

The schools St. Paul students deserve

Why educators are willing to strike for them

What are educators fighting for in contract negotiations?

Educators' top priorities in negotiations include:

- A fully staffed mental health team in every building. This includes providing teachers with more training and hiring more social workers, counselors, psychologists, school nurses and behavior intervention specialists.
- More multilingual staff to help our students and families connect to their school community.
- Additional educators supporting students with special needs and appropriate assignments for educators so they can give students more one-on-one attention.

These changes would improve the learning environment for all St. Paul students and allow educators to give children more individual attention. They will also improve working environments for educators – we want to attract and keep the best educators for St. Paul students.

Learn more about the proposals at supportstpaulstudents.org.

Why are contract negotiations so contentious? Will there be a strike?

St. Paul educators understand contentious contract negotiations and a potential strike are stressful for all involved – especially working families and our most vulnerable students.

State law requires the district and unionized employees to bargain every two years. Negotiations began last May between SPFE and the district. The union offered 31 proposals in nine public sessions. SPFE filed for mediation in November because the district didn't offer counters to those proposals.

Strikes are scary for everybody and can have a financial impact on educators, too. But we are willing to make that sacrifice to make sure our students' needs are met. We all want our public schools to have the resources they need. Unfortunately, that's not happening.

SPFE's executive board authorized a strike vote for Feb. 20. Any member of the union can vote in that election.

When would a strike begin?

If members authorize a strike, it's up to the union's executive board to set a strike date. State law requires the union to give the district at least a 10-day notice before the first day of the strike.

If there's a strike, what does that mean for St. Paul students and families?

The school district will have to make a decision, but most likely they will close schools during the strike. Parents will need to find alternative options for their students. For our most vulnerable students, SPFE is investigating options for making safe sites available. More information will be available as these plans are made. It is also possible that the City of St. Paul will open recreation centers and libraries for students.

Will the district have to add extra school days if there's a strike?

Not necessarily. If the district falls below the minimum number of days middle and high school students need to be in school, the district could add days. But there is no penalty under state law if a district doesn't meet those requirements.

Didn't the union endorse current members of the school board?

Yes, SPFE did endorse these board members. Unfortunately, it's clear these negotiations are being controlled by Superintendent Joe Gothard, not the board. Communications to board members appear to be limited and selective. It's time for the board to demand more information and get involved in negotiations.

How can parents, students and community members get updates on negotiations?

Sign SPFE's petition at <https://actionnetwork.org/forms/support-spfes-bargaining-priorities> to get on our community allies list. You can also follow us on Facebook (Saint Paul Federation of Educators) and Twitter at @spfe28 (hashtags #WeAreSPPS and #WeAreSPFE).



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