

St. Paul Mayoral Questionnaire

Mayoral candidates were asked to answer the following Yes/No Questions

The Saint Paul Federation of Teachers believes that parents, educators, and community members and students should be at the center of decision making around educational policy. However, there has been an increase in money from out of state millionaires with a vested interest in pursuing a corporate education reform agenda and removing local voices from discussions about our children’s education. Although the mayor does not impact education policy directly, the mayor can be a strong ally in creating the schools Saint Paul Children Deserve.

Will you and your campaign reject contributions and independent expenditures from wealthy donors who live outside our community and from market-based education reform organizations?

Candidate	Yes	No	Undecided	Declined to Answer
Melvin Carter	X			
Elizabeth Dickinson	X			
Tom Goldstein	X			
Pat Harris	X			
Dai Thao	X			

Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) is currently facing a budget shortfall. This is a major obstacle for expanding initiatives like restorative practices that help us address the racial equity gap. In addition to identifying new funding mechanisms, SPFT believes we must ask for support from residents for our public schools in the form of a funding referendum increase in 2018.

Will you as a board member endorse, support, and campaign for this referendum increase?

Candidate	Yes	No	Undecided	Declined to Answer
Melvin Carter	X			
Elizabeth Dickinson	X			
Tom Goldstein	X			
Pat Harris	X			
Dai Thao	X			

The Twin Cities has been named one of the best places to live, yet many of our residents - particularly in communities of color - struggle to make ends meet, often working two or more jobs and struggling with little or no benefits. Many labor and community organizations have championed a \$15 minimum wage and earned safe and sick time, issues that affect SPFT staff, parents, and community members.

Will you and your campaign support and endorse a \$15 minimum wage, rejecting carve-outs and tip penalties, and earned safe and sick time for all workers?

Candidate	Yes	No	Undecided	Declined to Answer
Melvin Carter	X			
Elizabeth Dickinson	X			
Tom Goldstein	X			
Pat Harris	X			
Dai Thao	X			

Do you support collective bargaining for public sector unions?

Candidate	Yes	No	Undecided	Declined to Answer
Melvin Carter	X			
Elizabeth Dickinson	X			
Tom Goldstein	X			
Pat Harris	X			
Dai Thao	X			

Will you abide by your political party endorsement?

Candidate	Yes	No	Undecided	Declined to Answer
Melvin Carter	X			
Elizabeth Dickinson	X			
Tom Goldstein			X	
Pat Harris				X
Dai Thao		X		

Mayoral Candidates were also asked to respond to the following essay-style questions.

1. What is the value of public education for you and for the city of Saint Paul?

Melvin Carter: I'm a proud graduate of Saint Paul Public Schools and an even prouder father of currently enrolled SPPS students. SPPS prepared me well for success, and I've worked hard to ensure that today's students have the same opportunity.

Education is a cornerstone of my campaign because I believe it's the most important factor in determining our future success as a city. The greatest challenges we face – poverty, joblessness, crime – are symptomatic of our failure as a city, state, and nation to invest in public education.

From my collaboration with schools, stakeholders, and SPFT to found the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood to my current position as the executive director of the Minnesota Children's Cabinet, I've made education my focus for over a decade. This focus is rooted in my values: I believe a public school system that serves students, supports families, and uplifts education professionals is essential to our future as a city, and I'll bring those values to the mayor's office.

Elizabeth Dickinson: Public education is the foundation of a civilized society, and the ladder to expanded life opportunities for students. It offers the opportunity to associate, work, and learn from people from all walks of life in true democratic fashion. It gives recent immigrants and their children a way to learn about and belong to St. Paul, and it gives people who've been here for longer generations a way to expand their awareness of the greater world. It can be a social, cultural, environmental and economic driver for our city.

Tom Goldstein: I believe that the purpose and value of public education is to nurture the development of critical thinkers—in a safe and supportive environment—who will become lifelong learners and have the personal and professional skills to positively impact their community and the society at large. It is also about teaching respect and appreciation for cultural and ideological differences; learning to collaborate in problem solving; challenging bias, prejudice, and oppression; and encouraging civic engagement. While private education has its place in society, public schools do the majority of educating, counseling, training, and solving of intractable problems facing those children with special needs or dealing with seemingly insurmountable challenges in their home environment. Unlike private schools, public education is expected to address the needs of every student in the community no matter what their circumstances or aptitude. Public education is often the only safety net on which families can rely. Imagine the alternative.

Pat Harris: Simply put, the single most important tool for assuring Saint Paul's future is public education. If we do it well, we will have the leadership, the workforce and the talent to respond to the opportunities and challenges that emerge. Without strong public education, we will have difficulty succeeding as a community. We must continually invest in public education in order to ensure a bright future for our community. I have three children at Expo Elementary, with my fourth starting this fall. Laura and I are extremely active at Expo and SPPS. We were active with the Saint Paul Public Schools

Foundation, where we chaired the final Investing in Student Success Breakfast, raising the most funds in its history. As the only Mayor in our history with a background in school finance, I will not only value public education, but I will live it every single day.

Dai Thao: To me, public education has always meant opportunity. Coming to Saint Paul at the age of eight as a refugee, public school was my ticket to a better life—it has made me who I am today. Across Minnesota and in Saint Paul, we are seeing a rise in racial disparity, this comes back to education. High-quality public education must be available from Pre-K all the way through high school. The gap between qualified candidates and open jobs can be closed by investing in education today.

2. SPPS has a diverse student population, with over 75% of students identifying as People of Color. Parents and educators agree that in order for students to be successful, we must have culturally competent curricula and educators that reflect the diversity of our city. People of Color graduating college often choose professions other than teaching – in part due to the prohibitive costs of higher education. The scarcity of educators of color means that many are often quickly recruited into administrative positions, leaving our classrooms lacking the diversity our students need.

Data shows that our city and our schools are becoming more segregated. Segregation and poverty are harmful to all of us, especially our students and their families. How will you as mayor work to desegregate our city and our schools?

Melvin Carter: One of the greatest contributors to this segregation is access to affordable housing options; as mayor, I'd invest in affordable housing and mixed income communities to reduce areas of concentrated poverty. This serves two purposes: to ensure that every Saint Paul child can see and aspire to be like a doctor, teacher, or carpenter in their neighborhood, and to ensure that no one in our city can ignore the realities of their struggling neighbors.

I'll also support public investment in art, infrastructure and businesses that celebrate our diverse populations, and I'll intentionally create space and opportunity for intercultural exchange and commerce.

I also support the development and implementation of culturally competent and inclusive curricula, which SPFT is already leading on; it will not only help break down barriers in our classrooms, but will also mitigate the worst effects of existing segregation and communicate to all SPPS students that our history is as diverse as we are.

Elizabeth Dickinson: School choice means parents and students can choose where to receive their education. As mayor, it's my job to make sure all areas of the city receive fair investment and care so equitably distributed amenities are available city-wide, not just in wealthier, whiter neighborhoods. That includes investment in parks and rec and after-school programming, and ensuring that economic development, jobs, affordable housing and transit are available in all areas of the city.

Tom Goldstein: Saint Paul has been a segregated city for far too long, and the structural imbalance that has resulted from unchecked poverty and lack of opportunity within communities of color has led to similar imbalances in our school system. We will not effectively desegregate our schools until we effectively desegregate the community, which requires a multi-lateral approach of greater investments in affordable housing, job training, job creation, access to capital for small businesses, increased wages, improved

transit, early childhood education and after-school programming, and affordable access to the internet so that all households can participate in digital learning and the digital environment.

It also means a citywide racial equity policy that dramatically increases the hiring of staff and teachers within our communities of color and providing the necessary supports so that every child has equal opportunities in our schools while we continue to struggle with the legacy of separate but unequal educational opportunities.

Pat Harris: First, it starts in our own house. The City's workforce must be reflective of our community, and I commit to achieving this. The Mayor's office will be among the most diverse in history and we will continually reach out to communities of color across the City, not merely hearing them, but listening, learning, and acting. For twelve years, I was the City Council's leader on affordable housing, providing thousands of units citywide, including controversial projects in my own neighborhood – one of which was the largest affordable housing project in over 15 years. I believe in equal access to all services and I have executed this philosophy as a Councilmember and nonprofit leader. I am also proposing a bold Access to Capital program, where targeted neighborhoods will receive up to \$100 million of capital, providing needed jobs across the City.

Dai Thao: One of the largest factors behind school segregation is the increasing number of charter school programs and private school vouchers. These programs remove dollars from public schools and promote segregation. School choice also promotes segregation; students from wealthier families, who can afford to send their kid across town, clump to specific schools which forces the district to increase funding to some schools while decreasing funding from others. This results in poorly funded neighborhood schools which predominantly serve students of color and students with low opportunity.

As Mayor, I will advocate for the equal funding of schools and increased funding for early childhood education. By providing early education we can tackle disparities before they form, build community wealth and lower crime rates.

3. SPPS is entering a transitional moment. A new Superintendent will be hired prior to this November's elections. Many parents, educators and students have raised concerns regarding the relationship between the board and the Superintendent.

The previous Mayor chose to side with the previous Superintendent and against the Board of Education, creating an environment that made it difficult for the board to fulfill their role. How will you publicly demonstrate your support for the democratically elected Board of Education as they provide direction for SPPS and the Superintendent?

Melvin Carter: As a councilmember, I worked hard on education initiatives in close partnership with SPFT and the School Board. From founding the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood to co-chairing the 2012 referendum campaign, I built strong working relationships with our School Board members. I've continued this relationship beyond my tenure on the City Council, serving on several board members' campaign committees. Engaging with their campaigns – and by extension, the voters who elected them – reminds me that a mayor is accountable to the same voters that elect the city's board of education.

I am honored to have the support of a majority of our School Board members, including board chair Jon Schumacher, vice chair Zuki Ellis, Jeannie Foster, Steve Marchese, and Mary Vanderwert. This broad support illustrates the strong working relationship I'll enjoy with our School Board members from Day One. I'm honored by their belief that I'll be a strong partner in their efforts to ensure every Saint Paul child receives a high-quality public education.

Elizabeth Dickinson: I will demonstrate my support for SPPS by supporting their choice for the new Superintendent. I will make it plain that while I have an open door policy to the superintendent and to the board equally, that I will not interfere in policy decisions made by the board in good faith, that promote a quality education for all, and a safe, productive learning environment.

Tom Goldstein: The role of the mayor is to partner with the school board in helping to make Saint Paul Public Schools the most innovative, cutting-edge, transparent, and successful organization of its kind. It also means collaborating with the school district to promote a citywide commitment to education that involves key partnerships for every school with local businesses, nonprofits, and labor organizations, as well as expanding relationships with higher education institutions like that which exists between Hamline University and Hamline Elementary.

As mayor, I would assist the school district in lobbying for necessary funding in both the public and private sector. I would also promote finding ways to utilize schools as community centers and locating resources for more after-school programming. Finally, I would reprioritize city spending so that we can help provide the necessary funding for early education/pre-K so that the high cost of child care does not continue to burden so many families.

Pat Harris: Our elected Board of Education is the governing body of SPPS, with the people of Saint Paul as the ultimate authority. As such, moving SPPS forward starts and ends with Board of Education and our neighbors. I would maintain a formal, regular and substantive dialogue with the Board, working together to ensure that the city is a partner in the education our children and the future of our community.

Dai Thao: I will always be very clear about my support for the Board of Education and I believe it is important to remember that the Board of Education is supposed to be determining the direction of our public schools going forward, which I hope is more clearly understood by the next Superintendent (while I also hope there is more support for teachers who want to voice concerns or make suggestions). I support the Board's goals of strengthening support for public education (including finding ways to increase funding to public schools), upholding the SPPS Gender Inclusion Policy, rejecting market-based reforms that take students and dollars out of public schools, and as mayor would certainly commit to assisting the Board in increasing community engagement and partnership opportunities that boost awareness and commitment to public schools. I believe to be an effective advocate for public education in our city we need to get more community members involved in the conversation, while it is very important to me that the Board of Education and teachers have an ally in the Mayor's Office who shares the common values and commitment to public education that its members have.

4. Across the Twin Cities, more and more students are choosing to “opt-out” of standardized testing. Recent reporting by MPR, MinnPost and the Saint Paul Pioneer Press suggest that testing is costly, time consuming and does not provide useful information for educators.

What is the appropriate use of data from standardized test and interim assessments? What changes would you recommend? Please comment on the use of standardized tests and interim assessments in high stakes decisions such as school closure and staffing. How will you support parents and educators in the “opt-out” movement?

Melvin Carter: Standardized tests are poor predictors of a student's prospects for future success. My understanding of this issue is informed by my professional experience, but also by my experiences as a student: we were tested so much that some of us participated in an 'opt out' of our own by adopting the “ABACADABA” method (alternating those letters in response to each question, instead of providing thoughtful answers). This was not because we didn't take our education seriously; on the contrary, it was because we felt the testing process didn't take us seriously.

In a city as diverse as ours, where so many of our students speak a language other than English at home, tests are an even more unfair and biased measure of student success. Further, they offer no instructional value if teachers can't receive their students' scores in real time.

I support limiting standardized tests as much as possible, working with teachers and parents to identify fair test instruments, and using the generated data as a flashlight, and not a hammer, to equip teachers and parents with real time information to help them identify concepts to focus on with their children. As Mayor, I will use my influence with our community, school board and superintendent to advance these goals.

Elizabeth Dickinson: The use of standardized tests and interim assessments is a blunt instrument to evaluate students' progress, and should in no way be used to determine school closures. Standardized tests like MAC should be used sparingly to give an overview of broad trends and college-readiness. Success in life is not determined by tests-it's determined by continuous daily assessments that measure current progress against prior achievement.

Tom Goldstein: I believe that we need to have metrics in place that will effectively evaluate each child's progress, but they need to be focused on a personalized learning strategy rather than high-stakes tests which often just measure the ability to take tests rather than demonstrate critical thinking and skills. As such, I am receptive to the opt-out movement and would support the development of other robust assessments for evaluating progress that ultimately could replace standardized tests.

With many colleges and universities now giving less emphasis to SAT and ACT scores, testing must be more carefully scrutinized to show that it is a reliable indicator of a child's progress that outweighs the many negatives that test-taking brings to schools. I believe teachers generally know best how their students are doing, so we need to make sure they have the time and resources to make interventions as needed.

Pat Harris: I will work with SPFT to achieve an acceptable policy on this matter. Our teachers are in the classroom every day and understand the needs of our students. I have long history of questioning the value of standardized testing, including involvement with the national advocacy group, FairTest. Standardized testing often marginalizes underrepresented communities and families with lower incomes. The policy should be evaluated immediately.

Dain Thao: Standardized testing and assessments are not accurate measures of student growth or proficiency, and should not be used for high stakes decisions. I do not support closing public schools—before we even think about that, we should reallocate District funds from schools not subject to public oversight. I will be a vocal supporter of the “opt-out” movement, as well as an advocate for growth-based learning. Arbitrary proficiency measurement harms the success of our students by disregarding their ability and individual needs. SPPS must strive to educate the whole child, and my budgets will reflect this support for strong public education efforts that will put teachers in a better place to reach their potential, just as learning environments need to help our students reach theirs.

5. Brain research shows the importance of stimulation starting at birth. Quality day care and pre-school programs staffed by trained educators are critical to helping children to be school ready.

- a. **How will you partner with SPFT to insure that all families have access to quality Pre-K programs in our city?**
- b. **New research shows that many Minnesotans live in child-care deserts, without adequate access to childcare options for their children. How will you use your role as mayor to provide additional options early learning options for parents?**

Melvin Carter:

(a) As the executive director of the Children’s Cabinet, I’ve spent the past two years working to expand access to Pre-K programs across our state. I’ve worked alongside Governor Dayton to implement All-Day Kindergarten, to fund and implement voluntary Pre-K, and to build and advocate a 2017 proposed budget that makes over \$200M in new investments in young children and their families, including Pre-K, child care assistance, home visiting, and rental assistance.

Our work is built on the understanding that 95% of brain development occurs before age 5, and that there is no better public investment than ensuring our children get the start they need to succeed.

As Mayor, I’ll continue my focus on our youngest Saint Paulites by:

- Advocating for Pre-K and other early childhood funding at the State Capitol.
- Helping to blend and integrate state and federal early childhood funding streams.
- Activating our libraries and rec centers as early learning hubs, and as a location where childcare providers can fulfill their continuing education requirements.
- Working with our school board and SPFT to build and advocate for the strongest referendum renewal possible, and helping to ensure it reflects our value of investing in young children.

(b) Across the city and state, child care providers are struggling; stuck between high rates and low wages that too often keep both providers and the families they serve in poverty. Many of the centers who serve our neediest populations have closed, and only a few higher education institutions still offer early childhood training and credentialing programs. Simultaneously, we need and continue to ask more and more of our providers - increasing their costs and barriers to entry - to ensure the quality and consistency we know will serve children best.

The workforce challenges in childcare mirrors the current teacher shortage, and underscores the effects of chronic underinvestment in children and families over the past several decades.

In order to address this problem, I will:

- Work with our child care community as we build Pre-K funding to avoid putting critical providers out of business.
- Foster better curriculum alignment and communication between schools and childcare providers to best prepare both our students for our schools, and our schools for our students.
- Utilize family resource centers - like the ones the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood have established in Jackson and Maxfield Elementary Schools - to help families access the public supports they need.

Elizabeth Dickinson:

- (a) I support Councilmember Noecker's work with the Wilder Foundation and others to establish an affordable pilot Pre-K program for the approximately 10,000 or so children who fall in this age range. Not only will this provide foundational instruction and day-care relief for working parents, but it will provide an opportunity to align with the kindergarten curriculum and potentially provide a pipeline of St. Paul kindergarten-ready students.
- (b) I support existing pre-K programs as well as expansion of ECFE programs. The more students we can funnel into pre-K, the more students we will retain and the more successful learners we have when parents are engaged.

Tom Goldstein:

- (a) As noted in my answer to question #4 above, the city needs to help create funding for all-day Pre-K programming so that the burden of child care does not negatively impact children & families.
- (b) Please see above answer and my answer to question #4. We have the buildings; let's find the funding. And let's end the constant shuffling of ECFE programming based on available buildings rather than where the needs are greatest within the community.

Pat Harris:

- (a) I believe strongly in access to quality Pre-K programs in our community and as Mayor, I will commit to achieving universal Pre-K in Saint Paul. I will not merely give speeches on it, however. We must act immediately. As a public finance professional with almost 20 years of experience in school and municipal finance, I am uniquely positioned to achieve this goal. I will get it done for Saint Paul.
- (b) Access to child care is critical to Saint Paul's future. As a parent of four young children, I know the financial costs of providing childcare. While Laura and I have been able to manage through these years, I know there are thousands of parents in Saint Paul – many single parent, single wage families – who struggle to obtain childcare. This is a matter of equity. Quality child care must be available to all who need it. I pledge at the city and state levels to achieve this. Recognizing the lack of

support at the Minnesota legislature for critical investments in childcare, I am willing to take on this responsibility at the city level to identify funding sources for universal childcare in Saint Paul. As Mayor, I would be uniquely positioned to make it happen.

Dai Thao:

- (a) Quality Pre-K will be the defining factor in resolving education inequity. I support a full day Pre-K program for all 4-year-olds in St. Paul. Students will experience common academic routine and instructional strategies to prepare them for elementary school. I will lean on SPFT for recommendations to promote and successfully work with the School Board and new Superintendent to ensure universal Pre-K, and will be a vocal advocate at the Capitol for pre-K funding. There is not a reliable study out there that doesn't show a direct correlation between a good pre-K education and better educational outcomes in the future, which impact economic outcomes beyond that.
- (b) Nearly 70 percent of Minnesota's population lives in a "child care desert", and nearly two-thirds of people in the Twin Cities live in a child care desert (roughly 1.2 million people live in ZIP codes meeting the qualifications of such in St. Paul and Minneapolis). For busy working parents, having affordable child care near their home or place of employment is extremely important, yet currently most parents – especially lower income families – have few options to choose from. Areas with dense populations of lower-income families are generally already hit with a lack of allocated resources, and this certainly includes child care/pre-K options. On top of the need for more child care options. While we as a city talk a lot about investing in infrastructure that improves our city, it is important to include in these investment efforts what is needed to make childcare more accessible and affordable for more families. Currently, child care or preschool costs between 13-17% of the median family income in Minnesota, which is far too high to be an affordable option for most, which has gotten us to the point where people are now paying almost 30 percent more for the same care than families were just 15 years ago. As mayor, I would be a loud advocate in our city AND at the state legislature for investing more state dollars towards these efforts (the "child care desert" is not just a St. Paul or Metro problem, it impacts our entire state) and making child care more affordable. I am a believer in universal pre-K across our state, and hope that our city and state can make all-day pre-K a realistic option for more families. Families deserve multiple options when considering childcare and early education, while data shows how important early education is in relation to success in the subsequent years of a child's education

6. Saint Paul is home to diverse communities, including many newcomers to the United States. SPPS plays a large role in helping newcomers feel welcome in their new city, while still valuing and retaining strong cultural ties.

How will you use your position as mayor to prioritize support for English Learners, especially for newcomers and their families? How will you work to protect immigrant students and their families in the face of a hostile federal government?

Melvin Carter: One of my top priorities as Mayor will be to ensure that all residents can enjoy confidence and trust in our local police. I know firsthand how devastating it is to feel targeted by the police, so I will work tirelessly to eliminate racial profiling and maintain Saint Paul's status as a Sanctuary City. No amount of federal money is worth sacrificing the trust that must exist between the community and law enforcement.

Beyond that, we must view diversity as an asset to maximize, not a liability to mitigate. ELL is a perfect example: in the face of overwhelming evidence that bilingual skills provide a boost in socio-emotional development, we still approach bilingualism as a deficit, not an advantage and an opportunity. If we treat bilingual skills as an asset other children would benefit from, we'll create a more inclusive climate while building stronger global citizenship skills for all our students.

I see ELL as a metaphor for the city's broader framing challenge around diversity. We call our diversity our greatest strength, but we haven't even attempted to take full advantage of the full set of opportunities our diversity creates. As mayor, I'll make that my focus.

Elizabeth Dickinson: I attended the SPPS board meeting where cuts in ELL staffing (from 273-171 over 12 years) was highlighted. Given the high numbers of immigrant students in our schools, particularly the recent immigration of Karen families whose education overseas was interrupted in refugee camps (and who are not always literate in their home language and so are additionally educationally challenged when they arrive), the loss of ELL teachers is particularly troubling. The basis for all successful learning is having a good foundation in English. I support hiring additional ELL staffing asap.

I was part of the group who worked on the 2004 Police/INS Separation ordinance. I fully support the separation of local police duties from immigration work and will do everything I can not only to protect immigrant students and families from a hostile federal government, but will also do everything I can to provide safety and affirm their value publicly to all of us in St. Paul. We will not cooperate with attempts to divide families, nor will we succumb to threats from the federal government. We are a nation of immigrants and will stand strong together.

Tom Goldstein: At one time, we were all immigrants, refugees, and newcomers—so as mayor I would expect all law-abiding residents to be treated fairly regardless of their status. That means standing with all of our diverse communities whenever they are in crisis and keeping in place those rules that ensure local law enforcement does not become the tool for draconian enforcement of immigration laws by the federal government that seek to deport families simply because they have come to our country fleeing tragedy or hoping to find a better life. We cannot let the hatred and divisiveness that the “Trump effect” has unleashed in this country lessen our commitment to being a welcoming place to all those who seek refuge here—and under my administration the city of Saint Paul will remain a beacon of hope.

Pat Harris: As a City Councilmember, I authored and passed Saint Paul's separation ordinance, now known as the “Sanctuary City” ordinance – drafting it, taking it to meetings across Saint Paul, and earning the votes to pass it in 2004. This ordinance assures that immigrants- including children- in Saint Paul can seek help without fear that their immigration status will be questioned.

As Mayor, I would champion ordinances to provide for livable wages, non-discrimination, affordable housing, collective bargaining, and more. My entire life has been dedicated to social justice issues and this certainly applies to our new Americans.

I was proud to kick off my campaign at the Darul Uloom Islamic Center in Dayton's Bluff and I am proud to stand side by side with our new Americans as we move Saint Paul forward.

Dai Thao: English is not my native language, I know what it is like to be an English Learner in the Saint Paul school system. As Mayor, I will support and allocate funding for programs for people of all ages to help them learn the English language. Saint Paul is home to new refugees every year. It is our responsibility to invite them to their new home and provide each child with the means and assistance for success. Too many children are often forced into being the translator for their families, which is sometimes far too much to put on a child.

I am proud to have authored a bill on the Council banning Donald Trump from Saint Paul, when he first wanted to ban our Muslim brothers and sisters from this nation. I will continue to fight against a hostile Federal government—Saint Paul will remain a sanctuary city, we will continue to fight preemption at every turn, and we will go out of our way as to not comply with ICE requests to turn our own citizens. I'll personally walk to the streets of St. Paul to find ways to make up for any federal funding withheld from our city because we protect our own.

7. SPFS and the City of Saint Paul presently do business with institutions that engage in practices that destabilize our community through predatory lending practices, investing in private prisons, and corporate tax avoidance. Additionally, TIF Districts (Tax Increment Financing) have been created in a way that disproportionately enriches corporations and big banks. Currently 30% of properties, including many of the most valuable pieces of land in the city, pay no taxes to the city of Saint Paul, placing a heavy burden on our families. These practices lead to economic injustice and racial discrimination.

- a. **How will you use your role as mayor to make sure that the largest corporations in Saint Paul pay their fair share?**
- b. **Predatory lending practices increase foreclosure rates, placing our families and students at risk. As mayor, will you join with SPFT in calling on banks to mitigate the impacts of foreclosures during the school year? What steps will you take to distance the city of Saint Paul from institutions that participate in predatory lending?**
- c. **Will you work with SPFT to ask Saint Paul's wealthiest non-profits to pay their fair share and institute a Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Program that benefits our public schools?**
- d. **As mayor, will you commit to working with SPFT to seek the revenue we need to have racially equitable schools?**

Melvin Carter:

(a) I believe the first step to ensuring corporations pay their fair share is to reexamine our process as a city for evaluating and approving TIF districts and other public subsidies. Our city cannot buy into the notion that tax subsidies are required to get companies to invest in Saint Paul; this short-changes the value of our local schools, workforce and public services, all of which are attractive for investment.

The test for subsidies should be whether that project will enhance the community as a whole (revitalize underinvested areas, provide living wage jobs, hire and contract locally, etc). These projects should also abide by agreements to deliver what they promise and to uphold labor and workforce agreements. These agreements must

include real, transparent accountability, tying awarded funds to a developer's performance against the promises made to secure the subsidy in the first place and including clawback provisions which return funding to the city if agreements aren't upheld.

- (b) Predatory lending destroys families and communities, and I will do everything I can as mayor to oppose such institutions. I would gladly join the SPFT in calling on banks to avoid foreclosures that would disrupt a child's school year. Beyond that, the first steps Saint Paul can take against predatory lending institutions is to stop doing business, entering into contracts with, or giving any other favorable treatment toward these institutions; shifting our business to locally based banks that will work with us to help expand our local workforce; and ensuring the institutions lending to our citizens have a stake in the community they serve. As Mayor, I'll create an Office of Financial Empowerment within city government; increase our investment in local banks, and partner with those same institutions to improve the financial position of Saint Paul families through efforts to provide financial education and counseling, increase the number of residents who are banked, and create short-term lending products to provide responsible alternatives to pawn shops and same day lenders.
- (c) I will, absolutely. Pursuing a PILOT program that addresses our systemic budgetary shortfalls will be a top priority for me as mayor. There is precedent for successful implementation: Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston, and Pittsburgh all have similar programs that I'm currently studying for ideas and lessons to be learned.

In order to do a PILOT program right, I believe the city must focus on large nonprofits, like hospitals and universities, who have multimillion-dollar budgets and utilize a large amount of public services. In the experience of other cities, these large nonprofits want to be viewed as responsible community partners, and thus are the most likely to pay into a PILOT system. I'll focus on these entities, rather than small nonprofits and churches. I'll also decline to pursue local government entities - like SPPS - with the knowledge that placing the burden on our schools, who already struggle to make ends meet, amounts to a harmful shell game that places the burden on schools to raise levies because the city fears raising property taxes.

That said, it's worth noting that state government occupies a significant portion of nontaxable land in Saint Paul. With this in mind, I'll continue to lobby the state for our fair share of Local Government Aid to cover that inherent deficit.

- (d) Yes - SPFT has led the way on developing best practices for racial equity. in an educational context, and I look forward to following your lead.

Elizabeth Dickinson:

- (a) I don't support giving out TIF like candy, and believe we should return to the original 1970s 'but/for' standard. TIF should be reserved for projects that demonstrate clear need on behalf of demonstrable social value, like green building practices and affordable housing.
- (b) Yes, I will. We will not bank or partner with institutions that practice predatory lending.
- (c) Yes.

(d) Yes.

Tom Goldstein:

(a) Nearly \$25 million in annual property tax payments do not make it into the city treasury because they are going to pay off TIF bonds. As mayor, I will sharply curtail the use of TIF so that it is only granted for projects that address genuine blight in the community and can pass a strict “but for” test. I would also reduce the length of time that TIF districts can be in place and deny extensions for these districts as has been a routine practice in St. Paul. In addition, I would end the disinvestment in neighborhoods that has occurred by granting TIF for projects like the Penfield, the Macy’s building, the Saints ballpark, and now being contemplated even for the Ford site.

(b) Yes. As someone who has worked on community reinvestment issues, aided homeowners in foreclosure matters, and supported responsible banking ordinances, I would prioritize the city pursuing contracts with our local community banks for necessary banking services so that we no longer do business with large corporate banks that engage in predatory lending and have a less-than-responsible track record in community reinvestment and granting access to capital.

(c) Yes, absolutely!

(d) Yes!

Pat Harris:

(a) Our taxation system in Saint Paul and Minnesota must provide for truly equitable revenue generation. Organizations and individuals must pay their fair share. As Mayor, I will work to ensure that Saint Paul not only has the most equitable system, but that the system is equitably enforced. Valuation determinations impact our neighborhoods, and the Mayor must be cognizant and responsive to major shifts in valuations that undermine the quality of our neighborhoods.

(b) Yes. Banks have discretion in how they manage foreclosures. I will not only support the work SPFT is doing in this area, I will meet with leadership of banks to seek policies that recognize the needs of families. I understand financial institutions and their policies and I am uniquely positioned to be a leader in this area. The City needs to be bold in its selection of financial institutions with whom to conduct business including evaluation of their lending policies within our city. I have deep knowledge in this area and can move Saint Paul to immediate action.

(c) I am a strong proponent of non-profit institutions paying their fair share of taxes for the services they receive - including public education. I am deeply disappointed that institutions recently came together to eliminate fair share payments for certain city services. I will immediately explore PILOT programs and other mechanisms such as service fees so that our schools – and our future – are not negatively impacted by this shift of tax policies on non-profit property owners. My municipal finance background will get it done

(d) Yes. With almost 20 years of municipal and school finance experience, I will put my background to use for Saint Paul’s kids and I commit to working with SPFT to get us there. I will not simply give speeches- will do the work. The time is now and my

experience and background will get it done. I have worked with school officials all over the country – being active in MASBO, MSBA, ASBO, NSBA, GFOA and so many more. I can and will make a difference for our schools

Dai Thao:

- (a)** As a member of the City Council, I helped push forward the responsible banking measures that were signed into law in 2014 because I believe that in order for the city to make legitimate attempts to promote equity, the banking institutions used by the city must clearly demonstrate they take into consideration impacts on communities in their regular practices, which includes equitable lending and accessibility measures. Additionally, I supported the creation of the citizen-led Responsible Banking Committee, which will review bank proposals to monitor equity measures. As mayor, I would support strengthening our efforts to promote responsible banking and make sure our city does business with banks and businesses that care about equity and providing services that actually help St. Paul communities. We should never stifle the success of large businesses in St. Paul or discourage large companies from doing business in St. Paul, but if a large corporation benefits so much from doing business in St. Paul that smaller businesses can't compete and are closing their doors, that business has an obligation to be paying people a living wage. As someone who championed the Earned Sick and Safe Time measures that passed here in St. Paul, I also believe corporate excuses for not providing reasonable benefits or intentionally scheduling people just under full-time hours to avoid providing benefits are practices that need to come to an end.
- (b)** As mayor, I would proudly stand with SPFT to call on banks to mitigate the impacts of foreclosures during the school year. Changing residencies is a transition that can be quite stressful in any situation, especially on children, but the level of stress and other negative impacts is clearly even greater when a family is involuntarily forced from their home because they are unable to keep on top of their mortgage payment. Banks also need to be held accountable for the predatory subprime loans that led to the housing crisis and many foreclosures in our city, and we need to be putting in safety measures here in our city to make it harder for banks to offer these predatory loans (since our state and federal governments seem to be doing nothing about it). Many of the banks who have a history of predatory lending tend to hone in on lower-income neighborhoods when pushing such loans, which directly contributes to making our efforts to promote equity more difficult. This means that vacant houses are sometimes congested in certain neighborhoods, leading to crime or lower property values (meaning it is harder to be able to sell your house, and less money goes to our schools because property values are lower and there are less people paying property taxes because they've been forced out of their homes). Being forced from one's home is traumatic and hurts families, but the impacts are especially felt by our youngest citizens.

As far as predatory lending and banking practices go, I also support regulations that would limit the amount of someone's check that can be taken as a fee by a check-cashing institution, and would also support limiting the rate by which "payday loan" institutions are able to charge individuals.

- (c)** When 30% of the property in the city are tax-exempt, we clearly need to reexamine the ways in which we can get more properties back on the taxable roll. While much of that 30% are public institutions - state government buildings or colleges - many of these properties are also non-profits. If we're going to raise the funds needed in our

city to provide better, more efficient services, we absolutely need to explore ways to get some of the more well-off nonprofits in our city to help us invest in our city, and this includes looking at ways to get some of them into a PILOT program. Courts have challenged existing PILOT programs in other cities, so other options need to also be explored, possibly special tax districts to get more properties on the tax roll at a reduced rate.

- (d) Yes, I commit to working with SPFT and following SPFT guidance as how to best serve our students. Equitable education will be a budget priority and I will lead on well-funded community schools in the timeline to desegregate our public schools.

With control over the budget and in conjunction with Tax Advisory committees, I will propose a necessary increase to fund the education our kids need and deserve. Funding high-quality, equitable schools is more than just the right thing to do or an important budget priority, it is the most effective investment we can make in the future of our city. For Minnesota to be equitable, Saint Paul must lead.

8. Teachers want to do their best and have many great ideas and solutions for ensuring all students can be successful but their voices are often not listened to.

What are your ideas to help teachers, in partnership with parents and community, have a voice in education policy so that their professional expertise and deep knowledge of each learner can best benefit our students?

Melvin Carter: The Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood began as a response to teachers, who told me their biggest challenges as educators were the external, poverty-related factors affecting their students' success: homelessness and transiency (moving 3x in a school year), lack of health insurance (needing inhaler or glasses and not being able to afford them), and other challenges beyond the traditional purview of the classroom. In an era of "education reformers" looking to charters for solutions, we intentionally planted the SPPN as an investment in our public schools. I believe strongly that public schools are the solution, not the problem, and the SPPN reflected that value. Ultimately, the visionary, holistic perspective of teachers set the tone for the Promise Neighborhood. As a candidate, I've been fortunate enough to maintain regular contact with SPFT leadership, as well as individual teachers, EAs, and other educators in my personal network for constant, well-informed feedback on education policy and the challenges we face. This perspective has been central to my thinking, and to the proposals I've crafted in the past six months.

I've spent my career connecting system-based expertise with community-based wisdom, and I will continue to lead in that way as Mayor. I will facilitate proactive discussions to engage residents and teachers around critical issues impacting our public schools and continue to push for better data, including data disaggregation, to ensure we are serving all of our students equitably

Elizabeth Dickinson: Teachers should be empowered to advocate for policies that support students' learning at the legislature and elsewhere. It's crazy when teachers are shut out of education policy. Who knows best what works in the classroom but the people who work there everyday?

Tom Goldstein: From the time I first ran for school board in 2005, I have been stressing the need to build strong relationships with local government, parents, residents, and the

business, labor, and faith communities, thus ensuring that there is a shared sense of purpose and commitment to education throughout the city.

As mayor, I would promote the importance of every school having community partners and mentors invested in their students, that we decentralize administrative control over local schools, and that we exhort all local higher ed institutions to pursue partnerships with St. Paul schools like that between Hamline University and Hamline Elementary.

No one person has all the answers; that's why we need as many knowledgeable voices around the table as we can find. As mayor, one of my highest priorities will be helping to bring people together around our schools and leveraging city dollars to aid education. People before Politics.

Pat Harris: I believe strongly in working with teachers to develop policy as it applies to the city's support for education. Teachers are in the classroom every day, they know our students, and they know what it takes for our schools to succeed. I would maintain a regular dialogue with SPFT and appoint a specific City staff member in the Mayor's office to coordinate directly with teachers to bring the full authority of the City to a true partnership for our schools. I also have the unique ability to bridge the information gap between our public schools and our business community, and I would bring key businesses to the table on a regular basis to learn from our teachers and grow our schools together.

Dai Thao: As mayor, I would be a vocal advocate for teachers and public schools at the Capitol and everywhere I go. In order to do that, the only effective route would be to speak regularly with teachers and the Board of Education to make sure the efforts I'm promoting are actually the solutions to the problems teachers face in the classroom. I will never shy away from speaking about the need to promote equity in our education system, and that more state dollars need to be put into our schools if all our city's children are going to have a chance to succeed. I'm a deep believer in grassroots community organizing, so I know the power in people coming together for a common goal and would never be able to accomplish what needs to be done without constant, direct communication with educators. We owe it to our children, teachers, faculty, and communities to further prioritize education as a city.