

2018-20 SPFT Elections

This year, the following offices are up for election:

- Vice President
- Treasurer
- Director of Non-Licensed Staff

Additionally, half of the Executive Board (9 seats) are also up for election.

The candidates listed alphabetically on the front and back of this sheet have filed petitions for nomination. Please vote and have your voice heard!

Name: Robyn Asher
School: Como Senior
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I have been a biology teacher at Como Park Senior for 18 years. My experience at Como also includes being the AVID Coordinator/ teacher, and co-teaching with both ELL and Sped teachers. I was a member of our Site Team (when we had one) and a science department chair.

As an executive board member, I will work for improved transparency of decision-making and open communication with members. High school perspectives in contract negotiations will have more of a vote.

Name: Diedra Carlson
School: JJ Hill
Office: Vice President



Bio: Public school teacher since 2000. Most of that time (15) in Saint Paul Public Schools in Crossroads Montessori, Boys Totem Town and currently JJ Hill Montessori, where I teach 1, 2, 3 grade.

A certified Members Rights Advocate: I, II and III through Education Minnesota. An effective building Steward for SPFT for over 10 years. An Executive Board member for many years. Researched and assisted in creating contractual language regarding overnight field trips.

I solve problems. I am reflective. I listen. I am smart. I know stuff. I am the Education Minnesota Human Rights Award Recipient for 2017.

Name: Stephen Collins
School: Central High School
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I have been a proud social worker and union member at Central High School for the past 16 years. My unique role in the building allows me to understand the collaborative relationships between teachers and support staff, our collective impact, and the ways in which our union can support and represent us all.

As a board member, I will prioritize communication between union leadership and our members, procedural transparency, and reflective practice. I look forward to advocating and contributing within SPFT.

Name: Pete Grebner
School: 360 Colborne
Office: Executive Board



Bio: After spending over 20 years teaching chemistry at Como Park Sr High, I am now better known as the "Schoology Guy" in SPPS.

I have been a member of SPFT for 24 years, most of those spent as a building steward. I have been a member of the Executive Board for the past several years and a member of the contract bargaining team for licensed staff the past two contracts. I have worked extremely hard to build a reputation of trustworthiness and honesty with my colleagues that I value above all else. I will continue to put in the time and effort to make our local a strong one.

Name: Bernetta Green
School: Eastern Heights
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I teach Fifth grade at Eastern Heights Elementary. I have been a SPPS teacher for 20 years. I love basketball, traveling, reading, and spending time with my family. I am loyal and have a strong sense of community. Some of the skills that make me a valuable leader at SPFT are my organizational, collaborative, technology, and leadership skills. My experiences as a SPFT Executive Board member, SPPS graduate, a SPFT ER&D facilitator, and former CAT member make me worthy of continuing to represent the members of SPFT.

Name: Gilbert Hale Jr.
School: Groveland
Office: Director of Non-Licensed Staff



Bio: I have worked in education for the past 27 years, serving in the capacity of teacher for grades K-12, curriculum director, assistant principal, charter school director, and currently behavior specialist at Groveland Park elementary school for 3 years. I started as a sub in the district. I have seen some positives reforms, however, I witnessed how our unlicensed staff have been treated poorly over the years. I believe the support staff is the backbone for successful classroom learning. As the Director of staffing, I could help bridge the teachers and support staff, to work in unison for the betterment of student learning.

Name: Fallon Henderson
School: Maxfield
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I can be a valuable leader at SPFT because I have had extensive experiences working with people in conflict situations. In the last six years, I have worked at Maxfield Elementary as a behavior TA, EDL coordinator, and most recently as the Restorative Justice Lead. All of these positions require me to solve problems. All of these positions require me to resolve conflict among adults, conflict among students, and conflict among adults and students. I am seen among staff at Maxfield as a positive leader and often called upon to help teachers and administration lead circles to build community, circles to resolve conflict, and circles to restore harm.

Name: Brian Hodge-Rice
School: Adams
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I am Brian Hodge-Rice, a third-grade teacher at Adams Spanish Immersion. I have worked at Adams for a total of nine years. I also student taught with SPPS at Cherokee Heights.

I am running to be an SPFT executive board member to fight for the schools our students, staff, families, and St. Paul community deserve. During the last round of negotiations, I was a strike captain at Adams and feel passionate about requiring meaningful change. From serving on our leadership equity team to our PTO I understand how to listen closely and advocate fiercely for true reform.

Name: Steve Jents
School: Central
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I have been a teacher at Central High School for five years. I feel as though our union can be bettered by increasing transparency in the contract action/negotiation processes as well as improving communications between SPFT Leadership and the rank-and-file member who make SPFT what it is. Simply put, I'm ready to put the "T" back in SPFT.

Name: Sarah Johnson
School: Four Seasons
Office: Executive Board



Bio: A veteran educator of 22 years, I am a coach at Four Seasons A+ Elementary. My involvement in SPFT includes facilitating professional development courses, helping develop and deliver the Parent Teacher Home Visit training, serving as a delegate to both state and national conventions, lobbying, marching, door knocking, etc. I have served two previous terms on the Executive Board.

In my many roles in SPPS and SPFT, I have the privilege of listening to educators across the district. Serving on the Executive Board provides the opportunity to share those perspectives and ideas with union leadership. I hope you will re-elect me to the Executive Board.

Name: Peter Kvamme
School: Como Senior
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I currently serve as the Technology Integration Specialist at Como Park Senior High. Since starting with SPPS in 2009, I have worked in multiple positions that have given me a unique insight into the district and its various stakeholders. I diligently keep myself informed about what is happening in both SPPS and SPFT, and I am committed to helping my colleagues be more educated about union issues. I felt privileged to help with strike preparations this year, and I would be honored to continue to elevate these efforts by serving on the Executive Board.

Name: Jaclyn Meyer Larson
School: Como Senior
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I have been a classroom teacher at Como Park High School for eight years, teaching social studies. In addition to classroom teacher I will be adding Licensed School Counselor to my resume beginning in May. Because I understand both roles of teacher and school counselor it is my goal as executive board member to have clear and consistent communication, transparency, and pursue systemic change. I will communicate the teacher perspective as well as the school counselor perspective. I have had opportunity to see our job as educators through two different lenses and will use those experiences to bridge gaps.

Name: Yasmin Muridi
School: Four Seasons
Office: Director of Non-Licensed Staff



Bio: My name is Yasmin Muridi, and I'm a Bilingual Educational Assistant. I have worked for the last five years at Four Seasons. If you don't know me yet, you will. I want you to vote for me. Why? You're right, I would ask myself the same question. I am a strong and committed EA. I was on the bargaining team, negotiating our new contracts for teachers, EAs, and SCSPs. Bargaining was an amazing experience because I met so many strong people who have supported me in improving my ability to represent my peers.

Name: Ellen Olsen
School: Focus Beyond
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I've been a sign language interpreter and a proud SPFT member for 18 years. I've served locally as steward and on the Executive Board. I'm currently SPFT's Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, an Education Minnesota Governing Board member, and an NEA Education Support Professional Director at Large.

Public education faces unprecedented attacks that we have not seen in our lifetimes. While I have to dial back a few commitments due to family concerns, I remain dedicated to our proactive, creative work on behalf of SPFT's members, students, families and our greater community.

Name: Sharon Overlien
School: Jackson
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I enjoy spending time with colleagues as we support children in the teaching field. I am a kindergarten teacher and have been in the district for 24 years. It has been fun and rewarding to help facilitate the Beginning Reading Instruction course work at SPFT. I have been one of the building stewards for the past five years and look forward to helping our families, students and colleagues achieve further excellence in education as I look for opportunities to grow and learn each year.

Name: Brian Pearson
School: Murray
Office: Executive Board



Name: Kaye Thompson Peters
School: Central
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I am a long-time active member and former E Board member who has a sense of my building and good relationships with members at other buildings. I have many years of experience at union organizing and with the CAT Team.

Name: Sylvia Perez
School: Crossroads
Office: Director of Non-Licensed Staff



Bio: SPSS employee 34 years – Cultural Specialist. Working in SPSS has allowed me to work at many levels starting with Teaching Assistant, Educational Assistant, Clerk 1, Clerk Typist II, ALC Site Leader, and SCSP. I have served on the SPFT Executive Board for 5 years and the following Executive Board committees: SCSP Bargaining Team (7 yrs.), Policy (1 yr), Employee review (1 yr), Screening (1 yr), Social (1 yr), and Elections (1 yr). I've also served on the Education MN Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee (1) and been a Latino Council for Latin Advancement Executive Board member (5yr). EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANTS' and SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SCHOOL PROFESSIONALS' VOICES MATTER!

Name: Stephanie Pignato
School: Phalen Lake
Office: Executive Board



Bio: My name is Stephanie Pignato. I am a Pre-Kindergarten teacher with 31 years of teaching experience. I have been a union steward for 25 years, served as Social Committee Chair for the past 10 years, and have been a member of various Union committees including: PAR, contract negotiations, PIC and CAT. I have been on our Executive Board for over 17 years. I am committed to promoting excellence in our profession. I am a strong advocate for maintaining our collective bargaining, and providing support and representation to our members.

Name: Rebecca Randall
School: BridgeView
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I have worked for SPSS for 10 years. I have neem at BridgeView for the entire time. I am a LPN/EA2. I work with Special Ed and students whom are medically fragile. I also am on the bargaining team. I feel like I learned a lot during negotiations. I would like to see changes made for LPN's and EA's/Health Assistance in our contract.

Name: Kari Rise
School: Highland Park Senior
Office: Executive Board



Bio: Hello Colleagues. My name is Kari Rise, and I have been an SPFT member and classroom teacher at Highland Park Senior High School for 21 years. I am a proud mother of a son who graduated from Como Park High School, Murray Junior High School, and St. Anthony Park Elementary School, who has now chosen to work in education as well. I am passionate about quality public schools and supporting teaches and staff as they work with our young citizens. I believe in equity, safety, transparent communication, fairness, and career-long growth.

Name: Erica Schatzlein
School: Nokomis
Office: Vice President



Bio: I am an EL teacher at Nokomis Montessori. I'm currently serving as Vice President of SPFT, and ask for your vote to continue my work. I am passionate about protecting members' and students' working conditions. Educators must always be a part of making decisions in the district; I will advocate for this as Vice President. My experience includes serving on the Executive Board, bargaining the last three contracts, working with the TIGER team, and helping lead the ELL PIC. I've worked in SPSS for 14 years.

Name: Razia Shariff
School: Capitol Hill
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I am in my 5th year of teaching, and currently teach 3rd grade at Capitol Hill. I started my second career in elementary education because I realized just how much I loved talking to kids about good books at the bookstore that I managed. I continually develop my base of knowledge with interesting professional development subjects, including environmental studies, English learners, social emotional learning, economics, and literature. I believe I would bring a unique perspective to the Executive Board, being an educator of color, a recent graduate into our field, a dedicated Saint Paul resident, and a passionate union advocate.

Name: Sue Snyder
School: Humboldt
Office: Treasurer



Bio: Greetings SPFT! I am a sign language interpreter at Humboldt and your current SPFT treasurer. While interpreting math is something that brings me joy, it is my inquisitive nature that makes me a great fit for your treasurer. I ask questions about your money/member money through the budgeting process and through the year. Please support me in another term as your SPFT treasurer. Thank you and please ask me questions too!

Name: R. Lee Staggs
School: Harding
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I bring a depth of experience within SPSS and a dedication to advocating for our students, staff, and schools. I have been employed by the district for over 20 years, first as an EA, and finally as a licensed teacher. My job descriptions have included classroom teacher (currently at Harding HS), ALC program coordinator, EL and CTE teacher, and summer school instructor. I have served on the CAT team and have been an advocate for SPFT when reached by the press on several occasions. I believe my commitment to seeking equitable solutions and my breadth of experience positions me well for a place on our Executive Board.

Name: Beth Swanberg
School: Highland Park Middle
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I teach Musical Production and Choir at Highland Park Middle. I've been in the district for six years. I'm on the Leadership Team at Highland. I worked as a canvasser, having conversations with members since last summer. I have been active with the TIGER Team and served on the E Board since December.

Name: Thomas Totushek
School: Open World Learning
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I am running for the Executive Board of SPFT because in my 15 years as a STEM teacher in Saint Paul I have grown a great deal professionally and feel ready to take on a leadership position in SPFT if elected. I consider myself a competent, capable person that is passionate about creating better schools for all kids, a clear communicator, and a pragmatist who is results oriented. I understand that sometimes incremental improvement is necessary, while other times paradigm change is. I have served as a building steward for many years and am recently National Board Certified.

Name: Leah VanDassor
School: Highland Park Middle
Office: Executive Board



Bio: I have been an English teacher at Highland Park Middle School since I started teaching in SPSS in 1996. Throughout my time in St. Paul I have been active with SPFT as a steward and CAT member. In addition, I have participated on the last two teacher bargaining teams, am a founding member of the TIGER team, and am on the PIC committee. As a good listener, I am able to foster relationships with people even when we disagree. My goal is to be a voice and advocate for middle schools on the Executive Board.

