

2019 SPFE Public City Council Candidate Questionnaire

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

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

1. The Saint Paul Federation of Educators (SPFE) believes parents, educators, community members, and students should be at the center of decision making around educational policy. However, increasingly out of state millionaires with a vested interest in pursuing a corporate education reform agenda have poured money into political races with the goal of 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
Anika Bowie	X	
Liz De La Torre	X	
Dai Thao	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 home owners, while wealthy corporations continue to receive tax cuts – allowing them to benefit from our communities without contributing to them.

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

CANDIDATE	YES	NO
Anika Bowie	X	
Liz De La Torre	X	
Dai Thao	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 is 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
Anika Bowie	X	
Liz De La Torre	X	
Dai Thao	X	

4. **Do you support collective bargaining for public sector unions and will you fight to protect them?**

CANDIDATE	YES	NO
Anika Bowie	X	
Liz De La Torre	X	
Dai Thao	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?

ANIKA BOWIE: Public education is the great equalizer of our democracy. Everyone should have access to our public education system. It is vital that this system supports both teachers and the community. I support public education because it has added value to my life and opened doors for many opportunities. The City of Saint Paul needs a robust public education to continue raising the next generation of responsible residents. Public education gives access to everyone to be a part of a strong Saint Paul community that we all share space within.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: I am a proud graduate of Saint Paul Public Schools. Public education is where we can fulfill the promise of equal opportunity for everyone in our society — regardless of gender, race, socioeconomic status or background. By offering everyone a good, public education, we are helping to grow the next generation of community leaders, small business owners, artists, leaders, changemakers, and families who will keep Saint Paul strong for future generations. I would not be where I am today had it not been for the teachers and mentors I had at Harding High School.

DAI THAO: The value of public education is very important to me. I came to this country as a refugee elementary kid. It was due to the public education that my single mother believed in, and supported my siblings and I to succeed. That is why when I became the council member in 2013, I accomplished this for the city of St. Paul in partnership with SPPS: expanded the city's Right Track Program, increased funding for out of school programming in the libraries and parks, and supported initiatives such as improving the exterior of Central High School and safe routes to school.

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?**

ANIKA BOWIE: I am a proud product of Saint Paul Public Schools and currently continuing the vision of public education for all. I have worked for the district and advocated for SPFE to implement policies and practices to help teachers be better and for schools to have an environment that is supportive of our diverse students. The teachers of Saint Paul have invested in my community leadership and lived civic engagement experience. I will fight for our students to have even more opportunities for them to thrive in education.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: As a SPPS graduate, and through my work as a sexual assault advocate within Saint Paul-Ramsey County Public Health, I have seen firsthand that we have more work to do to provide critical services to all students, especially students of color. The City has a key role to play, working with partners on the school board, the Saint Paul Federation of Educators, and the administration, to fight for policies that will better serve our students.

In high school, I had a mentor and confidant in my English teacher, Mr. Brandt that helped through the transition of living in a new state. He also listened to me and connected me to resources within the school to help me cope with the mental health

issues and the difficult situation at home. Mr. Brandt understood that these issues inevitably affected my ability to learn and excel in the classroom. I had Mr. Brandt to encourage me and push me to go to college. I have no doubt this was the push I need to continue to pursue my dreams of a higher education and I know that Mr. Brandt continues to do the same for many other students.

DAI THAO: I have always believed in public education. My family members are teachers and public educators. My whole family benefited from public education in Minneapolis and St. Paul. My three children under age four are all going to public schools.

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

ANIKA BOWIE: My definition of a public education champion is someone who is victorious in consistently advocating for our students and educators. I coin myself a public education champion because of my 10 year experience in working collaboratively and compassionately on behalf of both teachers and students. It takes a team to become a champion and I am a team player for the good of our students and have been successful in working in with schools, government and community.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: SPPS is currently facing a funding crisis that City Council members must help solve. Being a “public education champion” means advocating for funding at the State Capitol and raising awareness about the importance of public education. As a public education champion on the Council, I would also advocate for more social worker positions – these are often the roles that most directly serve and support underprivileged students. I would fight for funding to ensure that schools are equipped to protect the rights of students under Title IX, to ensure everyone accesses the same education regardless of gender, race, or background.

DAI THAO: A public education champion shows up (investing in youth programs, all day pre-K) and puts kids at the center. They have the public accountability and proactively moves the interest and support for public education.

c. Why are you seeking an endorsement from SPFE?

ANIKA BOWIE: I am seeking endorsement from SPFE because I am a result of strong schools and strong teachers working together for the betterment of public school students. As a passionate educator who values the power of education for all, I will continue to advocate for funding for our students education. A SPFE endorsement would be give me the support I need to champion education as my platform.

LIZ DE LATORRE: I believe earning the endorsement of SPFE would send a strong signal not only about my own candidacy, but about the importance of public education as an issue for the Saint Paul City Council. City Councilmembers have an opportunity to be more than a vote on a budget — we must elect public education champions up and down the ballot, to drive the public conversation on the need to support students and teachers in our public schools.

DAI THAO: I am honored and proud to have been endorsed by SPFE in the past. I believe SPFE’s endorsement is important because the backbone of our education are our teachers, assistants and school staff. You share the same values of racial equity

and community as I do. I believe that public education is the path toward eliminating the racial disparities gap. (*Note: Dai Thao was endorsed by SPFE in 2013. No city council endorsements were made in 2015.*)

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

ANIKA BOWIE: I envision SPFE and I having a working relationship that is consistent and informative to one another. This working relationship would involve one-on-ones and interviewing both parties on policy positions. My approach to growing out a working relationship involves an open-minded and common understanding of values. Conversations that will result in disagreements should be centered in the best interest of both our city and educators who advocate strongly for their students and communities. Disagreements should be met with further understanding and listening to one another on a consistent basis. Commitment to community within the education system is also part of my four point platform.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: I believe it is the role of elected officials to act as a conduit for the community. That means being able to bring the diverse perspectives of the community into the discussion and decision-making processes of city government. While individual elected officials may never agree completely with any organization, accessible leadership means the door will always be open for SPFE and the parents, teachers, and students they represent. I commit to be a transparent and ethical leader in all issues and work through the disagreements to find common ground.

DAI THAO: I hold the values of SPFE and would continue partnering with SPFE when we are making decisions impacting the school district, programs and services that impact with youth and St. Paul families. If we disagree on something, I will reach out to talk with the SPFE board and listen to their perspectives.

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?**

ANIKA BOWIE: The Red for Ed movement have taught me the power of statewide union organizing and standing up for students and educators. I learned that 1 out of 5 educators must take another to make ends meet. Educators shouldn't have to choose between enriching their students education experience and working another job to be in the community they teach. As a student that once aspired to be a teacher, I am included in the 71% of people who think teachers are not paid enough. The likelihood of children having a quality public education is based on the investment in educators and schools to be fully funded equitably.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: The Red for Ed Movement reinforced for me the importance of visibility to building solidarity — both within the education profession, and with the broader public. Recent strikes have made clear that there is broad public support for teacher pay, smaller class sizes, and better and more stable funding sources, but that this support only rises to the surface when we stand together and make our voices heard. The Red for Ed Movement has also helped to teach me that every individual —

including public officials — has a platform that they can use to advance the public discussion on issues that matter, like support for our students, teachers, and schools.

DAI THAO: We have not fully funded our schools so the Red for Ed Movement really brought to light the chronic issue of fully funding schools. It's to the point that our teachers have to pick up the signs to push our elected leaders to do the right thing. This is a crisis I care a lot about and if the teachers go on strike, I will be there next to you all because the kids deserve more.

- 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?**

ANIKA BOWIE: My position is based on a lived experience as a student in SPPS during several budget cuts and witnessing the loss of many teachers who invested so much into my educational experience. I remember the frustration of being crammed into large classrooms and seeing teachers struggle with the lack of resources to successfully complete a lesson plan. I come from parents who instilled values of respecting educators and learning from all my teachers. My parents also invested trust in the SPPS to give me the best experience and believed that the teachers will fight to see students thrive. Actions like the UTLA are examples of teachers not being heard and supported by government. I will use my position to problem solve with the union and collaborate on ways that best serve the people of Saint Paul.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: UTLA showed that the public supports strong public schools and will support teachers when they stand up to fight for good schools. UTLA made clear that the public understands supporting teachers and supporting students are not oppositional — they are one and the same. The argument that we need to shortchange our kids for a corporatist instinct to hoard funds was defeated.

UTLA also earned an unprecedented level of support from local elected officials, including California's congressional delegation, local legislators, and City Councilmembers, which put pressure on the district and helped turn the tide in negotiations. Public officials too often claim they "do not have jurisdiction" over education. UTLA demonstrated that public leaders can do a great deal to support public schools. It's time for elected officials to stand up and publicly declare their support for real solutions and a reimagining of what it means to support our public schools.

DAI THAO: As council member, I've used my position to meet with stakeholders and diverse communities about what we need for kids, which included having hard conversations with families about the school levy and property taxes.

4. Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) has a diverse student population, with over 75% of students identifying as People of Color. Parents and educators agree that in order for students to be successful, we must have culturally competent curricula and educators that reflect the diversity of our city. At the same time, data shows that our city and our schools are becoming more segregated.

a. **Segregation and poverty are harmful to all of us, especially our students and their families. How will you work to integrate our city and our schools?**

ANIKA BOWIE: At an early age, I have shared my personal narrative of being a student from a very segregated and low-income community in front of school board meetings and city council hearings. I understand that integration takes resources to bridge diverse student to our public education. I will work with the school board to support the allocation of resources to properly to fill in the gaps for diverse students to get equal access to public education. The funding of the school bus system plays a big factor in integrating students from different parts of the city into different schools. Our most vulnerable students depend on public schools to provide transportation, free or reduced lunch, afternoon activities, support specialists, and much more to have a fair chance to a quality education.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: One of the most important issues we need to address to reduce segregation and better integrate our schools is housing availability. Right now, the availability of housing that a family can afford determines which neighborhood they live in, and which school their children can most easily attend. If we want our schools to reflect our city as a whole, we need to invest more in making housing affordable and available. Not only does this ensure that students of color receive the same excellent educations as their white counterparts, it helps reduce concentrations of poverty and builds a stronger city.

I also support SPFE's work to develop and implement culturally competent and inclusive school programming to break down barriers in our classrooms and make clear we are working to ensure inclusion — and integration — from top to bottom at SPPS.

DAI THAO: I am already working on this in Ward 1 as the council member. I have created initiatives to bring together all the diverse racial and ethnic communities together for projects or initiatives.

5. Research shows the importance of stimulation starting at birth. We know students are more successful in school when they have access to high-quality early childhood education. All students should have access to these programs, whether through our public school systems or accredited independent providers.

a. **How will you partner with SPFE to ensure all families have access to quality Pre-K and early learning programs in our city?**

ANIKA BOWIE: The beauty of the City of Saint Paul is the current ecosystem of community educators and parents who are advocates for their children. I am honored to have grown out of this community of parents and educators who put early learning programs first. My great grandmother built a 25 year legacy as a teacher for Ramsey County's Community Action Program. She raised half of the community of Rondo and made sure her children were avid students who understood the value in public education.

I also am a strong supporter of wrap around programs that support strong schools and the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood initiative that bridges community providers with our public education system. One of my advantage as an candidate is my vast experience with educators and non-profit organizations working in partnership to close

the achievement gap and opportunity gap. I plan to be present in future working groups to support solutions for students to have access to quality Pre-K and early learning programs.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: We know that some of the most critical development occurs in children before they reach age 5. Some children already have good access to early childhood learning, but too many — especially children from historically underprivileged communities — are entering Kindergarten a step behind. There is no better investment we can make at the city level than ensuring all children get the start they need to succeed.

I will partner with SPFE, and other partners and advocates, to push for Pre-K and early childhood funding at the State Capitol. I will work with the city and state to ensure existing funding streams are being put to the best use to help the most students access the programs they need to succeed. And I will work with the school board and SPFE to ensure all new funding at the city level reflects our priority of investing in young children.

DAI THAO: As a father of three children under age 4, I truly believe that quality Pre-K and early learning programs are so important and needs to be accessible for all families. I will make sure the city continues to work with SPFE on these early childhood initiatives. In my role on the St. Paul Promise Neighborhood's board, I will make sure to connect programs together and promote these to everyone.

- b. **New research shows that many Minnesotans live in childcare deserts, without adequate access to childcare options for their children. How will you use your role to provide additional options early learning options for parents?**

ANIKA BOWIE: I understand the first hand challenges guardians face while seeking adequate access to childcare and early learning options. Childcare is expensive for the everyday person and forces parents to choose between early learning and covering basic needs. Access to early childhood is an advantage that all students should have. I see early education as a right and an opportunity of equity that our current Governor Tim Walz has rallied for. I see resources allocated by both the city and state to invest in early childhood for all.

I also will support organizations/agencies that provide early education and childcare for parents. I was a recipient of child care and early education and seek to continue opportunities of equity for parents that need it the most.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: Child care providers are trapped between high costs and low wages that, too often, keep both providers and the families they serve in poverty. Many of the centers that once served our neediest populations — like rec centers — have closed in recent years. Meanwhile, we continue to ask more and more of our providers — increasing their costs and the barriers to entry — as we work to ensure the quality and consistency we know will serve children best.

We need to work with the child care community as we develop new policies and funding, to ensure we avoid putting good providers out of business. We also must work with existing family resource centers — like those at Jackson and Maxfield Elementary Schools, through the Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood — to help families access the

public supports they need when child care deserts leave them searching for high-quality care for their children.

DAI THAO: As a father with young children, I believe quality childcare is so important and have continued supporting the St. Paul “Citywide 3k.”

6. 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?**

ANIKA BOWIE: I am knowledgeable about the real impacts of education reform and how good reform involves all parties including teachers, administration, students, and community. I was present during the schools Racial Equity policy implementation as well as the mainstreaming of students into the classrooms. I was involved in facilitating focus groups to listen to teachers, students and communities experience with policy change. I understand that good education reform must be rooted in solving issues and have buy in on both parties. Good policy must protect teachers as well as protect students. There are pros and cons in all education reform that will have economical, social, and systematic impacts on everyone.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: So-called “education reform policies” are designed to devalue public education and weaken our ability to deliver the education outcomes. These policies divert funding and public support from public schools on the premise that “school choice” can provide better learning options for students. They also introduce a fundamentally corporate perspective into schools: i.e., the most important outcome is that children are prepared to enter the workforce, not to live full and rich lives.

Anti-public-school advocates prove themselves right when they deprive our schools and teachers of the resources they need to succeed. Students — particularly students of color, and others who cannot pay the high price of privatized education — pay the price.

As a City Councilmember, I will be a champion for public education in our city, by lifting up the incredible work our public educators do, and by calling out the negative effects of the ill-advised “reform” proposals we can expect to continue years to come. I will be a strong partner with SPFE, and with state and federal officials, to amplify this call at every level.

DAI THAO: I understand policies such school choice diverts funding from public schools and only puts it in the hands of those with access. These are racist policies that allow segregation to persist our communities.

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

ANIKA BOWIE: I have worked in local public schools in several school districts in Minnesota and California and understand the state statutes that regulate the standards of school districts. The difference between Minnesota Charter schools and public

schools is multi-layered and complex depending on what type of charter school. From my own understanding, charter schools function as independent organizations that create their own mission and guidelines and the students/teachers are evaluated based on their own standards of success. Our local public schools are part of a governing body that oversees the performance of the students based on Minnesota standards and have more regulations to holding administration and employees accountable. Public schools function in the same way as a governing administration while charter schools function as an independent organization.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: From my work as a Public Health Advocate with Ramsey County, I have seen the dramatic failure of charter schools to ensure competent training and accountability on the issue of sexual violence. This is not an isolated issue, or one that can be separated from education. If we are committed to ensuring a good education for all students, we need to address all issues that might affect a student's ability to learn, including the trauma some students already experience. We must also acknowledge that abuse can happen anywhere and take all possible steps to prevent it. When charter schools fail to meet even basic standards of training and accountability for sexual violence, one can imagine where else they may fall short. We know we have more work to do in our public schools to ensure excellent education for all students — but we have the accountability and transparency in place to know the work we need to do.

DAI THAO: Charter schools are not bound to the same standardized tests that are required of public schools and lack of oversight on their board who are not accountable to the public.

- 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 charter 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?**

ANIKA BOWIE: I would need more information on the impacts of charter schools in Saint Paul and would include public schools teachers, parents of public students, and public school administration on the discussion of the state of public education and the impact of new charter schools. I will use my role to stand for quality education and against segregation and extraction of resources. I acknowledge that the stakeholders are educators from the community and plan to involve the champions of public education to further educate me on this issue.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: I would absolutely support this moratorium while a comprehensive study is done on the impact of charter schools in our communities, and I would be willing to carry this bill in the City Council. In doing so, it will be extremely important to include among partners and stakeholders the operators and families of culturally-specific charter institutions, such as those that serve Saint Paul's Hmong and Somali communities. While evidence has shown charter schools can increase segregation, we must be sure to include the voices of new Americans and communities of color who have used charter schools to hold space in a society which we know is not always welcoming to all. With careful and intentional outreach, I am confident we can make this moratorium a reality.

DAI THAO: Yes, I support a moratorium and will partner with all stakeholders, and specifically SPFE, and SPPS district.

7. 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?

ANIKA BOWIE: I will use my role to create public space to educate the city on the history of community destabilization and work in partnership with governmental partners to study the data of corporations impact on our residents. I will leverage my relationships with state and judicial government to address issues of racial discrimination and economic injustice in our city.

I am experienced in advocating for corporations to restore credibility and community trust by resourcing initiatives to decrease harm in the community. For example, I was recently contracted as an ambassador for financial literacy education in low-income areas that have suffered economic injustices from corporate banks. Ours discussions centered on finding pathways to financial empowerment. I envision my role as a city council member to create opportunities for community-led projects to equip the community with the tools to best support them in our public educational system.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: As a City Councilmember, I'll limit public subsidies and fight to ensure corporations pay their fair share. The things that will truly make St Paul attractive to businesses are the same things we prioritize in making St. Paul a great place for families — like good public schools and services. These things cost money, which is why St. Paul families pay property taxes, fees, and other revenue sources for local government. Wealthy corporations should at least pay as much toward building a strong city as families do.

In looking at the city budget, I will also carefully consider any proposals for new revenue to ensure that additionally needed funds are coming from those with the greatest ability to pay, including our largest corporations, and not from the most vulnerable in our city.

DAI THAO: I led and supported earned sick and safe time and \$15 minimum wage so that families working for large corporations will have a chance to earn a living wage and take care of their families without fear of retaliation or losing their jobs. I will continue to use my role to lead and leverage opportunities for corporations to hire locally, invest in our communities directly, and ban the box.

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 the city of Saint Paul from institutions that participate in predatory lending?

ANIKA BOWIE: Many people in my community, including my students, share troubling stories of foreclosures and are left feeling hopeless and suffering in crisis. As a SPPS

student who experienced homelessness, I stand in solidarity with SPFE to call on banks to refrain from foreclosing and predatory lending practices that displace students from their homes and schools. I will prioritize this issue by testifying in support of the separation of the city's participation in predatory lending. I believe the city of saint paul should always be an advocate for all of the people of Saint paul who participate in our local public schools.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: Predatory lending targets families and communities who are often already struggling to get by. As a City Councilmember, I will work with SPFE to do everything possible to oppose these practices, especially when they target families with school age children. Additionally, St. Paul must stop doing business with institutions who engage in predatory lending against our families and communities. The City of St. Paul can shift our business to local banks, ensuring the institutions that serve our city have a stake in the communities they serve. The City should also look into options to offer short-term lending products that would provide responsible alternatives to pawn shops and payday lenders.

DAI THAO: As a homeowner who had gone through a foreclosure eight years ago due to predatory lending, this is an important issue to me. I will definitely join SPFE on calling on banks to refrain from foreclosing on homes of students. I have led on responsible banking to hold our banking partners from such practices and have successfully partnered with them to gift foreclosed homes to local land bank partners.

c. 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?

ANIKA BOWIE: I voted "Yes" for Saint Paul kids and will continue to vote yes for Saint Paul kids. Ward 1 is one of the most racially and economically diverse areas in Saint Paul and the schools in this ward are a representation of this great diversity. Our ward has the assets to fund strong racially equitable schools and it is the responsibility of the city council, school board, and county to reflect our values in our city budget. This looks like doing the hard work to assess the current state of revenue for our schools and be innovative in creating solutions to the continuation of racially equitable schools.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: Yes — SPFE has led the way on developing best practices for racial equity in education, and our schools must have the funds they need to implement these policies. As a City Councilmember, I will ensure that any new funding for SPPS reflects our prioritization of equitable schools for all our students. I will also partner with state and congressional delegates to advocate at the State Capitol, and the federal level, for increased funding for racial equity in our schools. I also believe it is the role of every public official, at every level, to drive the discussion on the issues that matter — I will ensure that all conversations about SPPS are discussions of racial equity in our schools. Anything less would mean a failure to prioritize excellent education for all our students. I look forward to working with SPFE in these efforts.

DAI THAO: Yes; this means engaging in the community and stakeholders with hard conversations to make the case for increasing funding such as I've done for the recent referendum.

8. Traditionally the city of Saint Paul and SPPS have had an arms' length relationship. Each has their own budget, and sphere of influence. However, the actions a city takes impacts the daily lives of students and educators, and the desire to be near quality, local, public schools is often a primary factor in how families decide where to live.

- a. **How will you seek out educator and student voice in your decision-making process? What steps will you take to invite SPFE in as a stakeholder? How will you share information with SPFE, parents and students?**

ANIKA BOWIE: As a former educator and facilitator of SPPS district trainings, I will seek out the voices of the people who I am in proximity of the issue at stake. I am fully accessible to the community at large and have a strong background in elevating marginalized voices in places of power. As an organizer for Restore the Vote Minnesota coalition, a state-wide collaboration effort, I understand the importance of being in consistent communication with stakeholders and plan to build a relationship with SPFE as a stakeholder by managing time to meet and discuss political strategy for the improvement of quality public education. I plan to connect stakeholders with my staff to coordinate steps to best support decision-making. There are privacy practices and confidentiality policy that will regulate how I can share information with SPFE, parents, and students. Transparency and communication is key to a productive partnership therefore I will utilize several communications mechanisms to engage our partners such as online, social media, mailers and district council communications.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: In the early days of my campaign, I have worked hard to build connections with SPFE leaders, teachers, and parents, to gain a better insight into the state of SPPS and the challenges we face. I have greatly appreciated this perspective and insight on the campaign trail and know this expertise from those on the frontlines will be essential to crafting effective public education policy on the City Council.

As a Ramsey County Public Health Advocate, I spend my days helping connect individual experience with system-based expertise and opportunity, and I will continue that work on the City Council. I will facilitate proactive discussions to engage parents, teachers, and students in the critical issues impacting our schools, to ensure all voices are heard as we strive to serve all of our students equitably

DAI THAO: I meet with parent groups and educators regularly and will co-create places where we can gather to share and discuss policies that impact St. Paul families.

- b. **Where do you see opportunities for city and the school district to partner? How will you invite input from SPFE, parents and students on what those partnerships look like?**

ANIKA BOWIE: I am onboard with the initiatives and partnerships that the previous Mayor Coleman and current Mayor Carter implemented such as Saint Paul Promise Neighborhood. I see opportunities in bridging the resources of our public libraries and community recreation centers to our local public schools. Based on my experience in lobbying at the State Capitol, I see opportunities for both the district and city to work together on legislation that impacts teachers, parents, and students. I will continue to utilize my strength in organizing stakeholders to be engaged in our work towards quality education and racially equitable schools.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: I am running for City Council because I believe city services need to work better for the people they serve. That's the work I do at Ramsey County, and it's the drive I will bring to the City of Saint Paul. The city and school district must partner more closely in considering how school services interact with the broader social fabric of our city. Playgrounds, recreational programming, meal services, child care options, adult education opportunities, community gatherings — far more than just learning for students of a certain age during certain times, schools make up a core piece of our community. By partnering more closely between the city and the district — along with SPFE, parents, and students — we can ensure these services are delivered in a racially equitable way that does the most good for our children and families. Strong schools support strong students, strong families, strong communities, and a strong city.

DAI THAO: I believe that there are many opportunities for us to partner especially when we have large community input sessions about the City's budget and priorities.

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?**

ANIKA BOWIE: The term defines a leadership style that is rooted in inclusivity and collaboration of all people. It also means to be accessible, approachable, and responsible to the people I serve of Saint Paul. People-centered democracy is an aspiration that I strive to help the city council reach. I will commit to reaching a people-centered democracy by displaying a model of strong government and community relations grounded in access to public education.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: I believe strongly that the best decisions are made through discussion and collaboration. Throughout my career, I've been intentional about working in diverse teams to create real, meaningful change. To me, co-governance is centered in the principle that we work better together. No one should hold power; rather, elected officials should create space to empower and uplift the voices of their constituents.

The other critical component of co-governance is accountability. I believe all elected officials, especially incumbents, should be judged on two primary points: their record, including promises kept and results delivered; and, on whether they shared power broadly, or hoarded it. I am eager to be held accountable to my commitments — in action, and in values — as Ward 1's Councilmember.

DAI THAO: To me co-governance means accountable, transparency and governing with the people, and have the people (especially underrepresented people of color and women) at the table coming up with solutions but are also responsible of implementing such policy initiatives. People-centered democracy to me is politics, policy, and democratic processes and systems that is centered and driven by people and not corporations.

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

ANIKA BOWIE: I look to Mayor Carter, Commissioner Carter, and Representative Rena Moran to help guide me as an elected officials endorsed by SPFE to continue being a public education champion. I look forward to working with several youth-led groups and advocacy organizations to help guide good policy and practices that works for all of us. The most productive way to best support my role as a city council mem future fellow council members.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: I will seek the advice and guidance of my many mentors in public service, including my brothers and sisters in labor. In all matters, I will seek the perspectives of those who will be most affected by a decision. This means that, in matters where our schools are concerned, my first call will be to educators and parents.

DAI THAO: I have always and I will continue to look to SPFE, community members, and allies for guidance.

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

ANIKA BOWIE: I will take the steps to be accessible, involved, and informed by community. These steps will be taken in collaboration with community who are committed to change that works for all of us. These steps must be considerate of people of all social economic and cultural backgrounds and be adaptive to a variety of demographics. I will commit my steps to engaging communities that have been marginalized or left out of decision making spaces due to systematic barriers. With my staff I plan to continue to being a voice in my community.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: I have always believed that the best outcomes come from participatory organizing. I am committed to creating a welcoming, transparent, and inclusive space for everyone in Ward 1.

As a city councilmember, I will convene stakeholders and form diverse coalitions to get people working together, even if they don't agree on everything; and I won't just wait in the office for problems to come to me. I'll spend time in our communities – especially ones that are different than my own – to make sure all our neighbors have equal access to their councilmember.

As an advocate, I believe in holding elected officials accountable. I'll invite neighbors to collaborate on crafting policy to advance the goals we all share, and I'll expect them to hold me accountable when I do not meet their expectations.

When we govern together, we can begin to fundamentally transform our broken system.

DAI THAO: As an experienced Councilmember and a community organizer, I make my decisions carefully based on community input, data and research, listening to allies and stakeholders. I take my time to analyze each decision and calculate any unintended outcomes and what measures needs to be implemented to mitigate unforeseen problems

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

ANIKA BOWIE: I am running to serve the people of Saint Paul. I am a community cultivated leader who has experience serving the public good of the community out front and in board rooms. My accountability to the public good will maintain a more collaborative city that works together to serve the community. My platform and values will best serve our vision for the future more than my personal feelings. I am strategic and have the temperament to work with all people to reach a collective goals.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: Existing in the world as a woman, a Latina, and the daughter of undocumented immigrants meant that, from a young age, I had to fight for the dignity and respect others received without question. This early experience with inequality led me to devote my career to ensuring that others didn't suffer the same experience.

My motivation toward this work is personal, but my policy positions are not. Too many of us are trapped by a system rigged to benefit a privileged few, and we cannot hope to overcome this system without building the power and agency of our friends and neighbors. This goal is much bigger than any one person and requires ego to take a back seat so the collective "we" can thrive. I'm committed to building power with my neighbors as Councilmember.

DAI THAO: Lived experiences are important in policy making for the public good, but it shouldn't be the only driving force. As an experienced Councilmember I rely on thorough research, data, community inputs, understanding of the laws and city regulations to fully analyze a policy decision for the public good. These skills and experiences allows me to confidently champion bold and progressive outcomes.

10. What specific steps will you take to protect the right of workers – especially public sector workers – to bargain collectively? How will you encourage all workers to be part of a union, should they choose to?

ANIKA BOWIE: I will take the steps to build relationships with union workers and be engaged in the union's public policy. I am a strong supporter of unions and have family members who were proud union members and laborers. I can encourage all workers to be part of a union that work hard to protect their rights. As Vice President of NAACP, I advocated for the protection of rights of all people who face discrimination and intend on carrying my commitment to advocating for workers rights and civil liberties.

LIZ DE LA TORRE: As the daughter of a union member, and a union member myself (AFSCME Local 8), the fundamental right to organize is personal to me. I recently worked with my union to secure nearly \$20,000 in back pay.

I won't just talk about solidarity with labor -- I will be out on the strike line with Saint Paul workers whenever they are fighting to form a union, secure a fair wage, or increase wages, or improve working conditions. I will support prevailing wages and PLAs for all projects done in Saint Paul. I'll also write accountability provisions in projects that receive public funding, so the agreement can be nullified if employers don't keep their promises to workers and the community.

Public sector unions need a strong partner in the City Council, and I know where I stand -- on the side of workers. As a Council Member, I'll stand with labor to fight for fair resolution that serve all involved, especially our neighbors who depend on the union workers.

DAI THAO: As Councilmember, I protected workers and championed the strongest earned sick and safe time in the nation, paid parental leave, \$15, and walked the picket lines with labors. I will continue to educate public employees about their rights, the importance and benefit of organized labor. I will always support the right to organized labor, it is the last few tools we have left to fight corporate greed.