

2019 SPFE Public BOE Candidate Questionnaire

Candidate Omar Sayd was invited to participate, but did not submit a completed questionnaire. A completed questionnaire is a requirement for further screening and consideration for endorsement.

Candidates Amin Omar and Brian Sanders have stated they are withdrawing from the race.

Director Jon Schumacher has decided not to seek re-election.

Please limit the following questions to a yes or no response.

1. The Saint Paul Federation of Educators 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 removing local voices from discussions about our children’s education.

- a. **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
CHAUNTYL ALLEN	X	
ZUKI ELLIS	X	
JESSICA KOPP	X	
STEVE MARCHESE	X	
MARY VANDERWERT	X	
RYAN WILLIAMS	X	

2. Despite recent increases, public education statewide is severely underfunded, and has not kept pace with inflation. Communities have increasingly been called on to make up the lack of funding by passing levies that increase property taxes for homeowners, while wealthy corporations continue to receive tax cuts – allowing them to benefit from our communities without contributing to them. h

- a. **Will you as endorse, support, and campaign on increasing revenue that will go directly to public education funding?**

CANDIDATE	YES	NO
CHAUNTYL ALLEN	X	
ZUKI ELLIS	X	
JESSICA KOPP	X	
STEVE MARCHESE	X	
MARY VANDERWERT	X	
RYAN WILLIAMS	X	

3. SPFE members have indicated that they do not want to participate in Q-Comp (Quality Compensation). The core components of Q-Comp include: performance pay and salary schedule reform, teacher evaluation, and job-embedded professional development. Each Q-Comp plan must include all of the core components. The implementation of Q-Comp requires performance pay to be based on standardized test scores. This funding and terms are dependent on action by the state legislature.

- a. **Would you support moving the funding and capacity put into Tim Pawlenty’s failed teacher merit pay scheme commonly called q-comp, into equitable funding for all Minnesota districts general budget?**

CANDIDATE	YES	NO
CHAUNTYL ALLEN	X	
ZUKI ELLIS	X	
JESSICA KOPP	X	
STEVE MARCHESE	X	
MARY VANDERWERT	X	
RYAN WILLIAMS	X	

4. **Do you support collective bargaining for public sector unions?**

CANDIDATE	YES	NO
CHAUNTYL ALLEN	X	
ZUKI ELLIS	X	
JESSICA KOPP	X	
STEVE MARCHESE	X	
MARY VANDERWERT	X	
RYAN WILLIAMS	X	

Please limit your response to 150 words or fewer for each part of the questions below.

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

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: Public school, specifically St. Paul Public schools, has been central to my life. It gave me foundational education as a student, and has been a place where I have been able to support youth, especially those who need a strong and caring advocate. For the district as a whole, it should be a place where all kids can feel safe so they can learn and be ready to flourish as adults. Historically, the education system is not set up to benefit the majority of its population, who are minority and immigrant students. At the moment, the district still carries on this tradition, failing to address the full scale of kids’ needs; this is especially detrimental to the educational environment of these minority and immigrant students. With vision and action, we can turn this around, truly achieve the goals of public schools, and service minority students.

ZUKI ELLIS: I am a graduate of Saint Paul Public Schools, my older children have attended public schools and my youngest son currently attends SPPS. I also graduated from a public university, Metropolitan State. I had great opportunities of discovery within public education. St. Paul is the city that raised me and public education has and will continue to have a positive impact on the city. Public education has opened doors for me, and I want that opportunity for all students in St Paul.

JESSICA KOPP: Public education, for me, has always been a place to learn and connect – whether as a student, teacher, or parent. Public education is also a promise we make to the kids of this city that says we are committed to their future - it requires us to show up for and invest in not just the kids we know and love but the kids we will never know who all the same will take our places as workers, leaders, and dreamers.

Public education prepares kids for the opportunities that await them, readies them to take their shot, to imagine and build a community and world that might just be out of our sightline but is vivid and beautiful to them. It's our responsibility to build and evolve the system so it works for every student in St. Paul, no exceptions.

STEVE MARCHESE: I am the direct beneficiary of investments made in public education. As a first generation college student, but for public education, I would not be running for school board, working as a lawyer and raising my family in St. Paul. Public education is THE bedrock of our community – the main engine for our children to bring about the hope of a better life and the basis from which our city's economic and cultural future flows. Public education also is where we teach our children to be lifelong learners, respect the cultural and linguistic differences that make us unique, and learn values basic to a democratic society. If St. Paul is to continue to be a thriving city, it needs a functional, thriving public education system.

MARY VANDERWERT: I believe that educating our children is the most important thing any community does. Children must be provided the knowledge and skills they need to grow into contributing and productive members of the community as adults. That is our job as educators. When our children are strong and healthy and learning, our whole community becomes stronger, more innovative, more productive and safer. Strong, effective public schools are critical to the quality of life in any city.

RYAN WILLIAMS: I love being an educator. The biggest value of education in Saint Paul is for all of us to give students the opportunities that we might have missed. I was born and raised in Minnesota, however as a student my application for an internship at the state capital legislates page program was rejected. I worked with a few refugee students living in Saint Paul to complete their applications to the program, all students were accepted into the program. As educators we can learn from our errors and failures to facilitate student success.

2. An endorsement from SPFE is only given to candidates that show they are a champion for public education. We do not endorse in all races.

a. **What are your direct connections to SPPS, SPFE, and/or public education?**

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN I have been an Education Assistant with SPPS for 11 years total (six years currently, and five years after I got out of high school). In these years I have worked in a variety of schools, including Central, JJ Hill, Ramsey, Como High School, and Randolph Heights and numerous others through being a coordinator through the Community Education program. Because of the breadth of my experience across buildings, I have a lot of insight into the needs of different groups of students and teachers, including youth who've experienced trauma. I have on the ground exposure to what works—and doesn't work. I've been a member of SPFE for 11 years, paying dues and leveraging conversations amongst community that help to move agendas. I was also a student in the district at Community Ed, Randolph Heights, JJ Hill Montessori, Ramsey Middle, and Central High School.

ZUKI ELLIS: I am currently the Chair of the Board of Education. I am Ex-Officio board member on the Saint Paul Teachers Retirement Fund Association. I'm on the Minnesota

School Board Association board member for Director District 8 representing Minneapolis and St Paul which advocates for public school students across the state of MN.

Before I became a school board member I served on the PTO at my son's school. I completed an internship at SPFT where I worked with SPFT leadership to collaborate with community and parents on fighting for the schools our students deserve. I was a Parent Trainer for the Parent Teacher Home Visit project with SPFT. Parent Teacher home visits is work that I am still very proud of and continue to do as a parent trainer with the National program

JESSICA KOPP: I am the parent of an SPSS student, an active member of my school community, and a community organizer who has worked with several district personnel and offices. I am a former public school teacher, educational assistant, and department secretary. I have attended public presentations about school funding and teacher-led schools hosted by SPFE.

STEVE MARCHESE: I am the parent of two young men – one who just graduated from Central High School and the other who is currently a sophomore at Central. They have been educated in St. Paul Public Schools and I have been involved as a parent volunteer in their schools. In addition, I am the product of public education in New York City. Finally, both of my in-laws were public school teachers in Menomonie, WI until they retired.

MARY VANDERWERT: I serve on the Board of Education at this time. I have visited most of the schools and have participated in many of the activities and celebrations. I am also actively engaged in the development of the St. Paul 3K system where all 3 and 4 year olds in the City will be involved in high quality early childhood education and their families will receive the information and support they need to be effective parents and partners with the schools.

RYAN WILLIAMS: I'm an employee of Minneapolis Public Schools that is proud of the work that I do. I am a very slowly working on obtaining a 5-12 Social Studies Education License from Metropolitan State University. We can help the slower students and it takes one to know one. Some of my public sector experience is with AmeriCorp Read Corp at Nasha Shkola Russian Charter School, Volunteer at MPS Wellstone International 9-12 social studies & Green Central, MPS Early Childhood Special Education Assistant Hall & HIA, Summer School High SEA South High, MPS District child care at a over a dozen school, Associate Educator at Seward Montessori

b. What is your definition of “a public education champion”?

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: A public school champion is a person who can educate students of all socio-economic statuses and races. To do this, a champion needs to act from a position of love for the students and compassion for the needs they bring to the school. They need to fight for kids, advocating for resources, and tearing down the barriers that make schools less effective. They need to be willing to confront power, taking the discussion up to the next levels of state or federal government to inform public policy. And they need to be relationship builders to create partnerships with students, private sector and higher education to bring resources to the schools and build respect for the

students coming from public schools, and for the teachers who support them. School board members can and must be champions for the district they serve.

ZUKI ELLIS: A public education champion fights for resources for our schools and students. This requires making difficult decisions about limited resources to prioritize the students we are educating and pushing to reverse the decades of federal and state funding declines. There are always improvements we can make as a district, but our priority needs to be fighting for adequate funding, making sure our classrooms and schools are welcoming and accepting places where our students feel supported, celebrated as their whole selves and know that they matter.

JESSICA KOPP: I believe a public education champion is someone who shows up for public schools and this can look like a lot of different things; it's families and community members who volunteer in our schools individually or as part of an organized group, it's community organizations who partner with our schools to bring in resources, services, and learning and cultural opportunities, it's folks who speak out and provide public testimony to improve conditions for learning in our schools, it's educators who are tireless in their pursuit of best practices that serve the needs of their students, it's elected officials who tie their work vocally and specifically to education, it's people in our school buildings and district offices who show up to work each day to deliver for our students.

STEVE MARCHESE: Someone who understands the value and importance of public education and is willing to work hard to ensure that the public education system has sufficient resources, has sufficient focus and direction, and is committed to ensuring that the needs of all students are met, regardless of background.

MARY VANDERWERT: What are your direct connections to SPPS, SPFE, and/or public education? I serve on the Board of Education at this time. I have visited most of the schools and have participated in many of the activities and celebrations. I am also actively engaged in the development of the St. Paul 3K system where all 3 and 4 year olds in the City will be involved in high quality early childhood education and their families will receive the information and support they need to be effective parents and partners with the schools.

RYAN WILLIAMS: A "public education champion" is there for the students no matter what. They will stand up to coworkers or supervisors when needed. They can handle disputes professionally, not take issues personally understanding it is a conversation about what is best for the students.

c. Why are you seeking an endorsement from SPFE?

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: I want to represent students and teachers who love students. The best way to identify and support those teachers is through a working relationship with the union that represents the teachers.

ZUKI ELLIS: While we may not always agree, we are both working toward the same goal: a quality education for our students in SPPS. There is a need to continue to build, repair and work together in a trusting relationship that has at many times not been that way and is imperative for culture and climate. I respect and support the amazing

educators we have in SPPS. I am committed to doing that no matter what the outcome is.

JESSICA KOPP: I am seeking the SPFE endorsement because I both understand and value the work of educators and want to be a thoughtful, constructive partner in that work; an endorsement would signal that SPFE leadership view me as someone with whom they could work and count on to engage in good faith.

STEVE MARCHESE: I have great respect for the work SPFE has done in our community over the past years. As a parent, I have appreciated the focus on ensuring that parents and community members are included in the process of determining our children's education. In addition, as the representative of the most important adults who work directly with our children, SPFE is a necessary party to any efforts to make sustainable change and improvement in the district. There is also wisdom and experience that the district needs to understand and tap into as it moves forward to enact the new strategic plan. Finally, SPFE is a strategic partner in making the public case for why we need to leverage resources for our district and its students.

MARY VANDERWERT: As a current BOE member, I consider the support and recognition of staff of the schools a big part of my responsibilities. Members of SPFE are critical to the achievement of our students and the success of our district. It is important to me that they trust my contributions, support and leadership.

RYAN WILLIAMS: I want to make SPPS better for students and staff. If we improve the conditions of employees we can improve the conditions of students. There are State Statute / District policies that prohibit school district employees from running for board of education. Maybe if I run for SPPS Board of Education a SPPS employee will run to be on the Board of Education that directs my work.

d. How do you envision working in partnership with SPFE? What does that look like when we disagree?

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: I envision the union being the voice of the teachers. Although we have a high population of teachers who are not residents of St. Paul they are very much a part of educating youth in the community. The union allows them a voice within this community. I believe we must work with all members of the community in order to navigate the changes needed for overall success. I also believe that the union is acting on principle in the position it takes. There will certainly be times when my principled positions and the union's differ. As a union member, I'll be able to see both sides. As a communicator, I will listen and seek to bring together my position and the union's into a third way that makes the best of both of our views.

ZUKI ELLIS: My hope is that we can work together to bring more resources into our schools. I hope together we can close the opportunity gap. I recognize we will disagree, but there has to be a way and process we move forward, we will recognize our shared goals of supporting students in SPPS, hear each other when we bring concerns and be aware of how a public statement can have unintended negative impacts. It is important for us to be honest, thoughtful and kind. I don't believe disagreement means disrespect. I believe disagreement means opportunities to problem solve differently.

JESSICA KOPP: I envision partnership to be reciprocal and proactive. I favor an ongoing relationship-building approach that ensures we reduce gaps in our understanding of one another's work and humanity and that seeks to fill a well of goodwill where we don't lose sight of our shared priorities. When we disagree, we remind ourselves of that goodwill and the relationship we have worked hard to cultivate and do all we can to engage knowing that no one is in sole possession of the virtue of doing right by kids – it is a shared privilege and responsibility.

STEVE MARCHESE: I envision our working relationship to resemble much of the best of what it has been over the past 3 plus years – a willingness to listen, accessibility, honest communication about ideas, respect and acknowledgment of difference. When we disagree, I believe it should be done respectfully and with awareness that we are approaching the issues with positive intent. I bring the perspective, primarily, of a parent and involved city resident. I also bring the analysis of someone with legal training. I hope that those are valued, even if the conclusions we reach are different. Similarly, I am not an educator – I need to listen when educators speak, acknowledge what I do not know and what they do, and try to find collaborative ways forward. Fundamental to all of this must be respect in both directions.

MARY VANDERWERT: I have been instrumental in guiding the negotiations with SPFE and other unions by ensuring that our mission and values are always front and center. I ensure that our administration is negotiating honestly and fairly. When we have disagreements, we have to be able to sit down and work together toward resolution for as long as it takes.

RYAN WILLIAMS: The SPPS Board of Education absolutely needs to work with the Employees Representatives to create the best environment possible for the students. I envision any disagreement as a board director with labor representatives to be absolutely ridiculous. My goal is to make labor representatives blush and for them to tell me that I am overly supportive of labor issues

3. Over the past year, educators across the country have gone on strike. Just one year ago, SPFE narrowly avoided a strike by reaching a last-minute contract with the district.

- a. **What have you learned from the Red for Ed Movement?**

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: The Red for Ed movement has shown me that the issues we face, including teacher's wages and classroom sizes, are nationwide. Our district 625 leadership hasn't been bold enough to step out of their comfort zone to do what's best for kids. Although leaders and educators expressed behind doors the system is not working they were afraid to challenge the system in order to push for what's really needed. We need a lot more conversations and free space for teachers to express their frustrations so that when it's time to come forward and stand up they don't feel held back. I learned the SPPS district is similar to districts across the nation and they do not value paraprofessionals. While they talk about having school staff support who nurtures children toward academics and proper classroom management, they still fall short of fully funding the budget to properly compensate and support paraprofessionals.

ZUKI ELLIS: I have learned that there is widespread support for the work that teachers do. I am fully aware that SPFT was a leader in bargaining for the common good for schools our students deserve on behalf of students and educators.

JESSICA KOPP: I've learned that Red for Ed is a growing, national movement of educators organizing in their communities and supporting one another.

STEVE MARCHESE: There is a high degree of frustration and concern about the state of public education and, more specifically, about the conditions facing educators and their students. In particular, there is anger over the persistent underfunding of public schools at the state level and the impact that charters have been having on the overall public education system. Moreover, educators are willing to be overt and public about their concerns, as well as willing to push decision-makers to listen and respond.

MARY VANDERWERT: I have learned that teachers are not happy with their current conditions in the schools for themselves and the children in their care. They are ready to take on the issues in the community and their schools to make them better by whatever means is necessary.

RYAN WILLIAMS: Red for Ed during the Teachers' Spring went a little easy on School Boards in Minnesota. My Representations endorsed re-election campaigns while our contract had been expired for a year. Union leadership proposed to increase the number of votes required to for a strike. Labor representatives have been very generous and easy on school boards in Minnesota during the Red for Ed Teachers' Spring

- b. **UTLA (United Teachers of Los Angeles) recently ended their strike. In addition to much-needed pay increases, the challenges facing their students are similar to the students of SPPS. How can you use your position to support educators, parents and students in addressing these concerns?**

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: I would use my voice as a Public School Champion in all ways. I would actively promote community participation at board meetings, especially if it's uncomfortable. I would help the board come up with a structure that supports Student, Staff, and Parent voices within the policy making and roll out of new ideas. I would actively seek to learn from other school districts to build on their successes and learn from their failures. Finally, I would use my skills as an activist and my community network to identify and pilot innovative solutions for the benefit of the SPPS students.

ZUKI ELLIS: We need the best service for our students with learning differences and our English language learners. I proposed a resolution at the DFL caucuses last year around fully funded special education and ELL mandates. As a Black woman with a child in the district, I understand how racism, stereotypes, labels affects the resources that come in a large city and the threat and impact of charters. As a board member for Minnesota School Board Association, I have committed time explaining and fighting for the needs of schools and our students, many times as the only person of color in a room. It's been extremely helpful to build relationships with school board members across the state who have similar concerns, we can advocate as a group of elected school board members for resolutions that become part of the legislative priorities which

we vote on at the Delegate assembly but we can and do that advocacy with our legislators.

JESSICA KOPP: I will publicly advocate for full funding of education from the state, engage corporate partners, and support the elimination of special education cross subsidies to increase revenue

STEVE MARCHESE: First, I believe it starts with listening and understanding the concerns, being open-minded and willing to engage with educators, parents and students about what is on their minds. As a board member, my job is to integrate this information with what I understand about the school system, ask questions – whether about administration plans or community requests, and thinks in terms of the well-being of our children. I have an opportunity as a board member to ask questions in public, request information, and work with my colleagues to implement policies that can help respond to concerns. Finally, I have responsibility to act and be an advocate for the needs of the district, including its students and staff. This means being active in advocating for needed funding and presenting the case to the larger community for how it can support the work being done by district staff. much as possible in helping their children succeed

MARY VANDERWERT: support services, opportunities for professional development, and collaboration are all directly related to funding. The District and SPFE have to work together to mitigate this lack of funding until more money comes available. We worked hard in the last year to pass a referendum, which will help a lot, but the sad truth is the funding is still far behind and it will take a while to get it back to where it needs to be.

RYAN WILLIAMS: Beyond timely reasonable contract negotiation School Boards have responsibilities to create acceptable conditions for the students and staff in the district. If the State requires safety provisions such as the provisions required in District Transportation Safety Responsibilities, the school board must establish the required safety policies.

4. Like other districts across the country, SPPS is facing concrete challenges such as: lack of adequate state funding, increasing charter schools, and lack of support staffing (nurses, counsellors, social workers, educational assistants, librarians and others).

- a. **How will you show courageous leadership in providing direction and support for the superintendent in addressing these issues?**

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: This question also relates to the role of a Public School Champion. I would support and challenge the Superintendent by fighting for resources, building partnerships, and advocating for the district with the legislature. I would also support by providing feedback on their ideas and channeling other ideas to them so that they can better learn from others. Increased funding for support staff is a priority for me, because I've seen the value these roles bring. I'd also focus on increasing community participation around legislation that affect our schools. The courage this takes has been a hallmark of my life as an advocate for youth, and I will bring this to my role on the board.

ZUKI ELLIS: I am proud to be a part of the team that hired Superintendent Gothard; I am not afraid to question him, the direction the district is going and make sure everyone is fighting for the needs of our students.

JESSICA KOPP: I will support the exploration of creative community partnerships to meet the immediate need for nurses, counselors, social workers, and education assistants in our schools while advocating for full funding of education from the state.

STEVE MARCHESE: As can be seen from my work in board meetings, I have not been shy about expressing my concerns and advocating in public. I am very willing to make the case to legislators and others in the community about why the district needs adequate funding. In presentations I made about the referendum last year, I have been clear in grounding the conversation on the state's obligation to meet the requirements of the state constitution's education clause. Similarly, with charter school growth and the need for support staff, I believe I can be an advocate for why they should be addressed, both in public and behind the scenes with the superintendent.

MARY VANDERWERT: I have supported the development of SPPS Achieves, the new strategic plan for the District. I ensured that the planners were clear about the reasons for their decisions and that those were communicated. When this plan is fully implemented, I believe the means by which our schools are measured will be so improved that SPPS will be the best choice for families in our city. In some ways, the competition of charter schools has provided motivation for public schools to learn from the competition and to become more desirable but have taken away valuable funding making it harder and harder for the public schools to compete.

RYAN WILLIAMS: Schools Boards need to be accountable and take responsibility for their errors. I will constantly push for review and updates to policies that still require updates for making improvement to our schools. My major focuses are review and required updates to Transportation Safety Policy and Restrictive Procedures Policy

- b. What specific steps will you take in addressing the harm that charter school expansion (both in existing and new charters) is creating in our district?**

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: I will support an increase in public school enrollment and decrease in charter by providing my expertise around our poverty and race related issues and create safe, welcoming schools that parents and students can trust. Charter schools are developed when legitimate needs aren't met. As a board, we need to identify and prioritize these needs, working with the underserved communities who are turning to charters as a solution. Once these needs are addressed and met, communities will realize that charters are not an appropriate solution.

ZUKI ELLIS: I proposed a resolution with the DFL to write, into the platform, fully funding special education and ELL mandates. I worked last fall on the referendum as a member of the steering committee and through various get out the vote events. I called, reached out and met with labor for support and funds and labor answered the call. The referendum wouldn't have gotten passed without labor and hard work from many. Through my leadership position in MSBA, we have proposed increasing the per-pupil formula by 4% both this year and next.

JESSICA KOPP: I will advocate for and support the elimination of special education cross subsidies and support a well-designed, academically rigorous study to assess the effect of charters on SPPS and use the results of the study to guide future action.

STEVE MARCHESE: I start with the premise that the district needs to offer the best possible education to its students and meet their needs/expectations. However, I also have been troubled by the growth of charter schools in our community. Late last year, I contacted members of the St. Paul city council regarding efforts to site new charter schools and modify existing ones and expressed concern about how that impacts the ability of our educational institutions to meet the needs of our students. I am willing to be a part of a larger city-wide conversation that begins to examine where we are at and the impact of future growth. This must involve our elected officials, as well as community members, parents, students, teachers and other staff.

MARY VANDERWERT: I will illustrate the benefits of a public education in both the academic part of a child and family's life but also the opportunities that are only available there in terms of economies of scale, number of extracurricular activities, the opportunity to learn with students who are diverse in many ways and for a child to develop the executive functions necessary to be motivated in driving his/her own learning. Given the current political climate, "parent choice" as they say will result in charter school competition. We need to change the leadership that uses this rhetoric and this idea.

RYAN WILLIAMS: A major Issue with charter schools is the increased billing to the school districts. Charter Schools bill Public Schools for Special Education Services that school maybe be billed to to Insurance Providers I will push for review and solutions to this situation. Charters allow for non licensed non represented teachers higher quality SPPS Board Leadership can win students back.

Districts have some transportation authority over charter schools. On the board I will clean up transportation policy to keep students and funding in the district.

c. What actions will you commit to taking to increasing revenue that is dedicated to school funding?

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: I will lobby, continuing to build good relationships with the Governor and legislators. I'll promote partnerships with other public entities to share overlapping responsibilities in order to free up resources. When levy increases are needed, I'll communicate the reasons for increased spending and the benefits that will be realized. And I'll lobby against low value programs and testing that drain funds from our schools that could be better spent

ZUKI ELLIS: I proposed a resolution with the DFL to write, into the platform, fully funding special education and ELL mandates. I worked last fall on the referendum as a member of the steering committee and through various get out the vote events. I called, reached out and met with labor for support and funds and labor answered the call. The referendum wouldn't have gotten passed without labor and hard work from many. Through my leadership position in MSBA, we have proposed increasing the per-pupil formula by 4% both this year and next.

JESSICA KOPP: I will publicly advocate for full funding of education from the state, engage corporate partners, and support the elimination of special education cross subsidies.

STEVE MARCHESE: I am interested in participating actively in lobbying efforts at the State Capitol, making personal pitches to individual elected officials, and working with district leadership, unions and other partners to make the case for why the district needs to be funded adequately. In addition, I would like to highlight the impact of practices such as tuition billing that drain special education dollars from our district due to state law.

MARY VANDERWERT: In this next year and the years following, I will be pushing for finding ways for the schools to become organized in a way that maximizes the funding to ensure that there are consistent opportunities and supports in all of the schools. We need to look at the structure and systems of the district where more efficiencies can be realized. I have developed relationships with leadership at the state level and will continue to provide information and advocacy for the funding needed for our schools to be successful.

RYAN WILLIAMS: Higher quality leadership with safer working conditions will retain higher quality employees. Higher Quality employees will retrain more students in the district. I will fight for more funding for the schools at the state capital and at the ballot.

5. SPSS 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.
 - a. **Given that Educational Assistants are our most diverse group of employees who work with students, will you support the language in our Educational Assistant’s contract which provides support for EAs to become licensed teachers? How would you strengthen this grow-your-own program?**

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: I will continue to be aware and encourage EA’s to become licensed educators. Part of what prevents EA’s from the transition is the disconnect between students and teachers. This is a powerful mechanism to tear down the barriers to becoming a teacher. It also ensures that people who are becoming teachers understand the role and what it takes to be successful. Also, some talented EAs may not have the confidence to step forward, so an active recruitment program is important.

ZUKI ELLIS: Our EAs have the experience in our schools to know how to best support our kids and as a Black woman, I’d like to see our teachers better reflect the student population they teach. I support helping them become licensed teachers in our schools.

JESSICA KOPP: Yes, absolutely. I would continue and expand partner programs with local universities and colleges to develop program modules and schedules to meet the needs of SPPS employees who wish to pursue licensure and ensure that the program is accessible and affordable.

STEVE MARCHESE: Yes. I would encourage the district to consider additional ways to provide EAs opportunities to earn credit and gain practical experience. Is there potential for other lower cost educational providers to make it easier for EAs to afford tuition or receive some type of tuition remission in exchange for a promise to teach in SPPS after completion? Also, how can we use scheduling flexibility to enable EAs to have the time to attend classes during the school day?

MARY VANDERWERT: The SUTR program has had some success in developing teachers of color who are well trained and familiar with the students and culture of our schools. This program needs to be expanded and available to the EAs in the district. Collaboration with other institutions of higher education could also be pursued for other models that would work to make it possible for folks with less means to access. Our high schools also need to provide some encouragement to their graduates to pursue a career in teaching. By providing modeling that is positive about the profession and direct encouragement to students who might be interested, more of our graduates will return to teach in SPPS.

RYAN WILLIAMS: I am an Educational Assistant on the path to become a teacher. This is an important issue to me. I will fight for policies and contract provisions that create more flexibility for EAs to take leave for their teacher licensure programs. Additionally the school board can work better with the Metro State Urban Education Programs.

b. How would you strengthen retention efforts for new teachers of color so they feel supported and successful?

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: I would also create a support system for new teachers of color so they can have success within the program. It is a pretty intense program and can become overwhelming in the first year of co-taught programming. Providing a teacher mentor group along with a para support group provides the emotional and empowerment support needed to push through in the crunch. Then I would also recognize the insights that new people in a system can bring. The schools can learn a lot from new teachers' observations and past experiences, and it will be very validating for those teachers to have their perspectives valued.

ZUKI ELLIS: I support the efforts of Education Minnesota to recruit more American Indian and teachers of color into our schools. I was proud to support 2018 Increase Teachers of Color Act. I appreciated the emphasis on teacher mentorship. Support in a very difficult career is necessary and valuable. I look forward to working with SPFE to encourage allyship in schools and to create ways to mentor teachers of color and American Indian teachers.

JESSICA KOPP: Understanding the challenges all new teachers experience I would seek to improve overall retention efforts through increased mentorship, coaching, and professional development that includes self-care strategies. I would seek the input of

current teachers of color in SPPS to learn what approaches the district should consider to meet the needs of teachers of color and commit to fully funding and implementing their suggestions.

STEVE MARCHESE: Some of the main reasons the district loses teachers of color are lack of support for their development as teachers in a system predicated on white cultural norms, lack of mentorship in helping them navigate the challenges of teaching in the system and isolation within buildings due to being one of a few or the only teacher of color. Cultivating and supporting cohorts of new teachers of color could be a way to help address this. In addition, providing focused professional development for new teachers that helps them address the practical aspects of their work could be useful. Finally, working closely with building leadership where they are located to help foster mentor relationships could aid in retention. Finally, linking new teachers of color to affinity groups of more experienced teachers of color could ease isolation and provide mentoring.

MARY VANDERWERT: There has been some success in other districts to form affiliate groups where teachers of color can provide support to each other. Funding is provided for some of these to be forming in SPPS. Our systems of support for new teachers need to be respectful and supportive for all so they can feel competent and included in their school's culture. Peer mentors has been promising and the plan to onboard new teachers helps to ensure teachers can stay on board. Leadership in each site is critical to the development of a culture of mutual support and continuous improvement. SPPS needs to support leaders to that end as well.

RYAN WILLIAMS: Teachers are not as diverse as our student populations. District leadership must work to retain and attract a more diverse group of teachers. Metro State Urban Education Program would be a great place for SPPS to better partner with.

- c. **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 use the district's funds to address segregation to reverse this trend?**

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: This is one of those questions I feel like I can't—and shouldn't—answer fully now. The right approach is to reach out to the community and find out why this is the choice of parents. My initial belief is that it's happening because of lack of cultural representation within the buildings, and that implementing culturally relevant curriculum and a targeted effort to represent the students being taught would help.

ZUKI ELLIS: The most successful integrated schools are successful, in part due to advocacy of the parents who love the experience their kids have. We need to support our parents who fight for diverse school. I understand that our students diversity and experiences are assets to them and our student community. We all learn from one another. There was a Integration Task force that was an agreement with the 2016 contract to create a study the impact on the district, students and families. The report that group presented addressed ways the district could be intentional about desegregating our schools and opportunities we have to look at the way our areas have been created.

JESSICA KOPP: I am open learning the best ways to use district funds to address segregation.

STEVE MARCHESE: While the district has an achievement and integration plan that should be designed to address segregation, I think more needs to be done. As the district allocates funds through its strategic plan, it should be looking at how to equalize between schools to ensure baseline programs are available across schools. In addition, the district could consider how to support magnet programs in ways that make them even more appealing for parents throughout the district. Finally, over time, there needs to be an examination of the district's attendance zones to evaluate the range of educational options in each area and the impact they have in isolating parts of our city from opportunities.

MARY VANDERWERT: This is a very complex and a whole community issue that includes housing policies and access, human services, health services, systemic racism, etc. I would encourage more of our schools to become more like community schools where more support services for families are available. The effort to implement a system for early childhood education that includes all children and families so families come to the schools with a diverse network of support. Education is one of our best ways to begin to solve the issue of poverty which could reduce segregation.

RYAN WILLIAMS: Charter Schools seem to be a tool of segregation. SPPS can fight segregation by making more opportunities for team building with students. More options for team sports can bring students together. I little funding for students to play team building video games is a desagratiotion opportunity students will love.

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.

- a. **How will you use your position on the Board of Education to prioritize support for English Learners, especially for newcomers and their families? What steps will you take to increase family engagement? What policy recommendations do you have for English Learners at the district level?**

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: I plan to implement trauma free schools so students can feel safe and learn successfully. I would implement adequate training around trauma and how it shows up in the body. I believe that restorative circles will help build understanding about what students need. I would build family engagement by implementing processes that support their transition to new surroundings and cultural norms. I would recommend policies that provide English Learners with access to school and community resources that help them to adapt to their new environment. About seven years ago, I was placed in a position to support youth in a dual diagnosis program. It was an amazing opportunity to see these youth persevere through their trauma and help them do so. It gave me an even greater background in trauma informed care. I'll use this experience and a plethora of others to help youth be successful in SPPS.

ZUKI ELLIS: My first job is to be open, listen to newcomers and their families. It would be helpful to know what the needs are. Every family is different. School districts are

complicated places to navigate. Do our families understand how we can support them as newcomers? How are we communicating that to them. The opportunities we have when it comes to schools, access, transportation and support. I believe we have taken steps at the placement center to get better about how and what schools our families are directed to. I am proud that we declared sanctuary school status during my tenure on the school board.

I believe our PACs do provide support and welcoming spaces for families to work together and make room to have honest conversations with board members and staff. I am always trying to figure out ways to better engage our families. As an individual and as a board.

JESSICA KOPP: I will advocate for intentional outreach to the families of English Learners including home visits or events organized in communities and building strong partnerships with existing community groups to provide ongoing support. I will support policies that provide opportunities for tiered support for K-12 English Learners as their needs evolve throughout their SPPS career. I will also support policies and practices that make English Learners and their families aware of advanced courses and other opportunities available to students and provide tangible support to access them.

STEVE MARCHESE: We need to continue to support our ELL learners with the resources we have allocated for instruction consistent with our recent SPFE contract. In addition, we need to advocate for fully funding ELL services at the state level to eliminate the ELL cross-subsidy. The district should continue to provide a range of ELL services from co-taught programs that are embedded in comprehensive high schools and elementary schools to stand alone programs, such as LEAP High School and language academies. The district is focusing on family engagement as part of SPPS Achieves and I look forward to seeing how this will coincide with efforts to engage immigrant families. The teacher home visit program is one helpful model. Finally, we should be consistently re-examining how our services are adapting to meet the needs of ELL learners. I look forward to seeing the district's efforts in SPPS Achieves as the district works to improve student outcomes and reduce disparities for ELL learners.

MARY VANDERWERT: The last budget provided funding for more ELL teachers and the current structure includes language academies and immersion schools. With adequate funding for professional learning communities and planning time, more co-teaching can happen so that content is not lost in the learning of a new language.

This is an area where our philosophy in the schools needs to change. While we offer parents opportunities to volunteer in their children's schools and serve on the parent advisory councils, we don't really attend to the needs of the families in ways that I think we could. I believe that all K-third grade families should have at least one home visit per year with their teacher and that we have more designated staff in each school to be available to help families when they have needs. Providing activities for families to develop support networks and education sessions on child development can make a tremendous difference in the academic outcomes for our students. There needs to be more opportunities for Parent Academies, parent education on child development for late elementary and middle school parents and parent education in high schools for our future parents.

RYAN WILLIAMS: Volunteering with ELL students has been my most rewarding opportunity. I will push for policies encouraging volunteers and interns to give more focus with ELL students. SPPS can work more with community radio broadcasters to better communicate with families in their native language. I've worked with multilingual broadcasters from KFAI for more than a decade, it is a great communication opportunity for districts and families.

b. How will you work to protect immigrant students and their families in the face of a hostile federal government?

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN; Schools must be safe for kids and families, period. District policies to prohibit ICE activities need to be added, strengthened, or enforced. School board members must put time and energy into city, state, and federal advocacy, and find other external allies to speak up to help change the hostility coming from the federal government. At the same time, the individual students and families need to receive emotional and practical support, since fear of anti-immigrant policies by the federal government keeps many from having their basic needs met, including fundamentals for learning of food, housing, and health care.

ZUKI ELLIS: I support our sanctuary status for our schools. I would support any effort to protect our students.

JESSICA KOPP: I will be a public, vocal, unapologetic advocate for immigrant students and their families who live our communities.

STEVE MARCHESE: The SPPS board passed a resolution in early 2017 designating our schools as safe spaces for immigrant students. Beyond providing safe environments, I would work with advocates seeking to address legal issues facing immigrants, such as granting asylum, to ensure that they have the resources to effectively represent immigrant families. I would also be willing to work in coalition with other municipal, county and state elected officials to strengthen systems that provide human service, economic and housing support to immigrants. Finally, I would work to encourage the district to move quickly to adopt curricular changes that enable students to learn about the cultural and historical backgrounds of our immigrant communities.

MARY VANDERWERT: We will prevent identification of families without papers. We will work to include families as welcome members of our schools so they know that we will have their backs and we will provide civics education and opportunities for our students to be engaged in our community so they know what government is meant to do for its citizens and will vote with that in mind. Our students need to be change agents in our country and we must prepare them for that.

RYAN WILLIAMS: I will support new policies that protect employees exercising the need for student privacy. There should be no discipline for any SPPS employees that believe in good faith they are protecting student privacy from any agencies.

7. The current federal Secretary of Education, is well-known for her support of “disrupting” public education through “school choice” in the form of online learning, charter schools, and vouchers.

a. **What is your understanding of how education reform policies impact public education?**

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: Standardized testing and controlled curriculum is not conducive to all learners. The curriculum is not engaging and the tests cause/sometimes require lessons that are centered on merely finding the correct answer opposed to critically analyzing thoughts and understandings to find truth. This is very dangerous for today's society.

Earlier in our country's history, massive lucrative businesses, such as railroads and the automotive industry, were developed. Education focused on delivering a labor force to feed these businesses, emphasizing compliant “doing” rather than thinking. Today's economy needs minds that can think, create, and be outside of the box. We're not just looking for new ways of doing old things, we're looking for new things and new ways to do them. Schools need to prepare people to be workers and thinkers, and to ensure their skills will give them a living wage.

ZUKI ELLIS: Education reform undermines the foundational principle of public good by allowing people to further isolate themselves from people who aren't like them.

JESSICA KOPP: Education reform policies allow the establishment of schools outside the public school system and can include the implementation of voucher programs for private schools. If families make use of these options, public dollars flow into these programs and out of public schools.

STEVE MARCHESE: Education reform policies have sought to use “market-based” solutions to a problem that demands a sustained commitment to providing quality education to all of our students, regardless of who they are or where they live. As such, they have drained money from existing schools under the guise of competition without demonstrating that these changes actually improve outcomes for our children. In addition, they have shifted the responsibility for ensuring quality to parents and caregivers under the rubric of choice, instead of holding state policy makers accountable for their funding and policy decisions.

MARY VANDERWERT: It is distracting us from our fundamental duty to educate our children. It divides us and segregates us. Vouchers and “parent choice” always leave out the most needy and make for haves and have nots in our world. The reform policies take money that should be invested in public education and creates the need for more administration that could be spent on children.

RYAN WILLIAMS: These reformers are taking funding away from public education with transparency and oversight and transferring the funding to a less public leadership system.

b. What is your understanding of how charter schools differ from local public schools?

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: Charter Schools have their own separate board and are funded by public funds and corporations. This gives them the option to design curriculum and school structure how they want. Depending on your point of view, there are advantages and disadvantages.

- Pros: Choice for families, opportunity to innovate, and serving the needs of narrowly defined niche student groups.
- Cons: Fiscal inefficiency from funding alternatives to traditional public schools, lack of equal opportunity, increased segregation, and less accountability and transparency.

In my view, a successful public school district should be able to accomplish the “pros” and reduce the need for charter schools so that the negative consequences are avoided and all students benefit.

ZUKI ELLIS: Charter schools are exposed to less public scrutiny than public schools. Although they have boards that supervise the schools, these boards are not voted on by the public. Charter schools often receive funds from organizations that have agendas other than those that are the best for the kids, and influence the schools. Charters admit based on a lottery, many rely on word of mouth and are not intentionally recruiting from diverse communities and can be more segregated than public schools.

JESSICA KOOP: Charter schools are independent schools funded by public dollars and may operate under the authority of the state, district, or other sponsor. Charter schools are often exempt from the regulations public schools must follow so long as they are meeting the terms of their charter (contract).

STEVE MARCHESE: I am an elected official accountable to the entire community. Voters elect me to represent the community when I make decisions that impact the school district. Charter schools, while receiving public funds, operate as private non-profits. There is little standardization about how the governing boards of these entities work. The process for selection of board members is not a public process. The teachers employed by charter schools do not have to be represented by a collective bargaining unit. While enrollment must be open to all students, there can be a lottery used to choose students if the school is oversubscribed. (Local public schools must accept all students somewhere in their district.) Finally, charter schools can bill back 90% of the cost of special education services for a student to their resident district, even though the district receives no state funding for that student.

MARY VANDERWERT: Charter schools have different rules. They don't have to enroll or keep everyone who comes through their doors. They have much less monitoring. They focus more on test scores and less on the things that make for a well rounded education. They take a lot of money for special education services when they will serve children with disabilities and are able to disenroll when children pose too much challenge. Their teachers are poorly paid while their leadership is not poorly paid. The

only positive I see is that they may have the advantage of smaller class sizes and sometimes they have a specific focus that is good for some students.

RYAN WILLIAMS: Charter Schools allow teachers to work without licenses and their boards of directors are not voted on by the citizens of the district. Charter Schools are over billing districts with little oversight.

- c. **Will you support a moratorium on new charter schools and charter school expansions so that a comprehensive study can be done on the impact of charters schools in our communities (including segregation, tax base, land use, and neighborhood impact)? Who would you partner with for this study? Who would you include as stakeholders?**

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: It's really important that we take a step back and assess the charter schools that have opened, ideally before adding new ones. To me, conducting a comprehensive study is a responsible step to take. I'd want to partner with an organization with expertise but without bias toward or against charter schools, perhaps an academic group specializing in this area. It may be possible to partner with other districts in Minnesota or nationally with similar needs to share resources and learnings. And of course, I would involve the key stakeholders of taxpayers, parents, teachers, and students, along with members of St. Paul's diverse communities

ZUKI ELLIS: I honestly don't know what steps that would entail and I cannot speak to it more than that. I would have to educate myself more on what that would mean, and how that could be done.

JESSICA KOPP: I would support a well-defined, academically-rigorous study of the impact of charters in St. Paul.

STEVE MARCHESE: Yes. I would partner with local elected officials, community groups and members, parents, teachers, labor, non-profit service providers and other community institutions to examine the impact of charter schools. I would also want to hear from a broad range of families and students to discuss the impact charter schools have had on their education. This must include representation from communities most directly impacted, in particular, families of color.

MARY VANDERWERT: I think this is a decision that must be made by the community. We need to focus on making sure our public schools are better than any of the charter schools and provide some of the options charter schools offer so no more are formed. I would like to see a moratorium and would support that if the community decided that was needed

RYAN WILLIAMS: I would support the moratorium. I would partner with DHS and MDE to make sure that charter schools are not billing the district when they should be billing MHCP

8. **SPPS** 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. These practices have led to economic injustice and racial discrimination in our city.

a. How will you use your role to make sure that the largest corporations in Saint Paul pay their fair share?

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: If you're asking if I'll be ready to take it to the streets, the answer is yes. As a union member, I brought this issue to the union regarding the business that the public schools participates in. It absolutely disgusts me that teachers pensions are directly tied to the investments of privatized prisons.

If you're asking me if I will sit down with these corporations to get them to see that it's in their interest to invest in the youth of this community, the answer is also yes. I prefer to build bridges, but will push hard where needed.

Moreover, I will push for legislation to ensure that state tax policy doesn't favor these corporations over the needs of citizens. As a board member I'll work fully with the governor and legislator to ensure equity.

ZUKI ELLIS: I will support efforts to return our state to progressive taxation. I'd also like to see our city examine how it decides to give tax breaks to businesses and only do so in cases that help local businesses that help our more vulnerable communities.

JESSICA KOPP: I would use my role to engage in ongoing conversations with St. Paul corporations to identify our shared priorities regarding education in St. Paul and develop a menu of options that increase their community and financial investment in SPPS including PILOT (payment in lieu of taxes).

STEVE MARCHESE: I would be willing to work with district leadership, as well as city elected leadership, to approach corporations about how they contribute to our community. I believe in starting with a strategy of engaging corporations to be good citizens and enabling them to find ways to invest in concrete ways in the work of the district and the city. Our local corporations provide employment for a wide base of city residents and, as such, our goal should be to find a balance between recognizing what they bring to our city and pushing them to reinvest in the place in which they operate.

MARY VANDERWERT: How will you use your role to make sure that the largest corporations in Saint Paul pay their fair share?

SPPS receives a lot of support from large corporations in in-kind contributions and grants. Our relationship with them needs to be strong and collaborative and I will work toward that end. In the meantime, we need to advocate at the state legislature to change the tax laws so that schools are funded adequately.

RYAN WILLIAMS: Minnesota companies are successful because of our great citizens. I will prioritize relationship with companies that contribute to the well being of our students. I will help support the required taxing if those companies.

- b. **Predatory lending practices increase foreclosure rates, destabilizing families. Will you join with SPFE in calling on banks to refrain from foreclosing on homes of school age students during the school year? What steps will you take to separate SPPS from institutions that participate in predatory lending?**

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: When you look at the federal money cycle tied to corporations and see how much they actually put in the pockets of executives and then look at the average teacher salary minus the classroom supplies they provide, it really makes me sad how much teachers are devalued. They are building the body of our society and molding the hearts of our future compassion, but are basically laughed at when the discussion rolls to investment. I say INVEST IN TEACHERS. Especially the ones who invest in students.

Steps we can take include shining a light on these predatory practices; evil persists in the dark. Connecting those who are perpetrating these behaviors with the families they harm; when they see the results of their decisions it becomes personal and harder to justify. And give public acknowledgement to those who step up to encourage others to do so.

ZUKI ELLIS: I don't know what exactly would need to be done to keep this from happening. Again, I would have to do more homework to understand if this is something we can do and how.

JESSICA KOPP: I will wholeheartedly support SPFE in calling on banks to refrain from foreclosing on homes of school age students during and outside of the school year; a lack of stable housing has a profound effect on student learning and family well-being. I would ask SPPS to complete an audit of institutions with whom they do business to determine what, if any role, they play in predatory lending and create a process for disengaging with any institutions that do.

STEVE MARCHESE: Yes. I would be interested in working with district administration to examine its relationships to see how they can be leveraged to push such a policy.

MARY VANDERWERT: These are legislative issues that I would support.

RYAN WILLIAMS: I would work to prevent SPPS Board for establishing business partnerships and contracts with these institutions.

- a. **Will you commit to working with SPFE to seek the revenue we need to have racially equitable schools? What does this look like to you?**

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: Again, do you mean direct action? Absolutely, if that's necessary.

I'm also committed to putting in the time and emotional labor to work with my fellow board members and other decision makers to figure out the best ways to use the district's resources to achieve equity. I'm also committed to working with other partners to identify ways to share resources and advance our goals. These include other school

districts, state and local governments, the community, higher education entities, and local businesses.

ZUKI ELLIS: Yes. This looks like the work we have done around the referendum as well as advocating for state and federal funding for:

- A 4% and 4% per pupil increase
- Meeting ELL and special ed service needs and mandates
- Universal pre-K
- Full service community schools
- Mental health services
- Increasing teachers of color and American Indian teachers and diversifying our curriculum to be more inclusive

JESSICA KOPP: I will work with SPFE and any and all community partners to seek the revenue we need to equitably serve SPPS students. This may include public advocacy, providing testimony at legislative hearings, and the development of action-oriented workgroups dedicated to organizing a broad base of support (families, educators, organized labor, local businesses, corporations, universities) to send a message of unity and intent to create a proactive, short, medium, and long-term strategy for fully funding our schools.

STEVE MARCHESE: Yes. I believe this looks like us working together, and in conjunction with district administrative leadership, to identify targets of opportunity for funding. I envision this including a wide range of local entities, including corporations, higher education institutions, large non-profits, etc. I also believe it means looking at existing relationships and seeing where there could be increased or different levels of support, whether in kind or through direct grants.

MARY VANDERWERT: SPPS and the BOE have a lobbyist who is highly regarded at the Legislature. We are working with our senator and representatives to support the funding and policy changes that are needed to increase funding for the schools.

RYAN WILLIAMS: I will work to make SPPS the best option for all students to end charter schools being used to segregate the children off St Paul

9. In 2018, SPFE joined our institutional partners in calling for elected officials to engage in co-governance and people-centered democracy. As a practice, this means engaging with your partners in all areas of public work, a willingness to be held accountable to promises, and on-going, open communication.

- a. **What do the terms co-governance and people-centered democracy mean to you?**

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: Co-governance moves from a top-down decision making model to a more local and inclusive approach. The school is the nucleus of our community. The community consists of Staff, Parents and Students. Decisions are made together with the Board and the Superintendent, with school-based and community people having shared authority, rather than having decisions imposed on the schools that may or may not fit. This extends all the way to students, who are the reason for the existence of the school system.

ZUKI ELLIS: It means respect from all parties for the perspectives of all parties. It means that we bring a culturally appropriate lens to all our discussions and actions. It means being open to hearing each other and examining how our actions may harm others. It means recognizing our own privileges and owning when we have made decisions that cause harm. It means recognizing that our perspective is not the only perspective, and what seems the best course to me may not be the best course for you.

JESSICA KOPP: I view co-governance as shared responsibility for setting priorities, decision-making, and implementing and evaluating initiatives.

STEVE MARCHESE: First and foremost, the terms mean that an elected official serves in trust with the community. It means working directly with community members about their most pressing issues and concerns. It means listening a lot to what people have to say and need, as well as being willing to make sure that ALL voices, not just the “usual suspects”, are heard and considered in decision-making.

MARY VANDERWERT: It means to me that we have to have systems for communication and joint decision making to ensure support for our schools. Leaders need to be accessible and held accountable for the goals set by the community.

RYAN WILLIAMS: School Boards should seek more input from the employees that work with students daily to better govern the district.

b. What groups and individuals will you look to for guidance?

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: I will look to students, teachers and support staff to help guide the outreach process. I also recognize that my life experience will only take me so far, and that I need to be guided by others with different backgrounds to help me make the right recommendations. With that in mind, I will also turn to community organizations, spokespeople and elders from immigrant communities, and others on behalf of students who have not been fully served by the SPPS up to this point.

ZUKI ELLIS: I need to be as inclusive as possible. I can't just say it, I have to must find a way to look to everyone that I can.

JESSICA KOPP: I would look to the community for guidance.

STEVE MARCHESE: As a school board member, I start by looking to those most closely impacted by the district's work – students, parents and caregivers, teachers and staff – as well as community members with interest in and concerns about the well-being of our children. These are my primary sources of information. I look to organizations that have established credibility in the communities they either claim to represent or serve. (One example would be the Coalition of Asian-American Leaders, Wilder Foundation, etc.) I also consider the opinions of other elected officials who also represent my constituents as they share their knowledge and understanding. (For example, city council members, the Mayor, legislative representatives, etc.)

MARY VANDERWERT: I visit schools to keep track of what is happening in them. I talk with teachers and leaders to understand what idea they have or concerns they have for the schools or our students. I am engaged in a number of other groups in the community and my neighborhood including the African American Ministerial Alliance, Rotary, the Progressive Women and a large network of friends also involved in education.

RYAN WILLIAMS: The employees working with the students is the best group of individuals for board members to seek guidance from.

c. What steps will you take to make sure decisions are made with communities, instead of for communities?

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: I will work really hard to be visible to the entire school community. I will implement grassroots organizing strategies to gather voices from students and families and then create spaces that provide safety to continue this dialogue.

This has been the basis for my work to date. My goal is always to have the people who are affected be leading the way and setting the direction. I'm there to provide support and clear the path. This is what communities need in order to truly feel heard and included.

ZUKI ELLIS: Again, as a Black woman, I am constantly aware of the issues facing my community. Over the past 4 years, many members of my community have come to me over the past four years with concerns about teachers and administrators. I have worked hard to make their voices heard and root my decisions in these testimonies

JESSICA KOPP: would invite communities into the decision-making process as early as possible and would not proceed with these processes until communities are represented.

STEVE MARCHESE: Since I started my service on the SPPS board, I have held listening sessions at cafes and locations throughout the city that are open to all. This has been an important opportunity to listen and learn. In particular, it has been helpful when I have been close to having to make a decision on a board agenda item. I am working now with my colleagues to develop additional opportunities to listen to community members so I can incorporate their perspectives into my thinking. This might include larger public listening sessions, opportunities for conversations at school events (such as parent-teacher conferences) and in locations outside of school district buildings. I also review public forums on social media and respond when necessary.

MARY VANDERWERT: I meet with community groups to provide updates and receive input. We have engaged the community in the search for the new superintendent and in the development of the strategic plan. I see these strategies continued. I believe BOE members need to be involved in the community at events, meetings and through email communication. I have been available for all of these and intend to continue. The participation of the community/ies is critical for decision making so that our schools meet the needs and are reflective of the values of the various communities.

RYAN WILLIAMS: I will invite the communities to speak at Board Meetings.

d. How will you separate your accountability to the public good you're your personal feelings?

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: As an elected official, it will be my responsibility to represent my constituents. If my personal opinion interferes I hope the community holds me accountable.

I don't leave this to chance. Over the years I've surrounded myself with people who will challenge my opinions and push back if they think I'm going the wrong direction. It's not the easy path, but it's the one that leads to the best results in the long run.

ZUKI ELLIS: I don't. My activism is rooted in my personal experience and my feelings. I cannot separate my love for children and my personal conviction to do the best for them from my work.

JESSICA KOPP: I accept that sometimes my personal preference or belief may not be the best path forward. I intend to always listen, engage, learn, and work within community to arrive at solutions that serve St. Paul students

STEVE MARCHESE: As I mention above, this is a public trust. It is important to place the needs of the students and the community foremost in my decision-making. That is how I have operated throughout my time on the board so far and I expect to continue to do so.

MARY VANDERWERT: I assume you are asking how to separate my personal feeling from the common good. The common good is why I seek your support for another term on the BOE. My involvement is all about what is good for children and our city. Those are my personal feelings as well as my steadfast commitment to the public good.

RYAN WILLIAMS: I understand my feelings are not what matters. The needs of the students are what matter.

10. Educators 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.

a. What are your ideas to help educators, 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?

CHAUNTYLL ALLEN: Educators are a profound source of wisdom about students and ideas about what will work to address their needs. However, their insights are often neglected by those in authority, sometimes because they don't take the time and sometimes, sadly, because they don't see the value. As a board member, I'll set up a program for ongoing relationship building and listening sessions with educators of all levels. In addition, I'll seek ongoing feedback from the community to ensure that all students are having their needs met.

ZUKI ELLIS: I started my advocacy for children with SPFE. St Paul teachers have been huge influences on me and on my children. So I value teachers and their voices. But when only 20% of our teachers are of color but over 75% of our students are of color, I have to balance their voices with those of the students we serve and their communities. I am encouraged to hear that SPFE is willing to work with parents and the community and hope we can all work together to come up with policy that helps all our students.

JESSICA KOPP: I would work to support a district culture that values and encourages collaboration and innovation. Districtwide and/or school-specific collaborative workgroups that bring together students, parents, educators, administrators, district staff, and community partners to discuss how to create learning environments that serve students well is one way to amplify educator and community voice and inform policy decisions.

STEVE MARCHESE: I would be interested in spending time on a regular basis with educators to learn about what they are thinking and the ideas they have to share. It would be helpful to do this across a variety of topics and in a variety of locations. I would encourage SPFE and educators to work with board members and district leadership around specific public education and lobbying activities. It would be great to work with individual educators to help frame the impact of specific funding or policy legislation as part of a coordinated lobbying effort.

MARY VANDERWERT: One of the things we have been focused on as a board is improving the culture in our District to one that is healthy, collaborative, and focused on continuous improvement. Leadership at the District level and in each of the schools is critical to the having the kind of culture we want. Leaders need to develop a vision for the schools with the staff they lead, develop strategies to achieve that vision and then support that work. Educators working directly with children know them best and have the skills and knowledge they need to be effective. As a district, we need to learn from those who are having outstanding outcomes and develop ways to spread their strategies across the district. We need to use the incredible expertise we have in our district to keep making progress for kids. Again, authentic parent engagement is critical to the success of children and support to that end is effort well spent.

RYAN WILLIAMS: *Mr. Williams was sent a copy of the questionnaire that did not include this question. We regret the error.*