

## 2008 Alliance for Student Achievement Candidate Questions

Minnesota's Constitution: "... it is the duty of the legislature to establish a general and uniform system of public schools. The legislature shall make such provisions by taxation or otherwise as will secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state."

Learn whether candidates intend to honor the Minnesota Constitution. Ask candidates these questions, and share the card with family and friends. For more information and background, go to [www.allianceforstudentachievement.org](http://www.allianceforstudentachievement.org).

The Alliance for Student Achievement is a coalition of Minnesota's education organizations.

### **1. Do you support overhauling and sufficiently funding Minnesota's education funding system as ~~outlined in the New Minnesota Miracle proposal~~ and will you support the establishment of a timeline to phase in the new funding system?**

- To catch up school funding to inflation, Minnesota school districts would need an additional \$1,087.00 per pupil in the 2008-09 school year. (Association of Metropolitan School Districts)
- Minnesota ranks 46th in the nation in growth in per-pupil spending K-12. (Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government)
- In 2007 alone, Minnesota school districts spent \$548 million from their general classroom funds to subsidize state and federal unfunded mandates for special education.
- Ninety percent of Minnesota school districts have voter-approved operating levies subsidizing their general school operating funds. (MN Department of Education)

### **2. Do you support vouchers or expanded taxpayer subsidies for non-public schools?**

*If you support vouchers or expanded taxpayer subsidies, do you believe all schools that accept public funds should be held to the same rules and expectations?*

- Religious and private schools currently receive public funds for transportation, textbooks, counseling and special education.
- Minnesota is the only state in the nation that provides both tax deductions and tax credits that subsidize religious schools.

### **3. What strategies and investments would you support to ensure all children come to school prepared to learn?**

- The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis has concluded that one of the best returns on our spending on education comes during the first five years of a child's life. Studies show we get back as much as \$9 for every \$1 spent on early childhood education and as much as \$12-\$16 dollars for the children most at risk. (Art Rolnick's research, Federal Reserve Bank, Minneapolis)
- Less than 50 percent of Minnesota's kindergartners begin school fully prepared to learn. (Minnesota Department of Education)
- There is tremendous inequity in access to free full-day, every-day kindergarten in Minnesota. In 2003-04, 59% of Minneapolis kindergartners and 72% of St. Paul kindergartners attended full-day, every-day kindergarten. Only 10% of kindergartners in the remaining metro-area school districts were enrolled in full-day, every-day kindergarten. The corresponding figure for Greater Minnesota was 27%. (Humphrey Institute report based on MN Department of Education Data)
- Less than 1 percent of the state's budget is spent on programs (Early Childhood Family Education, Head Start and quality child care) that help get kids prepared to learn.

## **2008 Alliance for Student Achievement Candidate Questions (continued)**

### **4. Will you support the establishment of a growth model to measure the academic progress of individual students and schools?**

- Under the current State system of reporting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) to meet NCLB requirements, schools are assessed by a single metric (MCA II) to meet the standard.
- One high stakes test should not determine a school's public stature and cannot adequately assess its educational success.

### **5. Students have had fewer opportunities to receive a comprehensive education (such as the arts) because of budget cuts and state and federal mandates. How would you ensure the availability of a comprehensive education so students can compete globally?**

- Ninety percent of Minnesota school districts have voter-approved operating levies subsidizing their general school operating funds. (MN Department of Education)
- Minnesota received a grade of "C", ranking 34<sup>th</sup> in the nation, from Education Week in its analysis of the overall technology for students, teachers and administrators. "Technology Counts 2008: STEM," Education Week, March 27, 2008, Vol. 24, No. 30.
- School fees paid by Minnesota families rose 45 percent from 2002 to 2005. (MN Department of Education Survey)