

**This year, all candidates had the opportunity to answer questions about their core values, crucial issues impacting our schools, equity in SPFE, and their leadership experiences. See their responses below.**

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**Leah VanDassor (For position of Vice President and Regional Labor Federation)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role? (recommended word limit 100) .**

As a classroom teacher for over 27 years, I am dedicated to my students, helping them become lifelong readers, and guiding them to become critical thinkers. I am passionate about many things, including middle schoolers, strong education, and ways to improve and grow my union. I have a lot of knowledge both about my subject area of English, and also about union issues and systems. In all that I do, I bring my whole self. I want things done well, so I commit to whatever it is I take on.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out? (recommended word limit 100).**

Educating the whole child (and all the underlying areas included: class size reduction, nurses, media specialists, counselors, social workers, etc.); securing more funds and putting pressure on government when possible to increase the "size of the pie". I believe these two areas are intertwined because in order to have all that our students deserve, funding needs to increase. Students can't wait any longer; they need these supports now! We spent months bargaining for these things, yet there is still work to be done. We cannot let up, but need to redouble our efforts to secure this funding.

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

If we're going to continue changing our institution, we need to keep having open, transparent conversations member to member. We need to continue to reach out to our members of color and listen to them so we can learn what needs to be done. As a white woman, I will not pretend to know any of the answers, but I am open and motivated to learn. Additionally, in my interactions with other white members, it will be crucial to have the difficult, yet important conversations to help move all of us toward more equitable racial outcomes.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

I have held many positions in our union from steward to Institute Ambassador to Executive Board. I have also been a member of the last three bargaining teams. I enjoy learning about new things and using what I have learned to help and teach others. My union work is to encourage new people to fill positions throughout the union and then to support them in that work. I love introducing new people to union work because I know how much this work means and I want as many voices involved as possible.

**Todd Marder (For position of Treasurer)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role? (recommended word limit 100) .**

My work in public education and union leadership has centered around building relationships, advocating for others, and being a solidly reliable teacher and colleague. I approach all of my work by first building relationships with those around me. These strong relationships help me know what my students and colleagues value, which helps me be an advocate for them. As a teacher, a bargaining team member, a member of the Professional Issues Committee, and member of the PAR Board, I have shown that I am reliable. When I'm needed, I show up. I'm always excited to help my students, colleagues, and my union in any way I can.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

I believe that the most significant issue facing public schools is chronic under-funding, which I see as stemming from a lack of respect for educators and our voices. Making sure that public schools are strong and provide a great education to all students will require more than just money. But additional funding – and prioritizing spending based on educators' input – would have a huge impact. While people in positions of power say they listen to educators, they don't seem to really hear us – and this needs to change. Educators are on the front line, working with students every day, and we know best what our classrooms and students need.

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

First, I think SPFE needs to make direct efforts to increase the number of members of color in leadership roles. Since some of these positions require an application and selection process, I would advocate for training for interview and selection team members on implicit bias, so that we can interrupt it, and also a review of application and selection processes to ensure they are not biased. Second, I think SPFE members – starting with leadership – need to be committed to: understanding our own racial identity development; to moving forward on our personal and collective journeys; and to learning tools and adopting the mindsets necessary to be anti-racist in our work and daily lives.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

I have served three times in a row as a member of the SPFE bargaining team. This most recent round of negotiations, I was responsible for costing proposals and conducting financial research. I really took pride in these important responsibilities. Knowing how much our proposals cost and knowing what funding the district has and how it being used, gives us an advantage at the bargaining table. As Treasurer, I will be able to use my strengths to continue to advocate for my colleagues and our students. I also appreciate that the Treasurer position will allow me to stay in the classroom, so I will be able to maintain my commitment to my students, while using my skills to support SPFE.

**Fallon Henderson (Director of Non Licensed Personnel)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role? (recommended word limit 100) .**

At my core I value connections, people and respect. My belief is that treating people with humanity is important.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

My belief that student, families and educators voices are the missing piece to education.

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

Great leaders that are willing to listen and be selfless when making decisions for our members. We need folks that are willing to be pushed out of their comfort zone and willing to fight for our families and colleagues.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

I have been an executive board member almost two years. I've been a part of great discussions with great leaders and seen great outcomes due to those discussions. My belief is we still have ways to go.

**Yasmin Muridi (Director of Non Licensed Personnel)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role? (recommended word limit 100) .**

The three core values that define my work in public education and my union leadership are integrity, mutual respect & responsibility, and a sense of urgency. These are the (3) three core values that guide my "Why" for running for an SPFE leadership role in that I pledge integrity through my job role & responsibilities to my fellow colleagues, our students, our parents, and our community. My sense of urgency is to find ways to get our public schools fully funded. With these funds, I want to find a committee to hold the district accountable for dispersing the funds correctly.

I am a passionate ESP who strives to respect everyone I encounter throughout my career. I love work in the education system. I enjoy seeing my students smiling as they accomplish their tasks. I have persevered as an ESP for 6 years. I often persevere with my students because I, too, am often reminded that Rome wasn't built in a day. I have a great relationship with my students and their parents. They know that I respect their cultures and beliefs.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

I feel under-funding and district budget cuts as the most significant issue impacting schools.

Under-funding schools have led to huge problems for most public schools. You see a larger student to staff ratio, fewer resources to combat mental health needs, children of color being left behind and not receiving equitable resources to help them be successful as their white peers. Less funding leads to our students of color being left behind.

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

SPFE needs to reach everyone. Members of Color need to feel valued by SPFE. SPFE needs to do more work on racial, social justice, and transparency. Everyone needs to have a voice and to feel heard.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

Although I am from a different culture, my time spent in my union has built my leadership skills. I served on the SPFE Executive Board for two years. I am currently serving on the Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee. I served on the Negotiations team bringing my voice to the table for ESPs and ESPs of colors. In being nominated as ESP of the Year via Education Minnesota, I am using my voice to support my colleagues. I take my personal time to teach students' parents how to navigate in the school system as well.

**Jeff Garcia (Executive Board)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role? (recommended word limit 100) .**

My biggest value, and one instilled into me during my own education, is faithfulness. Through my work, I am trying to model faithfulness by having an impact on the students and places I am closest to — showing up when I am needed. That faithfulness informs my second ethic of service; I take a lot of pride in being a public servant and love St. Paul as my adopted home. Third, I believe in the power of listening, in order to amplify the voices of folks in my community. I hope that by living these values, I could be a moral and attentive leader in SPFE.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

I believe that without clear-eyed advocacy for key resources (mental health services, wraparound family help, career and tech education, restorative practices), our schools won't be able to educate the whole person as our kids grow, and we will enact the same violent and oppressive outcomes that underlie many past education projects. These resources come from good people who invest years into community schools; they are not bundled with new buildings and photo ops.

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

I believe that SPFE must do all it can to facilitate professional growth for non-licensed/multilingual/Black and Indigenous staff in our schools — these may include incentives to finish Bachelor's degrees, recruiting with programs like SUTR and getting graduates involved in SPFE, and other solutions. I also believe that we need to convene affinity groups that can advise the E-board and help SPFE write new narratives about our members, students, and community.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

I previously have served as a BoD member for the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group (MPIRG), and have a general knowledge of how boards function and fiduciary duties. I also have seen the landscape of MN politics firsthand and have many close friends in organizing. I hope that this background knowledge will come in handy when it comes time to amplify member voices — I want to practice listening as my default and ensure my voice is not taking up too much space.

**Janey Atchison (Executive Board and Regional Labor Federation)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role? (recommended word limit 100) .**

Solidarity, equity, and progressivism grounds my work as a public educator. We cannot change the status quo unless we are truly progressive in our approach to education, unions, and funding models. Over the past thirty years, and specifically with the Janus ruling, union workers have been under attack. It is crucial, now more than ever, that we, as SPFE, continue to fight for our students and create schools they deserve. We, as educators, also deserve respect for our career and the work we do every day. As a union, we need to continue fighting for our professional, our working conditions, and the important role we play in society.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

The most significant issue impacting schools is the mental health crisis facing our students. Recently, the 2019 Minnesota Student Survey results were published showing that thousands of students consider suicide each year and are continuously struggling with mental health starting at a younger and younger age. To me, this has reached a crisis level and we need for it to be addressed. On top of this, we have students who have adverse childhood experiences who need critical intervention. We need to be able to help students work through these traumatic experiences, so they are able to fully engage in school.

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

We, as a union, need to continue pursuing more teachers of color. The State Legislature is considering a bill to increase teachers of color in Minnesota, which I fully support. This bill recently cleared the House of Representatives! I also support Parent's for St. Paul Schools Charter Moratorium. Charter Schools continue to hyper-segregate students as well as pull money from our schools through the special education bill back process.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

I am currently representing SPFE at the Regional Labor Federation and would love to continue that work! I currently sit on the COPE committee at SPFE and attended the Unity Summit this past February. I also

represent SPFE on the Legislative Action Committee at Education Minnesota and will be a representative for us in April at the Convention! This spring, I was also an Area Strike Captain in addition to my continuous role as a building steward. I love education finance policy and am currently working on my PhD around funding and the economics of education. I was recently appointed to the Governor's Commission on Education Funding in hopes to come up with solutions to better fund education in Minnesota!

**Anna King(Executive Board)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role? (recommended word limit 100) .**

I believe public schools should be positive and safe for ALL. Educator voices should be respected and heard. Students should receive the support they need and deserve. It is no secret educators have a full plate. I want to help our members by advocating for their needs and our students' needs. In this role I would try my best to bring our voices to the table.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

Mental health and trauma needs are growing at a rapid rate. As our students grow and change around the Nation our policies remain dated. All stakeholders need to reimagine and restructure schools and changes need to be adopted.

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

Our union leadership should represent the students we serve. We are missing some voices at the table, and having elected leadership seek out missing perspectives could help bridge that gap. I believe we need to evaluate everything that we are doing, and assess who it is positively impacting. We need to be prepared to change, even if that means we face some harsh truths.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

I pride myself on my collaboration and problem solving skills. I am team oriented and involve myself in everything at Ramsey from athletics and Flipside, to school leadership teams. In 2017 I got more involved with our union when I volunteered as a building strike captain. Since then I have had the pleasure of serving as our building steward and a CAT member the last two years. In 2019 I worked as a summer organizer for SPFE and recruited new potential members. Most recently I served as an area strike captain for the 2019 contract campaign.

**Sarah Bosch(Executive Board)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role? (recommended word limit 100) .**

Love for all children, love for learning, and equity. All children deserve the joy of learning, the joy of childhood, and the joy of discovery. We need to look at the role of race in our education system and why some students have more opportunities than others.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

We need fully funded schools. Educators are asked to be everything for our students, and we are only measured by test scores. We need to educate the whole child and we need funding to support it.

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

Our union needs to be a welcoming space for all of our members. We need to rethink settings where the status quo is that mostly white members show up. We need to ask hard questions and be open to discomfort. We need to reach out to SPFE members and have open conversations.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

I am a current executive board member, I was an area strike captain, and I am a building steward. As a leader, I seek multiple perspectives, I carefully read through information, and I ask questions for deeper understanding.

**Carlo Franco (Executive Board and Regional Labor Federation)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role? (recommended word limit 100) .**

All of my work is grounded in my deep, cultural values and the ones that are the most important are:

1. Collective decision making and action through an equity lens
2. Uplifting marginalized groups voices to be heard, listened to, and valued
3. Youth success grounded in community connection

As a member of the working-class, who was raised by a Union family on the West Side of Saint Paul, I am a proud Union Member of Saint Paul Federation of Educators (SPFE) and formerly of AFSCME Local 1842 (City Technical Union), a community activist & advocate, a Coach, a Saint Paul Youth Worker and SPPS staff member, I am excited to be considered for this SPFE Leadership Opportunity. I want to bring my lens of being a Latinx Man from a diverse Saint Paul Community, Union Leader with AFSCME, and being the PBIS Coordinator at Humboldt working to Coordinate Student Successes to the Board of the SPFE Executive Leadership Board.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

The most significant issue impacting our schools in Saint Paul is symptoms that stem from systemic oppression. This exists from generations of leadership in school districts across the nation that have not addressed every policy, procedure, training and dollar spent from an equity lens. It is extremely important to me that our young people are at the helm of every decision that is made for our students. When SPPS has 80+% of students of color and an even higher percentage that live in poverty, we need to have our

work be grounded in intersectionality, while keeping a race and class analysis at the core of all of our work.

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

First, it is extremely important to have our board be representative of the demographics of the people we serve. Those of us providing direct service to the young people of Saint Paul know what they need, even more so - those of us who have lived and experienced what our young people go through, absolutely know what our young people need and deserve.

Additionally, every decision that is made on behalf of young people, staff or our communities should be looked at from an equity lens. Too often those in the leadership roles decide “what is best for our \_\_\_\_\_ (people, communities, students, staff, etc.)”.

EVERY single decision that is made, should be through an equity lens. Every dollar spent, every decision made, every policy created, every procedure reviewed, every event hosted, every professional development offered, and so much more. I will bring this lens to the Executive Board for SPFE.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

I have experience as a Union Activist, Professional Experience with Saint Paul Public Schools and the City of Saint Paul, and as a West Side Community Leader. In all of these roles, I pride myself in being a lifelong learner and Transformational Leader who gets stuff done. While with AFSCME as a steward and most recently when I was Strike Captain at Humboldt, I prepared myself in these roles by attending training, meetings, and setting up one-one-one conversations with other labor leaders who could mentor me to ensure I am successful in these roles. Additionally, I have read all 3 of the SPFE Labor Agreements many times, and am able to interpret these contracts, provide clarification to other staff and have also prepared notes on how some of our contracts may be able to be streamlined and strengthened. Professionally, I am a Youth Worker with the City of Saint Paul and PBIS Coordinator at Humboldt as a SPPS staff member, and have also always demonstrated being a trainer, coach and leader to my colleagues. This is in addition to keeping young people at the forefront of all of my work and decisions made.

As a long time youth athletic coach, and the President (currently elected) of the West Side Boosters Youth Athletics 501(c)(3) Non-Profit., I have continued to build on the work of my predecessors and the 50 years of history that we have brought to Saint Paul, while adapting and ensuring we keep up with the most up to date technologies, fundraising, policies, procedures and more.

Sharing leadership roles are extremely important to the work we do each and every day. Taking an asset based approach to building our staff and leadership teams is key, while ensuring that there is something for everyone who wants to be involved. We can do this together by continuing to build and strengthen our base, and engaging all of our membership.

**Beth Swanberg(Executive Board)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role? (recommended word limit 100) .**



Equity should be at the heart of public education. We need to strive for classrooms where teachers have the tools they need to meet the needs of ALL students.

Inclusion is important in our public schools as well as in our union. As a union leader, I will continue to work to build engagement among members so our decisions reflect the ideas and work of all.

In a member-driven organization, it is the dedication of individuals that keeps us moving forward. I am happy to put in the extra time and energy to fulfill the responsibilities as a member of the Executive Board.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

Decades of underfunding at the state and federal level are currently starving our public schools. Per student funding has declined to the levels of the early 2000s. Teachers are continuously asked to do more with less. We see the effects of this in our classrooms every day.

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

It has been my involvement in SPFE as a previous Executive Board Member, on the TIGER team, and on COPE where I have learned the most about systemic racism and white privilege. As a white woman, I need to look at all I do through a lens of racial equity and address racism with other white folks. I am committed to calling out racism when I see it and when someone else calls me out, I will listen, learn, and try to do better.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

Last fall when I knew that Chicago Teachers Union was going on strike and that the first day would be over MEA, I decided to go to Chicago to support them. Walking the picket lines with them I understood the value of solidarity. While there, we also learned so much from their process and were able to bring it back to inform our process when we went on strike. Seeing it all come full circle as an Area Strike Captain when their members came here to support us is an example of how we are stronger together and how I would lead within SPFE.

**Rachel Stohlmann(Executive Board)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role? (recommended word limit 100) .**

My three core values are Solidarity, Advocacy and Passion.

I think that we saw the need for Solidarity during the month of March. Without the Solidarity that we saw from our membership, we would not have had such a successful strike. We also saw so much Solidarity from the community around us. The amount of people who brought us food, honked their horns, joined us at picket lines and in rallies and even the businesses who stepped up with support - that should leave little doubt that we are doing a great job as educators fighting for their students and people are behind us all the way.

As a Special Education Teacher, one of my core values has to be Advocacy. There are so many people who do not understand my students. Whether that be what they need or even how they experience the world, I need to be an advocate for them on a daily basis. I would not be an effective teacher if I was not actively observing and learning about my individual students and their Special Needs so that I can stand up and speak for both them and their parents. Obviously, this ties right in to advocating for our teachers and other families as well.

Finally, my most evident core value is Passion. You can ask anyone who knows me that I am definitely passionate about education, my students and anything that inspires me (most recently our bargaining and eventual strike). Passion has and continues to fuel my life. I am loud and outspoken and you will always know what I think about what our Union, students, families and teachers need. It is my Passion that drives me day after day. It was my Passion that was further ignited this school year. It is my Passion that makes me want to be a leader for our Union on the Executive Board in the coming school year.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

Lack of funding on a Federal and State Level. Obviously, we heard this over and over again from our Superintendent as we were trying to settle our contract. Both the Federal and State Government have significantly cut funding to all areas of Education consistently. However, we all know that our kids needs are actually getting more and more intense and thus more costly. As a Special Education teacher, I am seeing our students have more and more needs. But I asked to work with virtually no budget when my students need very specialized materials. I am asked to provide knowledge and training to paraprofessionals but given no time to do that because no one wants to pay them for extra hours to have Professional Development or even just basic training on how to work with students with Special Needs. And I know that Special Education is not alone nor unique, these things apply to all of our students. Until we can change this, we will have to continue to fight hard to get our students what they need.

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

As you look in our buildings, it is clear that there is still a lack of racial equity in our teaching force. SPFE needs to be more involved with the District to find ways to more actively recruit and retain Teachers of Color. I think that there is active recruiting being done but how are we actively supporting those teachers as they get into our classrooms and our schools. In our schools, I am sure that there is still a feeling of being in the minority. I look around my weekly staff meeting and it is not unnoticeable that the majority of faces are white and female in the Elementary setting, while the faces in our paraprofessional staffing are exactly the opposite. I know that teachers of color in our EL department are frequently "forgotten" when it comes to equitable practices such as providing PLC times in the buildings. And then they are just told to "make it work". That does not give that person a sense that they are a valued and equal member of the school staff. We need to do better at this.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

This past year, I have been actively involved as the Union Steward in my building. As negotiations continued to break down, I led my building to go "Red for Ed" every day during the month of November. We provided additional red items for our members to wear so that they would be in Red every day for the month of November. I participated in all of the Actions that we had leading up to the Strike. In January, I spoke before the School Board during Public Comment to ask the School Board and Superintendent Gothard to try to avert a strike and take our requests seriously. I was an Area Strike Captain during the Strike and had to manage the multiple entities that are housed in the Rondo Building. I am a Mentor for my newest SPED colleague in the building. I am also a part of the PAR Board. This last year, I have had such a great year learning and discovered a passion for helping to lead my colleagues in advocating for themselves and our profession. I feel like adding a leadership role on the Executive Board would give me a wonderful opportunity to continue to grow and advocate for both my colleagues and my students.

### **René Myers(Executive Board)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role? (recommended word limit 100) .**

I place Integrity above all values, and it drives everything I do and how I interact with every student and adult. If I do not speak my truth and follow through on my word, I am and have nothing. Compassion reminds me to love and lift those not in the same place of good fortune as I, and it goes hand in hand with Respect, for without respect for all people, children, staff and positions, I cannot expect anything but selfishness instead of selflessness.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

The mental health of our students and staff is at great risk, and I see this every day in my work. I'm a trusted staff member, and this means both students and staff often share the trials of their lives with me. My students come to me daily with the ongoing trauma associated with homelessness, violence in their homes and community, hunger, abuse, etc...and my coworkers share the stress and sense of helplessness they feel because they cannot help their students in the ways they need to. We do not have nearly enough services in place to help those struggling with these needs.

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

My coworkers of color share that they don't see themselves represented. I would like to see conversations occur where they feel safe to speak their truth, no matter what that is, no matter how uncomfortable, where they can tell US how they want to see these changes occur, not us guessing and hoping we get it right. I would like to see places at the table left open for these voices, and not filled by white people simply because no others were able to be there in that time. I don't think saying we want people of color to be present is enough. We need to show this in determined, intentional and repeated actions.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

With little experience or related knowledge, I took a personal leap and became a member of the bargaining team. My goals were to learn, represent those in the SCSP group, and contribute towards the greater good. I tend towards the introverted side, so each of these goals took me out of my comfort zone and into a space I've not often been brave enough to be in. I learned to be comfortable being what sometimes felt like the only person who didn't have all the knowledge, learned to speak about what my peers experience in their professions so that others could learn, and ultimately, I contributed towards the greater good of those in and not in my profession. I found my "union feet", and am ready to strengthen these new skills and add to them.

### **Gia Taylor(Executive Board)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role?**

Three core values that define my current work is belonging, believing, and being courageous. I selected these values because one has to believe they belong to a greater part so solidarity then becomes courageous in the eye of great need.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

I believe the most significant issue of our schools is the shortage of substitutes. Because leaving for any reason is difficult and knowing you won't get a sub after spending hours preparing for one stands out

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

They need an equity committee. To help add that flavor to it.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

Our most recent strike I believe demonstrates this. The union stood tall during these trying and uncertain times. Teachers felt the fellowship of one another no matter what school.

### **Jean Walker (Regional Labor Federation)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role?**

I am a team player who is determined and dedicated to making public education the best it can be for all students. Through a strong union we will have the guidance and pathway to fight for better schools.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

Mental health services for all students is the most important issue in our schools. Too many students struggle with mental health issues on a daily basis and not enough places to get help. When their most basic needs are met we can then focus on the academics. We are just starting the fight to get more vital services for our students.

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

We need to see people from diverse backgrounds in every aspect of our union and schools. We should be promoting a workforce and leadership that reflects the image of our student population. The union needs to continue the fight for promoting pathways to increase a diverse workforce in our schools.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

I would like to continue the work I have started with being a face at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation. The federation is a collection of very diverse labor unions. We need to have a voice and face to represent our schools linking and sharing our ideas with our fellow unions.

**Sue Snyder (Regional Labor Federation)**

**What are 3 core values that define your work in public education and union leadership and how do they guide your "why" for running for an SPFE leadership role?**

\*Children are our future.

\*We are stronger together.

When we work together, students benefit, families benefit, and our communities benefit.

\*Labor is more than educators. We need to be with (and support) each other through all of our struggles. Labor has created the middle class. I want to afford the middle class opportunity to more people in our community. Strong labor unions in every sector will help do just that.

**What do you feel is the most significant issue impacting schools and why do you believe it stands out?**

Underfunding. When we have a superintendent saying student needs are important yet we cannot accommodate them because of funding, we have a problem.

With adequate, equitable, sustainable funding, we could have mental health supports for all students, multilingual supports for students and families, case loads that are actually manageable, co-teaching teams that have planning time together, teacher and education support professionals having time to plan student support, the list goes on...

**SPFE has been working with intentionality to examine and break down racial barriers in our union. From your perspective, what is most needed for SPFE to continue and deepen this commitment to equity?**

We need to do more than talk about equity. We need to do more than have a meeting or training day about equity. We need to identify and name the injustice that happens everyday and everywhere. We need to lean into and get beyond the discomfort and not let the discomfort slow us down or stop us from making changes to make our union more equitable, more welcoming and accessible to all. Policies and practices need to be examined and changed because these policies have made our union the organization we have today.

**Tell us about a union, professional or personal leadership experience that illustrates how you would learn and lead, as Vice President, Treasurer, Director of Non-Licensed Personnel, Executive Board Member or SPFE representative at the St. Paul Regional Labor Federation.**

I will

attend RLF meetings and functions.

share information with members about labor events.

encourage and invite members to participate in our RLF.

support RLF endorsed candidates through phone banking and door knocking.

show up for our union brother and sister's events: rallies, strikes, fundraisers,...

Labor is all of us.