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1626**

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Candidate endorsement questionnaire - St Cloud office

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10A

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Educator Pay

1. ESP living wage: Will you support legislation to ensure that all education support professionals earn a living wage of at least \$25 an hour?

Yes

2. Due to significantly below-market compensation for teachers, most school districts in Minnesota are having difficulty filling teaching jobs, and state colleges report a continued decline in the number of graduates from teacher preparation programs. Would you support creating a minimum salary for all licensed Minnesota teachers of \$60,000 a year and an \$80,000 minimum salary for licensed teachers with 10 years of experience and a master's degree?

Yes

Pensions

3. Will you support increasing state funding to ensure the financial sustainability of public pension funds?

Yes

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 that will help recruit and retain educators?

Yes

5. How will you support efforts to lower inequitable penalties in the Teachers Retirement Association in order to expand retirement options?

Efforts to lower inequitable penalties in the Teachers Retirement Association (TRA) and expand retirement options typically involve a combination of legislative advocacy, policy reforms, and stakeholder engagement. Those common strategies and efforts that

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might be undertaken are:

Legislative Advocacy: Proposing Bills: Advocates may work with legislators to propose bills that address inequitable penalties in the retirement system. These bills might aim to reduce penalties for early retirement, adjust benefit formulas, or provide more flexible retirement age options.

Lobbying: Teachers' unions, professional associations, and advocacy groups often lobby state legislators to support reforms that make retirement benefits more equitable.

Policy Reforms: Adjusting Benefit Formulas: Reforming the formulas used to calculate retirement benefits can help ensure that penalties for early retirement are fair and do not disproportionately affect certain groups of teachers.

Service Credit Adjustments: Policies that allow teachers to purchase additional service credits or receive credit for prior teaching experience can help mitigate penalties and provide more retirement options.

Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs): Implementing or enhancing COLAs can help ensure that retirement benefits keep pace with inflation, making retirement more viable for teachers.

Stakeholder Engagement: Teacher Surveys and Feedback: Collecting input from teachers about their retirement needs and challenges can help inform policy changes and ensure that reforms address the real issues faced by educators.

Public Awareness Campaigns: Raising awareness about the inequities in the retirement system through public campaigns can build support for reform efforts among the general public and policymakers.

Financial Education and Planning: Retirement Planning Resources: Providing teachers with resources and education about retirement planning can help them make informed decisions.

Part of the problem stems from the fund managers in the 1980's and 1990's. Fund managers made risky investments that caused some of the shortfall. Highly likely the reason why we are short on new teachers now. The biggest issue is that teachers have a two tiered retirement system, and early retirement penalties really eat into pensions. They have 82,000 in Plan and 69,000 retirees.

Health care

6. Do you support educators having access to a mandatory statewide health insurance pool, just like other state workers?

Yes

7. 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?

Yes

8. All Minnesotans deserve access to affordable health care and publicly managed plans like MN Care and Medicare are some of the most efficient plans out there. The legislature is currently seeking a federal waiver to expand MN Care to more residents. Do you support expanding all public health care programs to include more working people?

Yes

Education funding

9a. Reverse Minnesota's perpetual underfunding of education by significantly increasing the per-pupil funding formula.

Yes

9b. SPED cross subsidy: The state must fully fund special education costs instead of relying on school districts to pay for them.

Yes

9c. EL cross subsidy: Fully fund the costs districts pay to provide quality English learner programs and instruction.

Yes

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9d. Lower class sizes: Lower class sizes so teachers can give students more of the individual attention they need and deserve.

Yes

9e. Full-service community schools: Expand access to full-service community schools across the state.

Yes

9f. 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

9g. 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

9h. 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.

Yes

9i. Professional development: Provide professional development to all staff around cultural competency and trauma-responsive classrooms with aims of closing the discipline disparity gap.

Yes

9j. Education debt relief: Provide debt relief to retain teachers so they can afford to stay in the classroom.

Yes

Taxes/revenue

10. Would you commit to raising revenue to ensure the wealthiest corporations and richest households pay what they truly owe in taxes so every student, no matter what they look like or where they live, can attend a fully funded public school that prepares them to pursue their dreams?

Yes

11. 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. Considering your own experience and expertise, are there other progressive, equitable ways to raise state revenue that you would recommend the union consider supporting?

Yes

12. Fully funded schools require adequate and stable revenues. Will you oppose tax cuts and carve outs that lower tax collections or narrow the tax base?

Yes

13. A balanced tax code draws revenue from a mix of income, sales, and property taxes. Will you support policies that maintain both adequate funding and a sustainable balance between revenue sources?

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Yes

Higher education

14. Do you support increasing the state's direct investment in public higher education to significantly reduce institutions' reliance on tuition?

Yes

15. Will you support investments in capital bonding projects that preserve buildings, remodel classrooms and keep our technology assets current?

Yes

16. Do you support DEI efforts on our college campuses and universities?

Yes

17. What would you do, as a state legislator, to help with the cost of higher education?

Addressing the high cost of higher education requires a multifaceted approach involving policy changes, institutional reforms, and support mechanisms for students and families. Some strategies that can be considered:

Policy Reforms: Increase Public Funding: Governments can increase funding for public colleges and universities to reduce the financial burden on students. This can include direct funding to institutions and increased financial aid programs.

Tuition-Free or Reduced Tuition Programs: Implementing tuition-free or reduced tuition programs for community colleges and public universities can make higher education more accessible. Examples include the "College Promise" programs in various states.

Regulate Tuition Increases: Enacting policies that limit the rate at which tuition can increase can help keep higher education affordable.

Financial Aid and Scholarships: Expand Need-Based Aid: Increasing the availability of need-based financial aid can help lower-income students afford higher education.

Merit-Based Scholarships: Offering more merit-based scholarships can reward academic achievement and reduce the financial burden on students.

Simplify Financial Aid Applications: Simplifying the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process can make it easier for students to access financial aid.

Institutional Reforms: Cost Efficiency: Colleges and universities can implement cost-saving measures, such as reducing administrative expenses, optimizing resource allocation, and leveraging technology to lower operational costs. **Accelerated Degree Programs:** Offering accelerated degree programs that allow students to complete their education in a shorter time frame can reduce overall costs.

Online and Hybrid Learning: Expanding online and hybrid learning options can provide more affordable and flexible education opportunities.

Student Support Services: Financial Literacy Education: Providing students with financial literacy education can help them make informed decisions about loans, budgeting, and managing educational expenses. **Work-Study Programs:** Expanding work-study programs can provide students with opportunities to earn money while gaining valuable work experience.

Loan Forgiveness and Repayment Programs: Public Service Loan Forgiveness: Expanding and promoting loan forgiveness programs for graduates who work in public service or underserved areas can alleviate the burden of student debt. **Income-Driven Repayment Plans:** Offering and improving income-driven repayment plans can make loan repayment more manageable based on graduates' income levels.

Community and Employer Partnerships: Most important is Employer-Sponsored Education Benefits: Encouraging employers to offer education benefits, such as tuition reimbursement or scholarships, can help employees pursue higher education without incurring significant debt. **Community College Partnerships:** Strengthening partnerships between community colleges and four-year institutions can provide affordable pathways for students to complete their degrees.

Advocacy and Awareness: Public Awareness Campaigns: Raising awareness about the high cost of higher education and

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advocating for policy changes can build public support for reforms. Student and Parent Advocacy: Encouraging students and parents to advocate for affordable education policies can influence policymakers and drive change. By implementing these strategies, stakeholders can work towards making higher education more affordable and accessible for all students.

18. The North Star Promise is expected to result in an increase in enrollment on our campuses. Many of these students are projected to be disproportionately first-generation students and students from historically underserved communities. As a legislator, what would you do to ensure these students had the support they needed to be successful?

As a legislator, ensuring that first-generation students and students from historically underserved communities have the support they need to be successful in higher education requires a comprehensive approach. Here are several key actions I would advocate for:

- 1.Enhanced Academic Support Services: Tutoring and Mentoring Programs: Fund and expand tutoring and mentoring programs specifically designed for first-generation and underserved students. Peer mentoring and faculty mentoring can provide academic guidance and personal support. •Academic Advising: Increase the availability of academic advisors who are trained to understand the unique challenges faced by these students. Advisors can help with course selection, career planning, and navigating the college environment.
- 2.Financial Support:•Scholarships and Grants: Increase funding for scholarships and grants targeted at first-generation and underserved students to reduce financial barriers. •Emergency Financial Aid: Establish emergency financial aid funds to help students who encounter unexpected financial difficulties that could disrupt their education.
- 3.Comprehensive Orientation Programs:•First-Year Experience Programs: Develop comprehensive orientation and first-year experience programs that include workshops on study skills, time management, and navigating campus resources. •Cultural Competency Training: Provide cultural competency training for faculty, staff, and students to create an inclusive and supportive campus environment.
- 4.Support for Basic Needs: •Food and Housing Security: Ensure that students have access to food pantries, affordable housing options, and other basic needs support. Addressing food and housing insecurity is crucial for student success. •Health and Wellness Services: Expand access to mental health services, counseling, and wellness programs to support students' overall well-being.
- 5.Career Development and Internship Opportunities: •Career Services: Strengthen career services to provide career counseling, resume workshops, and job placement assistance. Focus on connecting students with internships and job opportunities. •Partnerships with Employers: Develop partnerships with local businesses and organizations to create internship and job opportunities for students, particularly those from underserved communities.
- 6.Community and Family Engagement:•Family Outreach Programs: Create programs that engage families in the college experience, providing them with information and resources to support their students. •Community Partnerships: Partner with community organizations to provide additional support and resources for students, such as mentorship programs and community-based scholarships.
- 7.Data Collection and Monitoring: •Track Student Outcomes: Implement systems to track the academic progress and outcomes of first-generation and underserved students. Use this data to identify areas where additional support is needed. •Continuous Improvement: Regularly assess the effectiveness of support programs and make data-driven adjustments to improve student success.
- 8.Advocacy and Policy Support: •Legislative Advocacy: Advocate for policies that support higher education access and success for first-generation and underserved students, such as increased funding for support services and financial aid. •Collaboration with Institutions: Work closely with colleges and universities to ensure they have the resources and support needed to implement effective programs for these students. By taking these actions, we can create a more supportive and inclusive environment that helps first-generation and underserved students thrive in higher education.

19. There are efforts to expand the North Star Promise to Minnesota's private colleges and universities. This would dramatically increase the amount of public money going to private institutions. Do you support the expansion of the North Star Promise to include private colleges and universities?

Yes

High-quality professional educators

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20. What will you do to help recruit and retain high-quality educators in our classrooms?

Recruiting and retaining high-quality educators is essential for ensuring a robust and effective education system. Here are several strategies that can be implemented to achieve this goal.

Recruitment Strategies: **Competitive Compensation and Benefits:** **Salary Increases:** Offer competitive salaries that reflect the importance of the teaching profession and are comparable to other professions requiring similar levels of education and expertise. **Comprehensive Benefits:** Provide comprehensive benefits packages, including health insurance, retirement plans, and other perks that make the teaching profession more attractive.

Incentives and Bonuses: **Signing Bonuses:** Offer signing bonuses for new teachers, especially in high-need areas such as STEM, special education, and underserved communities. **Loan Forgiveness Programs:** Implement or expand loan forgiveness programs for teachers who commit to working in high-need schools or subjects.

Pathways to Teaching: **Alternative Certification Programs:** Develop and promote alternative certification programs that allow individuals from other professions to transition into teaching. **Grow-Your-Own Programs:** Create "grow-your-own" programs that encourage high school students and paraprofessionals to pursue teaching careers, often with financial support for their education.

Marketing and Outreach: **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Launch public awareness campaigns to highlight the rewards and impact of a teaching career. **Recruitment Fairs and Partnerships:** Participate in job fairs and establish partnerships with universities and teacher preparation programs to recruit new graduates. **Retention Strategies**

Professional Development: **Ongoing Training:** Provide continuous professional development opportunities that allow teachers to grow in their careers and stay current with educational best practices. **Mentorship Programs:** Establish mentorship programs where experienced teachers support and guide new teachers through their first few years in the profession.

Supportive Work Environment: **Collaborative Culture:** Foster a collaborative and supportive school culture where teachers feel valued and part of a team. **Administrative Support:** Ensure that school administrators are supportive, approachable, and responsive to teachers' needs and concerns.

Work-Life Balance: **Reasonable Workloads:** Manage teacher workloads to prevent burnout, including reasonable class sizes and adequate planning time. **Flexible Scheduling:** Offer flexible scheduling options where possible, such as job-sharing or part-time positions.

Recognition and Advancement: **Recognition Programs:** Implement programs that recognize and reward outstanding teachers, such as Teacher of the Year awards or other accolades. **Career Advancement:** Create clear pathways for career advancement, such as opportunities to become lead teachers, instructional coaches, or administrators.

Teacher Autonomy: **Empower Teachers:** Give teachers more autonomy in their classrooms to innovate and tailor their teaching methods to meet the needs of their students. **Involvement in Decision-Making:** Involve teachers in school decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard in policies that affect their work.

Safe and Positive School Climate: **Safe Environment:** Ensure that schools are safe and conducive to learning, addressing issues such as bullying, violence, and inadequate facilities. **Positive Relationships:** Promote positive relationships among students, teachers, and staff to create a welcoming and inclusive school community.

Policy and Advocacy: **Legislative Support:** **Funding:** Advocate for increased funding for education to support higher salaries, better resources, and improved facilities. **Policy Reforms:** Support policy reforms that reduce bureaucratic burdens on teachers and allow them to focus more on teaching and less on administrative tasks.

Standardized testing

21. What individual or system-level decisions in education do you believe are appropriate to make based on standardized test scores?

Standardized test scores can provide valuable data for making informed decisions in education, but it's important to use them appropriately and in conjunction with other measures. **Avoiding Overemphasis:** Avoid placing too much emphasis on test scores alone, as this can lead to teaching to the test, narrowing of the curriculum, and increased stress for students and teachers.

Fairness and Equity: Ensure that decisions based on test scores are fair and equitable, and do not disproportionately disadvantage certain groups of students. By using standardized test scores thoughtfully and in combination with other data, educators and policymakers can make more informed and balanced decisions that support student learning and school improvement.

Honesty in Education

22. Most educators believe students should have access to a wide range of age-appropriate books that include relatable characters and situations that reflect the diversity of Minnesota families. However, certain politicians and big money groups are trying to remove books from school libraries across America, particularly books with LGBTQ+ characters or those that deal with racism in America. How should Minnesota protect its students' freedom to read?

Protecting students' freedom to read is essential for fostering a well-rounded, inclusive, and critical-thinking educational environment. Here are several strategies Minnesota can employ to safeguard this freedom: Legislative Measures. Enact Strong Library Bill of Rights: State Legislation: Pass state laws that explicitly protect the right to access diverse books and materials in school libraries, ensuring that censorship based on content, viewpoint, or the identity of characters is prohibited. Anti-Censorship Policies: Implement policies that prevent the removal of books based on ideological or political pressures. Inclusive Education Mandates: Curriculum Requirements: Mandate that school curricula include diverse perspectives, including those of LGBTQ+ individuals and discussions on racism, to ensure that students receive a comprehensive education. Diversity Standards: Establish standards for diversity and inclusion in educational materials and library collections. Community and School-Level Actions. Empower Librarians and Educators: Professional Autonomy: Support the professional autonomy of librarians and educators to select books and materials based on educational value and the needs of their students. Training and Resources: Provide training and resources for librarians and educators on how to handle challenges to books and materials, including legal and procedural support. Transparent Processes: Ensure that the process for challenging and reviewing books is transparent, fair, and includes opportunities for public input. Advocacy and Public Engagement. Engage the Community: Public Awareness Campaigns: Launch public awareness campaigns to educate the community about the importance of intellectual freedom and the dangers of censorship. Partnerships with Organizations: Collaborate with Advocacy Groups: Partner with organizations such as the American Library Association (ALA), the National Coalition Against Censorship (NCAC), and local LGBTQ+ and civil rights groups to support efforts to protect intellectual freedom. Legal Support: Work with legal organizations to provide support and representation in cases where book removals are challenged. Monitor and Report: Track Challenges: Monitor and report instances of book challenges and removals to identify patterns and respond proactively. Annual Reports: Publish annual reports on the state of intellectual freedom in schools, including data on book challenges and removals. By implementing these strategies, Minnesota can create a robust framework to protect students' freedom to read and ensure that school libraries remain places of diverse and inclusive learning.

23. Education Minnesota believes all students should have the freedom to feel safe and welcome in their public school, no matter what they look like, where they're from, how they pray, transgender or not. Do you agree?

Yes

24. Students bring many needs into their public schools, but our union believes they all deserve the freedom to grow with the help of support for their mental health and with lessons in how to recognize and control their emotions, which is sometimes called social-emotional learning. Do you support increasing support for students' mental and emotional health in public schools?

Yes

Time to Teach

MoveDuplicate Settings Delete 25. 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

26. Will you support legislation that protects an educator's prep time so it can't be used for meetings or having to sub for colleagues?

Yes

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27. Do you support paid, dedicated time outside of student contact time for special education teachers to complete their paperwork and attend required meetings?

Yes

School safety

28. Creating incentives for school administrators to enforce districts' codes of conduct without bias and/or creating accountability measures for those who don't?

Yes

29. Increase reporting and transparency in worksite safety when reporting physical injuries and emotional trauma in the workplace?

Yes

Union Rights

30. The ability of workers to come together in union and bargain collectively has been vital for reducing wage gaps by gender, building the middle class, and limiting wealth inequality in Minnesota. Do you support expanding and strengthening workers' rights to join a union and bargain collectively?

Yes

31. Will you oppose any legislation or constitutional amendments that would weaken collective bargaining rights, the right to organize, the right to strike, automatic payment of union dues, union access and activities at worksites or other anti-union policies backed by anti-worker groups?

Yes

32. How will you support unions as a state legislator?

Supporting unions as a state legislator involves advocating for policies and initiatives that protect workers' rights, promote fair labor practices, and strengthen the ability of unions to organize and negotiate. There are several ways to support unions:

- Legislative Actions.** Pro-Union Legislation: Right to Organize: Introduce or support legislation that protects the right of workers to organize and join unions without fear of retaliation. Collective Bargaining: Advocate for laws that strengthen collective bargaining rights, ensuring that unions can effectively negotiate on behalf of their members. Fair Labor Standards: Minimum Wage: Support raising the minimum wage to a living wage, ensuring that all workers earn enough to support themselves and their families.
- Workplace Safety:** Promote and enforce strong workplace safety standards to protect workers from hazardous conditions.
- Anti-Retaliation Protections:** Whistleblower Protections: Strengthen protections for workers who report unsafe or unfair labor practices.
- Anti-Discrimination Laws:** Ensure robust anti-discrimination laws that protect workers from being targeted for their union activities.
- Policy Initiatives.** Support for Public Sector Unions: Public Employee Rights: Advocate for the rights of public sector employees to organize and bargain collectively. Funding for Public Services: Ensure adequate funding for public services to support the jobs and working conditions of public sector employees. Labor Education and Training: Workforce Development: Invest in workforce development programs that provide training and education for workers, helping them to advance in their careers. Union Apprenticeships: Promote and support union apprenticeship programs that provide high-quality training and job opportunities.
- Community and Advocacy.** Engage with Unions: Regular Meetings: Hold regular meetings with union leaders and members to understand their concerns and priorities. Public Support: Publicly support union actions and campaigns, such as strikes or rallies, to show solidarity with workers. Coalition Building: Alliances with Advocacy Groups: Build alliances with labor advocacy groups, community organizations, and other stakeholders to create a broad coalition in support of workers' rights. Oversight and Accountability: Conduct oversight to ensure that labor laws are being properly enforced and that workers' complaints are addressed promptly and fairly. Annual Reports: Advocate for annual reports on the state of labor in your state, including the impact

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of unions on wages, benefits, and working conditions. Personal Commitment. Lead by Example: Union-Friendly Practices: Ensure that your own office and campaign staff are treated fairly, with good working conditions and the right to organize. Union Membership: If applicable, join a union yourself to demonstrate your commitment to the labor movement. By taking these actions, you can help create a supportive environment for unions and contribute to the advancement of workers' rights and fair labor practices in your state.

Privatization

33. Do you oppose state tax credits for private K-12 education tuition and expenses?

No

34. 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

35. Will you support a moratorium on new charter schools until such changes are made?

Yes

Your role as a legislator

Have you visited a public school in your district in the past year? If so, which one? What were your observations from your visit? How will that experience inform your work as a legislator? If not, when did you last visit a school? Would you like us to help arrange a visit?

I have not visited a school in my rural community, yet. I have made contact with Aitkin County school superintendent and expect to build on that relationship so I can communicate our specific needs to other Representatives and congress and help write proposals to advance rural needs.

What have you done to become informed on issues relating to public education? What organizations and individuals do you go to for your information?

I obtain most of my information by print publications and special issue publications. I go to people I know that are or have been teachers and principals in public schools. As I said above, I recently made contact with our county school commissioner and plan to expand on that relationship along with other habitat and conservation organizations.

How do you envision working with Education Minnesota if you are elected/re-elected? If you disagree with us on an issue, how will you communicate that?

I believe change happens one conversation at a time. I also believe education is the foundation of our future. If I were to disagree on an issue, my professional communication skills come to surface. Always start with a compliment of encouragement. Then address the issue with thoughtful consideration for all stakeholders and succinctly present my position with its' cost and benefits comparisons.

If elected/re-elected, how will you balance competing priorities that might exist between Education Minnesota and other education groups?

Balancing competing priorities between Education Minnesota (the state's teachers' union) and other education groups requires a nuanced approach that considers the diverse needs and perspectives of all stakeholders involved in the education system. Here are some strategies to achieve this balance: Stakeholder Engagement Inclusive Dialogue: Facilitate regular meetings and open forums with representatives from Education Minnesota, school administrators, parent-teacher associations, student groups, and other education advocacy organizations. This ensures that all voices are heard and considered in the decision-making process.

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Advisory Committees: Establish advisory committees that include members from various education groups to provide input on policy proposals and legislative initiatives. Data-Driven Decision Making Research and Analysis: Use data and research to inform policy decisions. This includes analyzing the impact of proposed policies on student outcomes, teacher effectiveness, and overall school performance. Pilot Programs: Implement pilot programs to test new initiatives on a smaller scale before rolling them out statewide. This allows for adjustments based on feedback and results. Transparent Communication Clear Objectives: Clearly articulate the goals and objectives of proposed legislation or policy changes. Ensure that all stakeholders understand the intended outcomes and the rationale behind decisions. Regular Updates: Provide regular updates on the progress of legislative initiatives and policy implementations. Transparency helps build trust and keeps all parties informed.4. Compromise and Collaboration Negotiation: Encourage negotiation and compromise between competing groups. Identify common ground and work towards solutions that address the core concerns of each group. Shared Goals: Focus on shared goals, such as improving student achievement, enhancing teacher professional development, and ensuring equitable access to quality education. Equitable Resource Allocation Funding Priorities: Ensure that funding is allocated in a way that addresses the needs of both teachers and students. This includes investing in teacher salaries and benefits, as well as resources for classroom instruction and student support services. Targeted Support: Provide targeted support for schools and districts that face unique challenges, such as those in low-income or rural areas. Legislative Framework Balanced Legislation: Craft legislation that balances the interests of teachers, administrators, students, and parents. This might involve creating policies that support teacher autonomy and professional growth while also holding schools accountable for student performance. Flexibility: Build flexibility into legislation to allow for adjustments based on feedback and changing circumstances. This can help address concerns as they arise and ensure that policies remain effective over time.