public funds for transportation, textbooks, counseling and special education.

Should private and religious schools be given additional public funds either directly or through tax credits?

Should all schools which accept public dollars be held to the same rules, mandates and expectations?

7. Traditionally, Minnesotans have believed public schools should be locally controlled and that communities should have the right to decide what their children learn. In recent years the federal and state Governments have exerted unprecedented control over K-12 education.

Do you believe it is appropriate for the federal government to dictate K-12 education policy to states and school districts?

What is the appropriate role for the state government in education?

In our district, what is your understanding of the most pressing issue facing our schools?

8. The Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCAs) tests are how Minnesota holds schools accountable and public perception is influenced by this single indicator. Yet the MCAs are not yet aligned with the new state standards and do not provide parents, teachers or students with information showing individual student growth.

How do we make the tests more meaningful for parents, students and teachers?

How should a school's success be measured?