



MEMBER HANDBOOK



The **SAINT PAUL FEDERATION OF EDUCATORS (SPFE)** is made up of over 3,500 School and Community Service Professionals, Educational Assistants, Teachers and other Licensed Staff who work at over 65 sites in Saint Paul Public Schools. SPFE is an affiliate of Education Minnesota and our two national teachers' unions: the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association. We are a member of the Saint Paul Regional Labor Federation and the Minnesota AFL-CIO.

**JOIN US AS WE STAND UP FOR OUR STUDENTS, OUR SCHOOLS
AND OUR COMMUNITY IN SAINT PAUL.**

WHO WE ARE

SPFE has a long history advocating for quality public schools through collective action. We firmly believe that **all students deserve a high-quality education**, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, immigration status, or ability. This belief guides us every day as we fight for strong public schools in the classroom, at the bargaining table, and in the streets.

We have lived this belief since our founding over 100 years ago. Teachers in Saint Paul came together to officially charter our union with the American Federation of Teachers in 1918. They were fighting for better working conditions and better public schools in Saint Paul.

Our members have successfully advocated for class size caps, additional staffing for our English Learners and students enrolled in special education services, high-quality family engagement programs, Restorative Practices, and better working conditions and higher wages for educators.

We know that **if we stand together, we can be a powerful force for change, equity, and democracy.**

Unfortunately for far too many students, our public schools still don't work. This is especially true for many of our Black and brown students.

We know our public education system does not have to be this way. We believe that we must do better. Finding the resources to provide a quality education for every child is challenging, but absolutely necessary. **We need you to join us as we fight for fully-funded, racially equitable schools.** Our students, communities, and country are counting on us.

HISTORY

Over 100 years ago, a group of teachers in Saint Paul officially formed the Saint Paul Federation of Women Teachers, affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers. Teachers in Saint Paul had been organizing since the late 1800s, but the chartering of Local 28 marked the founding of the **first teachers' union in Minnesota**.

At the time, **teachers' unions were outlawed** by the superintendent in Saint Paul. There were no tenure laws. Active union members were denied promotions, transferred to other schools, and even fired.

None of that stopped educators in Saint Paul who believed in the promise of public schools. They fought against merit pay and for higher wages, tenure laws, and a voice in their workplace. **They stood together to fight for their profession, their students, and their public schools.**

We are grateful to these pioneers. They had the courage to organize when teachers' unions were illegal and the vision to imagine the schools Saint Paul students deserve.



B E N E F I T S

As a member of SPFE, **you have a direct say in the governance of your union.** Members elect union leadership and ratify contract proposals. Members also can serve on our Bargaining and Contract Action Teams, Professional Issue Committees, or as stewards or other union leaders.

SPFE members have **unique opportunities to grow in their professional practice as educators.** SPFE offers a wide variety of courses through our Learning and Teaching Center, most of which are offered free of charge for members. Additionally, membership opens opportunities to be engaged in public education advocacy on a state and national level.

When you become a member of SPFE, you also join **Education Minnesota, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and the Minnesota AFL-CIO,** and receive all of the benefits associated with those organizations. Members receive \$1 million in professional liability insurance and legal representation for employment-related issues. Members also have access to additional discounts on insurance, financial planning services, dental and vision care, prescriptions, and even travel and car rental. A full list can be found in your welcome folder or by calling the SPFE office.

M E M B E R S H I P

Anyone whose job is classified as being in the **Teacher, Educational Assistant, or the School and Community Service Professional** bargaining units is eligible to join SPFE. To join, visit www.spfe28.org/membership/join/.

Questions? Email membership@spfe28.org or call (651) 222-7303.

GLOSSARY

MEMBERS: You! Members of SPFE – School and Community Service Professionals, Educational Assistants, Teachers, and Other Licensed Staff – stand together and support each other in the workplace. As members, you should read your contract, participate in union activities, wear red on Thursdays, and support your coworkers.

STEWARDS: Stewards are your building or program union representatives. They are leaders who serve as a source of information about your union. They can answer questions about your contract and help resolve most problems or grievances in the workplace. They share information happening in your building with union leaders and organizers. Stewards are elected every spring. If you don't know who your steward is, contact our union office or check www.spfe28.org.

CONTRACT ACTION TEAM: The Contract Action Team (CAT) are leaders who make sure you stay informed about negotiations. Each building or program should have a CAT member. They attend bargaining sessions and organize actions in your building to show solidarity with your bargaining team. If you need an SPFE t-shirt, talk to your CAT member. They also share information with the bargaining team about the issues you care about. If you're interested in getting involved as a CAT member, contact the union office.

EXECUTIVE BOARD: The Executive Board is comprised of 18 elected members and up to three members appointed by the President. The Executive Board is responsible for directing the affairs and strategic direction of the union. Terms for officers and the Executive Board last two years and are staggered. To get in touch with the Executive Board, email executiveboard@spfe28.org.

OFFICERS: The President of SPFE acts as the organization's chief executive officer and presides over the Executive Board. Assisting the President are other union officers: Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Director of Non-Licensed Staff, representing EAs and SCSPs. They are elected to two year terms in the spring by SPFE's membership. You can find a list of officers on our website.

COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL EDUCATION: Our Committee on Political Education (COPE) is responsible for developing our union's political plan and endorsing candidates. COPE screens candidates for local and statewide offices, hosts fundraisers for endorsed candidates, and organizes door knocks and phone banks to get leaders elected to public office. Contact our Political Organizer, Lynne Bolton, at lynne@spfe28.org to get involved.

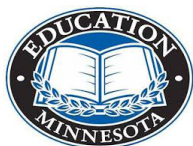
ORGANIZERS: SPFE's organizers are staff members who organize and mobilize educators. Organizers work with members to build the strength of our union and solidarity among educators. They also lead bargaining sessions with the district, assist members with grievances, and act as resources for you. Our organizers are Abena Abraham (abena@spfe28.org) and Maggie Kalda (maggie@spfe28.org). To find out which organizer is assigned to your school, check our union website or ask your steward.

EDUCATION MINNESOTA: Education Minnesota (EdMN) is the state union of educators, representing public school teachers, school support staff, and higher education faculty in Minnesota. There are 80,000 EdMN members across the state. As a member of SPFE, you are a member of EdMN as well.

AMERICAN FEDERATION OF TEACHERS: The American Federation of Teachers (AFT) is one of two national unions. SPFE has been an AFT affiliate since 1918. AFT represents 1.7 million members

NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION: The National Education Association (NEA) is the largest labor union in the United States. NEA represents over three million educators around the country. In 1997, SPFE affiliated with NEA as part of the creation of EdMN.

AFL-CIO: The AFL-CIO is the largest federation of labor unions in the United States. Both our national unions, AFT and NEA, are affiliates of the AFL-CIO.



UNION RIGHTS

As a member of SPFE, **you have the right to have a building steward or union representative present at any meetings or investigatory interviews** if you believe the meeting may lead to disciplinary action. Here are some guidelines to protect your rights:

- Politely and professionally state that you wish to have your union steward present.
- Contact your building steward or – if your steward is not available – the union office.
- Your steward will act as your witness and take notes for future reference.
- If a serious accusation is made, the steward should immediately postpone the meeting and contact your SPFE organizer.

If your request is refused and management continues asking questions, you may respectfully decline to answer. Instead, read the following statement when the meeting begins:

If my responses to your questions could lead to my termination or discipline or adversely affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request you summon my union representative. Until my representative arrives, I choose not to answer any questions.

GRIEVANCES

A grievance is a worker complaint that is a violation of the contract, the law, employee policies, or past practices. The grievance process is outlined in your contract.

If you think you have grounds for filing a grievance, talk to your steward. Not all workplace complaints are grievances, and working with your steward improves your chances of success. If you and your steward determine that a contract violation has occurred, together, you will file a grievance with the assistance of your organizer.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

SPFE has long had an active, engaged political presence in our city. Led by our Committee on Political Education (COPE), SPFE believes in thinking differently about politics. Instead of just engaging with political parties and individual candidates, we focus on issues that matter to educators and parents.

We work together with members of the community – including parents – to set an agenda for our elected leaders. We have fought for a more transparent, engaged school board, pushed our corporate and nonprofit neighbors to pay their fair share to support our public schools, and worked with our friends and allies to build coalitions that can shape education policy.

Our members drive SPFE's political engagement. COPE **develops our union's political plan and screens candidates**, and makes recommendations to the Executive Board. To learn more or get involved, contact our Political Organizer, Lynne Bolton, at lynne@spfe28.org.



TEACHING & LEARNING CENTER

SPFE believes **the most relevant and effective professional development is led by other educators**. Educator-directed professional development encourages constant learning and growth in our schools and in our union.

Because of this, SPFE is proud to offer **research-based professional development entirely created and delivered by educators**. All our courses are presented in an ongoing, reflective process, rather than as a singular in-service event. Through these classes, we emphasize practical applications and implementation of instructional strategies.

We offer professional development courses for free to SPFE members, unless otherwise noted. For most courses, SPFE members should register online through Saint Paul Public School's PDExpress system.

If you have any questions about SPFE's professional development offerings, want to get involved in the family engagement opportunities listed on the next page, or just want to learn more, please contact the Director of SPFE's Teaching and Learning Center at tlc@spft.org.



ACADEMIC PARENT TEACHER TEAMS

Academic Parent Teacher Teams (APTT) are an **alternative model of parent-teacher conferencing**, meant to engage families more intentionally in supporting students' learning.

Instead of the traditional two one-on-one conferences, APTT allows for three 75-minute group meetings throughout the school year, where teachers meet with all the parents in the classroom at one time, in addition to a one-on-one conference. Teachers use these group sessions to **coach parents on how to interpret the data** that tracks student performance, and the group works on **concrete strategies to support learning at home**.

PARENT TEACHER HOME VISITS

Families and educators often want the same thing for students: to learn and thrive in school. Parent Teacher Home Visits (PTHV) seeks to **build the partnerships between parents and educators** that are essential to providing quality education to all students.

PTHV is a voluntary program for educators in Saint Paul. Before their first home visit, educators who elect to participate are trained by both educators and parents on how to **respectfully and authentically engage with families**. This training ensures families and educators meet each other as equal partners in their student's education.

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

Restorative Practices represent a radical shift in the way members of our school communities relate to each other, focusing on **intentional relationship building and shared problem solving**. When restorative practices are successful, families feel safe and welcome at their child's school because they have **deep, lasting relationships within the school community**.

Restorative Practices began as means for SPFE to address school discipline issues during our 2015-16 contract negotiations. Through our partnership with Saint Paul Public Schools, Restorative Practices in Saint Paul has become a **model for a healthy, racially equitable school culture**.

FACEBOOK: Saint Paul Federation of Teachers
TWITTER: @SPFT28
INSTAGRAM: @SPFT28

Visit www.spfe28.org for more information.

23 EMPIRE DR., STE N 100
SAINT PAUL, MN 55103

PHONE: (651) 222-7303
FAX: (651) 222-8948