

2021 SPFE Public BOE Candidate Public Questionnaire

The 2021 SPFE Board of Education Candidate Public Questionnaire consists of two sections: five yes/no questions, and eight long answer questions. Candidate responses are listed in alphabetical order. No edits were made to responses.

SPPS Board Chair Jeanelle Foster and SPPS Board Vice Chair Jim Vue have declined to seek the SPFE Endorsement process, and did not return a completed questionnaire.

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

1. The Saint Paul Federation of Educators believes that parents, educators, community members and students should be at the center of decision-making around educational policy. However, there has been an increase in money from out-of-state millionaires with a vested interest in pursuing a corporate education reform agenda and 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?**

	YES	NO
James Farnsworth	X	
Halla Henderson	X	
Clayton Howatt	X	
Jennifer McPherson	X	
Zoe Sblendorigiebel	X	
Uriah Ward	X	

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

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

	YES	NO
James Farnsworth	X	
Halla Henderson	X	
Clayton Howatt	X	
Jennifer McPherson	X	
Zoe Sblendorigiebel	X	
Uriah Ward	X	

3. 2021 is a bargaining year. SPFE engages in open bargaining, encouraging SPFE members and community members to attend and witness bargaining with SPPS.

a. Will you commit to attend at least two bargaining sessions?

	YES	NO
James Farnsworth	X	
Halla Henderson	X	
Clayton Howatt	X	
Jennifer McPherson	X	
Zoe Sblendorigiebel	X	
Uriah Ward	X	

4. Do you support a moratorium on all new charter schools opening in St. Paul as well as a moratorium on any expansions of charter schools already in St. Paul?

	YES	NO
James Farnsworth	X	
Halla Henderson	X	
Clayton Howatt	X	
Jennifer McPherson	X	
Zoe Sblendorigiebel	X	
Uriah Ward	X	

5. Do you support collective bargaining for public sector unions?

	YES	NO
James Farnsworth	X	
Halla Henderson	X	
Clayton Howatt	X	
Jennifer McPherson	X	
Zoe Sblendorigiebel	X	
Uriah Ward	X	

Responses are limited to 150 words or fewer for each question.

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

James Farnsworth

A strong public school system is the cornerstone of a strong community. As a proud SPPS graduate, I can personally speak with passion about the student experience in SPPS. I feel incredibly lucky to have benefitted from such dedicated and amazing educators. A high quality public education should be a fundamental right for every student in the city of Saint Paul. In order to maximize the value of SPPS within the city, we need strong community partnerships in order to enhance the everyday lives of students, staff, educators, and families. During these incredibly difficult times, community partnerships are essential to not only ensure the success of education delivery, but to ensure those other critical family needs are met so students can fully engage with completing their K12 education.

Halla Henderson

I firmly believe that when we invest in our public schools, the rest of our community thrives. Our students are our future leaders and educators, so when we cut programs or fail to provide them with the tools they need to succeed as adults, we further inflict harm upon them. Our public education system is vital to our communities' success, and to divest from it will only lead to increased disparities for students and families.

Clayton Howatt

Public education is the bedrock of our democracy. It is the one place where a wide diversity of students, parents and guardians, teachers, administrators, citizens, and more, can come together to make the difficult decisions that will provide the most benefit for all. And like our democracy, public education is far from perfect. Therefore we must continually work to improve our common good. The inequities we see just in our own city of St. Paul are mirrored within our school system. Public education must be a primary tool in addressing these injustices.

Myself, my wife, our children, along with many extended family members are products of St. Paul Public Schools. Public education generally, and SPPS specifically, are simply an integral part of who I am.

Jennifer McPherson

The value of public education is both emotional and financial, when the schools do good the community does good because public schools are a reflection of the community.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

Public education has value because it requires buy in from the community and thrives on collective input. Education being accessible and free to all people is how a society continues to progress, it is the cornerstone of health and success. For me public education is a must. It has given me an education that was enriched by the diversity of people and knowledge we share. Saint Paul must invest in our public schools because it is an investment in our future.

Uriah Ward

I believe that public education should be part of a societal framework that provides equal opportunity for all. Public education ensures the stability of our democracy and our economic future. Our educational system should make it so that all of our students and families can pursue their life goals. This belief was inspired by my time growing up in public schools and it encouraged me to pursue a career in education. Public schools were also a secure place for me when home was not. I know how important it is for our schools to be safe and nurturing environments for all of our kids. We need more people in elected office who understand the personal and societal importance of strong public schools.

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?***

James Farnsworth

As a student in the district, I was a member of the advocacy group No Cuts to Kids that collaborated with SPFE on the rally at 360 in 2015 to demand that proposed budget cuts stayed out of the classroom/direct services to students and families. I graduated from Highland Park Senior High School in 2016. For the last four years, I served as the administrator of Working For A Better SPPS, a Facebook group dedicated to discussing SPPS issues. I had the opportunity to meet and exchange dialogue with many educators, staff, parents, students, and community members as the administrator of that group. I'm also the son of two longtime public school teachers.

Halla Henderson

I work directly with young people in my role with the Minnesota Youth Council. Every day I am privileged to assist students as they navigate how they advocate for themselves and their peers in political spaces. From this role and the years of organizing I've done in Saint Paul, I have had the opportunity to engage with SPPS

students and alumni and gain a deeper understanding of their experiences within the district.

I attended public schools as a student and faced many of the challenges that our students are facing. I dealt with housing insecurity, overcrowded classrooms, and difficulty navigating post-secondary options while in high school. Those experiences combined with my time as an advocate have shown me what we're up against and what is possible when we organize around our collective values.

Clayton Howatt

I am a parent, Galtier Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) president, Executive director of our PTO 501(c)3, past member of the SPPS Budget Finance Advisory Committee, past member of the SPPS/SPFE Integration Task Force, past member of the SPFE T.I.G.E.R. Team, assisted the formation of the Maxfield PTA, founder of Parents for St. Paul Schools, an organization advocating for a charter school moratorium in St. Paul.

Jennifer McPherson

I have 5 students and volunteer often. I attend school and board meetings.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

My whole school career prior to college was at SPPS. SPPS is home to me in a lot of ways. I grew up in these schools and have been inspired by my experiences to reinvest in SPPS. I worked for SPPS for 3 years after graduating even while attending school because of my passion and dedication for this work.

Uriah Ward

Public education has been important to me throughout my life. I came up in public schools and got my Masters of Arts in Education from a public university. I've served students and colleagues as a public middle school social studies teacher and department chair, chess team coach, SGA advisor, and football game announcer. Politically, I was an organizer on the 2018 referendum campaign. SPPS is a part of my family. My wife is a teacher at Bridge View. I also know the value of educational professionals standing together through collective action. While I was helping to organize my own workplace, I joined SPFE's strike by walking the picket line and 'adopted' a school during the strike and brought them breakfast and snacks.

b. How will you demonstrate that you are a “public education champion”?

James Farnsworth

A public education champion is somebody who believes strongly in public education and backs up that support by action. Whether that’s attending public schools as a student, spending time at the state legislature advocating for fully funded public education, or volunteering at a local school, it’s about demonstrating your values and belief in public education by taking action during a time where public education needs more champions than ever before.

As the son of two longtime public school teachers and union stewards, I’ve grown up to strongly value public education. I’m running for the Saint Paul Public Schools Board of Education because I want to serve as a strong steward and ambassador of our public school system.

Halla Henderson

A public education champion is someone who fights for the resources that our schools and students need to receive an equitable education. As I envision a working relationship with decision-makers and SPFE, I see this as an opportunity to push for fully funded schools, additional mental health supports, and resources for students. This is an opportunity to acknowledge past failings and move forward with a plan that invests in our students and community.

Clayton Howatt

I see a “public school champion” as someone who is fighting for the institution of public education. I will be doing this by addressing the underlying structural issues that continue to put SPFS and our students at a disadvantage. Much of this will be highlighted in a financial plan our campaign will release. There are structural issues within SPFS that I will highlight and request the public’s help in addressing and fixing at the district level. There are also issues at the city and state level that I plan to highlight for the public and address, both publicly and privately, with our city and state elected officials.

Jennifer McPherson

I will make myself available to families and listen to them. I will do school visits and speak with staff.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

I demonstrate it through the work I currently do and will continue to do by supporting teachers, students, staff, the community, and fully funding our schools

Uriah Ward

We need leaders that stand up for our public education consistently - not just when our students, teachers, or parents experience a crisis or when candidates are asking for support during their run for office. I've worked for increased funding for our schools, I've supported SPFE in their advocacy efforts and I've supported candidates who are committed to fully-funding our schools. I will continue to be an advocate and will continue to uplift other leaders who share our values.

I will also make the point that so much of what impacts student achievement happens outside our classrooms. Poverty, housing, healthcare and other issues have a huge impact on student achievement. I'll be an advocate for progressive change wherever I can be so that our schools aren't asked to fix every problem by themselves. Being a champion means being a partner, and I want to serve as the best partner I can.

c. Why are you seeking an endorsement from SPFE?

James Farnsworth

I'm seeking an endorsement from SPFE because educators are part of the backbone of the district and during these extraordinarily difficult times, educators need relentless champions on the school board. I would be honored to receive SPFE's endorsement and support. I'm eager to get to work on behalf of all educators, staff, students, and families.

Halla Henderson

I am seeking the SPFE's endorsement because unions supporting working-class issues are essential to challenging growing corporate power and improving the lives of workers, and I believe when we invest in workers and the labor movement, our community is stronger. I see this as an opportunity to fight for a district that supports our students and educators

Clayton Howatt

Teachers have the training, expertise, and experience to be a guiding force within public education. Although an endorsement from SPFE would be greatly appreciated the main reason I am participating in this process is to engage with SPFE leadership as well as teachers across the district. I expect through this process I will be asked questions that will be of importance to SPFE but also the broader community. This process is an example of the transparent democratic process we use to govern our public school system. I am in full support of this process and hope many voters will learn about myself and the other candidates through this platform SPFE provides.

Jennifer McPherson

Because I care about education and want to be held accountable by the ones who are in the buildings.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

I am seeking the endorsement of SPFE because I believe teachers know a good candidate when they see one. I have always trusted my SPPS teachers so I have confidence in their ability to endorse a candidate that makes sense.

Uriah Ward

SPFE represents voices that need to be integrally involved in our education system. SPFE understands their members' needs as professionals. Our elected officials should recognize the experience, training, and dedication that our teachers and staff bring to the table every single day. They need and deserve a vocal partner and advocate. As a former teacher, I know that SPFE members have a deep knowledge of what our students and families need to be successful. I know we share the same values around building a community that supports all of its members, regardless of their background.

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

James Farnsworth

I envision a collaborative and transparent relationship which includes direct and proactive communication. If/when we disagree on a topic, I believe in initiating conversation and dialogue as soon as possible to work on a solution. I deeply value trust, honesty, integrity, accountability, and transparency as core to my governing philosophy. As a school board member, I expect SPFE to hold me accountable as an elected official, partner, and ally. At the end of the day, we're all in this together for the kids, families, educators, staff, and the broader community of SPPS.

Halla Henderson

I believe in transparency and proactive communication. I see a working partnership as an opportunity to lean into our shared values and govern with community instead of *for* community. That's not to say that I don't believe there will be moments where we disagree, but I am committed to entering those conversations from a restorative mindset. Ultimately, I believe we are fighting for the same thing. A district that is safe and supportive for our students, families, and educators.

Clayton Howatt

SPFE, SPFS administration, students, families, voters, and other stake holders all want the same thing for all of our children. We want a safe environment where all of our kids can receive a world class education to fully realize their potential. We must remember that, we are allies with the same end goal. Of course the pathways to that end goal is where the disagreements arise. In respect to SPFE I will always welcome and listen to input from leadership or any individual teacher. If I disagree with SPFE I will say so in clear terms and own my decision. I will then move on and seek SPFE input and partnership on the next set of decisions facing our district.

Jennifer McPherson

Open communication, asking questions, and being available. When we disagree we will find a way to compromise in a way that will benefit the children first.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

I envision strong relationships being built on trust, honesty, and respect. Relationships are not quick or easy but they are vital in order to work collectively. When it comes down to it we all want the success of students so even when we disagree this is what we will fall back on is how are we doing our jobs to the best of our ability to better ensure the success of our students.

Uriah Ward

I plan on looking to SPFE membership and leadership for guidance in School Board decisions. I want our communication to be open, transparent, and frequent. When we disagree, I hope to explain my rationale as best I can, receive honest feedback from SPFE, and transparently explain my decision-making process.

In March, SPFE went on strike for the first time since 1946.

a. What do you understand to be the reasons SPFE went on strike?

James Farnsworth

SPFE went on strike because your top priorities were not being met by the district at the bargaining table. Those included: a fully staffed mental health team in every building, increased multilingual staff, and additional educators to support students with special needs.

Halla Henderson

I understand that the strike stemmed from a call for a reallocation of funds that would support our educators and students. Needs that failed to be addressed at the bargaining table were additional mental health supports in each building, additional resources to support students with special needs, and increased resources for ELL services.

Clayton Howatt

I saw that there were two broad areas for the 2020 strike. The first reason was around an SPFE vision for how to best help our students. Our schools have had their budgets cut. Seemingly year after year. The resources cut have often been nurses, librarians, counselors, ELL staff, literacy support, and other student support positions. These positions are not optional and we need to do everything possible to keep and increase these positions in all of our schools. I saw the SPFE strike as fighting for these positions and vision.

I also saw a broader reason for the strike. It was a call to action for our state and federal governments to do their part in properly funding public education. In the United States there is no reason a school cannot “afford” a nurse and a librarian in every single school. We need to do better.

Jennifer McPherson

Class size, special education funding, and teacher pay.

Zoe Sblendoriogjebel

SPFE went on strike for better mental health services with training for teachers and fully staffed mental health teams, investing in teachers that speak more than one language, and more special ed teachers.

Uriah Ward

Our teachers and families have been clear: our educators and staff members are professionals who deserve to be treated as such in fair dealings and compensation. In the past, our school board members have talked a big game about being collaborative partners, but when the time has come to be advocates and allies, they have not always followed through. Our students and education professionals are desperate for help. Full-service community schools are how we should move forward, together. That means access to services beyond the classroom, like mental health counseling, social services, and early interventions to meet the needs of our school communities.

- b. What do you understand the role of the Board of Education to be in negotiations with any bargaining unit? As a board member, how would you participate in negotiations with any bargaining unit?***

James Farnsworth

I view the role of members of the Board of Education during contract negotiations with a bargaining unit to make sure that we're informed and up to speed on what's going on, actively participating in/observing negotiations as appropriate, and to direct and advise the Superintendent on district negotiation strategy.

Halla Henderson

My understanding of the role during negotiations is that members would be aware of what was going on, actively engage in the process, and advise when appropriate. Additionally, I believe it's crucial that as an individual member, I would come to conversations early and see my role as one where I could be proactive instead of waiting to interact when tensions are heightened.

Clayton Howatt

There is a balance that must be taken. The Board or an individual Board member does not want to become a third party in bargaining, as that will not serve the public's best interest. The Board of Education should be a part of the negotiations on some level to inform both parties the priorities the Board has moving forward. If elected my goals as a new Board Director would be to learn about the process by observing as well as leaning on the side of not being a hindrance to the process.

Jennifer McPherson

To make sure it's fair and that everything is with reason.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

I understand that the board of education plays a vital role in negotiations. I am for unions and people to be paid a fair wage. This is how I will show up to negotiations, as a person who values people and their work. We need all of the staff that show up with their best selves to school every day.

Uriah Ward

The Board of Education should be actively engaged in the bargaining process. They should regularly attend bargaining sessions and should provide guidance and feedback to district negotiators. They should continually seek out updates from both sides of the bargaining table and help to facilitate a good-faith negotiation wherever possible. Too

often our Board members will stay out of the process until it reaches a crisis moment. I'm going to do my best to listen to all voices - including our students, teachers and families - while working to build relationships where we all thrive

- c. ***Will you commit to releasing the tapes from closed board sessions that relate to SPFE negotiations as soon as SPPS and SPFE have agreed to a new contract?***

James Farnsworth

In the spirit of accountability and transparency and in accordance with local, state, and federal laws, yes, I would commit to releasing any tapes as able to per advice from SPPS General Counsel

Halla Henderson

Yes, the need for transparency is greater than ever and I will commit to that

Clayton Howatt

I cannot commit to that at this point. I simply do not have enough understanding of the pros and cons of this action.

Jennifer McPherson

Yes

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

100 percent commit to that, the public deserves to have full transparency from the district. Their taxes, their votes, their right to know what they are paying for and where people stand on issues.

Uriah Ward

Yes.

Like other districts across the country, SPPS is facing concrete challenges such as: lack of adequate state funding, increasing charter schools, and lack of resources. As part of the contract agreement, SPPS and SPFE have agreed to a statement of intent around: forming a work committee to explore seeking a PILOT (Payment In Lieu Of Taxes), coordinate efforts to seek increased funding, initiate a community impact study on the impact of charter schools in our community, and collect and review data from families

that have left the district). While COVID-19 has impacted the ability to meet and collaborate in person, SPPS has yet to take these steps.

- a. ***What specific steps will you take to make sure that SPPS fulfills their responsibility to meet this agreement?***

James Farnsworth

I would immediately and in collaboration with board colleagues, direct the Superintendent/district administration to take whatever steps necessary to form a diverse, representative, and inclusive task force/working group to begin this work. Every tenet of the statement of intent are things that we should be actively collaborating on and the district has a responsibility to assist in convening the group and beginning the work.

Halla Henderson

I believe that a PILOT program is long overdue. Without a meaningful increase in education funding through the state, it forces districts to develop their own shoestring resources. Saint Paul has many non-profits and faith organizations that believe in public education, yet they don't contribute to the property tax base. Increasing our levy in a majority renter city, with a majority of renters being from communities of color, isn't our best solution. We need to find more revenue sources that don't price communities of color out of Saint Paul. In addition to PILOT programs, the School Board has a responsibility to work with city officials and assess the impacts on financing large development projects in the city with Tax Increment Financing. I will leverage my relationships with the Saint Paul State Legislators Delegation and the City Council to help convene and find funding for a community impact study.

Clayton Howatt

I fully and strongly support this initiative. To be most effective this will require partners outside of SPPS. The first step is to ensure that the majority of the Board of Education and the Superintendent are in agreement. SPPS must then make two things clear; the role a school district plays that no other entity can replace, and the threats that are in place to public education that are outside of the control of SPPS. We must then build a coalition of elected officials including, City Council members, the Mayor's office, and state Representatives and Senators, that share our concern. We then need to put forward a clear plan with specific asks and communicate the goals to the broader community.

Jennifer McPherson

I will use technology to gain as much information as possible.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

I will leverage my position and relationships within the district to continue to understand and push for this issue to be fulfilled. It is a priority of mine that we understand why our community is choosing charter schools and how we can better serve our communities for the success of them and their children.

Uriah Ward

PILOT's are the first issue I listed on my website. I have publicly campaigned on all of these issues. I will press the district on specific timelines for each of these and will follow up to make certain that adequate progress is being made. When possible, I will work directly on the implementation of these efforts.

b. What will your timeline be for starting a community impact study on charter schools?

James Farnsworth

Acknowledging I continue to not have the full background on why the community impact study hasn't launched yet and understanding the urgency of it, I will get up to speed as quickly as possible and do whatever I can to ensure a thoughtful, well tested, and culturally competent study is designed and administered in a reasonable timeframe.

Halla Henderson

Studying the impact of charters is of utmost importance for me, and I am ready to push for a study immediately, working alongside our city partners and beginning a thoughtful analysis. The consistent divestment from our schools ultimately harms entire communities. I would be interested in exploring how we use the study to gather input on ways to build a stronger and more equitable school system.

Additionally, the largest funder of charters in the state is the State. A portion of this work should also consider how to capture funds that would have been allocated to charter schools during the moratorium/study year and direct them to our public school system. We cannot begin this conversation without state legislators at the table.

Clayton Howatt

I have been working on this for the past six months with Parents for St. Paul Schools. I feel it is important that this study comes from a third party, not the City of St. Paul, or SPPS. We need it to come from a third party for two reasons. The first being objectivity, facts need to be the starting point in any policy change. Secondly, we need experts in their field to conduct a study like this. I have already been in contact with organizations at the University of MN that would be able and willing to study the breadth and depth of the impact, both positive and negative, of charter school expansion within St. Paul.

Jennifer McPherson

The first two months I will take time to build a team to work on this.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

The sooner the better. I know just how long good data takes to gather, this has been an issue too long to push back this study any further.

Uriah Ward

The Saint Paul City Council has begun this process and my hope is that the study will be completed before I am able to take office. However, I am still waiting to learn more about the details of this study to see whether or not it will sufficiently address the concerns I have about unfettered charter school expansion. If the city doesn't follow through and I begin my term without a study finished or currently underway, I would begin pushing for that study immediately and would expect to be able to begin it within a year from that point.

c. What is your timeline for collecting data from families that have left the district for other districts or charter schools? What steps will you use to gather information from families that do not speak English as a first language? What is an appropriate timeline for that information to be made available to the public?

James Farnsworth

Performing exit interviews, having conversations, and collecting other data points from families that have left the district is something that I've been advocating for as a student and community member for a long time. When a family announces their intent to leave the district, there needs to be a robust exit strategy plan in place to collect as much feedback from that family as possible so we can learn and continue improving as a district. The plan needs to be fully culturally competent – utilizing translators, multilingual family engagement staff, technology, etc.

In terms of determining a timeline – I fully understand the urgency of the issue but due to not being fully up to speed on the latest conversations and work planning, I don't have a specific, concrete suggestion for a timeline at this moment. What I can commit to is encouraging and ensuring a thorough, engaged, and efficient process. This work has already been delayed for too long and is too important to wait any longer.

Halla Henderson

In addition to performing exit interviews and collecting data, I would push for the establishment of a comprehensive plan for exiting families. To be effective, any plan

would require access to both language and cultural translation. So, in my first year on the Board, I will prioritize engaging in conversations with Minnesota's State Ethnic Councils: The Council On Asian Pacific Minnesotans, the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs, and the Minnesota Indian Affairs Council, as well as other organizations working on education issues in immigrant and BIPOC spaces, to develop a plan with them that will best capture data in communities most impacted by disparity. I cannot project a timeline without first engaging those partners, but upon completion of such a study, the data should be immediately available to Saint Paul communities.

Clayton Howatt

I would build on the idea of asking for input from families that leave SPPS. I feel this should be handled at the school level and families that leave the school for an out of district option OR another option within SPPS will be contacted. It does not have to be every single family but a fair representation of the families choosing to leave. Families leaving the district is of course the bigger concern in terms of per pupil funding. But, families leaving one SPPS school for another SPPS school should be considered a problem as well. An increase of families leaving a single school should be a loud warning sign of problems at the school level that need to be addressed. I will address this further as a part of my Enrollment and Equity plans that will be released in the coming weeks. Families that do not speak English as their home language can be contacted with the help of the ELL staff at the school they are leaving, which they should have some relationship with. There is no reason a sort of, "beta version", could not be ready for fall of 2022.

Jennifer McPherson

3 months should be enough time to find these families and understand why they left. I will use translators and resources to get all the information. 6 months after we start collecting data the information should be made public.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

This should be as transparent as possible throughout each step of this process. In order to gather all the data I find it best to bring the community together to really understand an issue you must first understand the people it impacts. Using translators is an easy first step but it takes more than that to get people to share their personal story.

Uriah Ward

We should collect this data each year during the enrollment period and possibly through the end of September to catch families who have decided to leave the district. We need to make these surveys available in multiple languages and can use community liaisons to help reach out to families that do not speak English as a first language. The

information should be made available to the public before the end of the calendar year each year so that we have time to act on the data before the new school year begins.

SPPS serves a diverse population, and has been criticized heavily in the past for poor communication and lack of transparency, resulting in a loss of trust in Board members and the district.

- a. **What actions will you take to rebuild trust with parents and bargaining units that communication will be timely, accurate, and complete?**

James Farnsworth

Timely, accurate, and complete communication is essential. Full stop. For example: while the details of active negotiations can be sensitive and need to be kept confidential at times, that means communication to external stakeholders has to be extra comprehensive and thoughtful all throughout the process. Through my past governance and community engagement experience, I've learned time after time how important communication is to **all** stakeholders of an organization/group/institution. Communication and transparency build trust. I am completely committed to always being accessible and available myself as an individual school board member and to always push my colleagues and district administration to be as accessible, transparent, and responsive as possible

Halla Henderson

Clear and frequent communication is crucial to regaining trust with stakeholders, as is acknowledging that trust has been broken and we will need to take active steps to restore that trust. I pledge not only a high level of accessibility, but proactivity in engaging students, parents, and educators regularly, with or without an imminent decision.

Clayton Howatt

I believe integrity is a key component of being an effective leader. I will commit to things I can deliver and not to things I cannot deliver. I will expect the same from those who I will be working with. This means communicating timelines and expectations from the beginning of a process. If timelines will not be met, guardians, bargaining units, and anyone else, needs to know prior to the deadline and provided an explanation, an apology, and a new timeline. Not keeping ones word is a primary source of sewing distrust, and cannot be tolerated.

Jennifer McPherson

I will stay true to who I am and show everyone I can be trusted and am here for the community not the district.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

Authentically showing up as myself, a concerned open-minded citizen, is how I believe I can best rebuild trust. Being someone who has been engaged in the schools and the work to make them better is another way I rebuild trust. Trust is earned and I am here to work for and with the people. Trust looks like calling on someone and them responding with genuine concern and real action.

Uriah Ward

I believe this starts with a recognition that we have failed and must do better. We should not shy from naming SPPS's shortcomings and engaging in open and honest debates about how best to serve our students. We should set higher expectations regarding district communication. We should expect a transparent dialogue instead of one-sided statements

- b. What steps will you take to make sure that adequate and appropriate translation and interpretation services are available at all times?***

James Farnsworth

Translation and interpretation for any individual that needs those services is essential. Whether it's for a district budget engagement session, a school PTA meeting, or an external communication coming from the district, any district stakeholder should have easy access to request translation or interpretation services for any SPPS related function or published material.

Halla Henderson

I would like to see us invest in community liaisons, folks who are embedded in the community and can provide the nuance needed for meaningful interactions, in addition to funding for quality translation services. I have consistently heard from community that ill-translated documents cause confusion and difficulties for new immigrant and ELL families. For languages that are spoken rather than written, I would be interested in exploring how we can ensure video and audio translations are dispersed

Clayton Howatt

I feel the most important relationship a parent or guardian has with the school district is his or her child's teacher. A teacher should have the ability to quickly and easily access

translation services to communicate to a parent or guardian and that parent or guardian should have the same ease of access to be able to communicate with their child's teacher. I will reach out to our various Parent Advisory Councils for specific recommendations. SPPS is home to well over 100 languages spoken at home. This means that beyond the major languages spoken (Spanish, Hmong, Somali, Karen, for example) we have many more languages (Pashto, Lhasa Tibetan, Arabic, etc.) that our resources for translation services are much less. We also need to create a pathway for these families to communicate with their children's teachers.

Jennifer McPherson

Start a monthly district parent group each school will have a parent rep that will address their schools concerns and give updates on the solution. The board will respond at the next meeting.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

By investing in these services. We need teachers and staff that have all the tools to better communicate with all of our students.

Uriah Ward

Teachers are frequently unable to acquire translation services for the families they serve. This is unacceptable. We need to invest the resources necessary to make certain that translation services are available whenever needed. Like many of our priorities, this one comes down to funding. We have to be willing to work together to push for fully-funded schools so we can meet our obligations to our students

Saint Paul is home to diverse communities, including many newcomers to the United States. SPPS plays a large role in helping newcomers feel welcome in their new city, while still valuing and retaining strong cultural ties.

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

James Farnsworth

The district has a history of failing ELL students. I've seen this issue up close and personal thanks to the relentless advocacy of my friends Jane Sommerville and George Thawmoo. As a result of their advocacy, a light was shone on some major inadequacies

that existed in the district in terms of how ELL and immigrant students were being serviced.

Many of SPFE's top priorities such as a fully staffed mental health team in each building positively impact ELL, immigrant, and other vulnerable student populations. Especially during this time of hostility and an increasingly uncertain climate for vulnerable populations at the federal level, I will do everything I can to make sure our district offers culturally competent, well-rounded support for the students that need it the most.

Halla Henderson

We have one of the most diverse school districts -- full of rich cultures and lived experiences -- however, our students and schools are struggling to provide them with the tools they need for success. How do we gauge engagement when we struggle to disseminate accurately translated materials? What would it look to better fund ELL programming and hire additional teachers? How are we ensuring that engagement is transparent, culturally competent, and consistent?

Basic translations and written materials are not adequate for families in SPPS. On the school board, I will prioritize exploring measures that emphasize audio and video engagement, liaisons for language and cultural communities, and more robust ELL programming. These investments aim to improve both the retention and experiences of families and foster stronger relationships in SPPS. Policy-wise, we need to explore alternative means of assessing the learning of students and the success of educators beyond standardized tests.

Clayton Howatt

We must ensure that ELL students are given the same opportunities to excel that all other students are given. For example, Capitol Hill, our only "Gifted and Talented" elementary school has an ELL population of 9%. Our district as a whole has an ELL population of 28%. If our district is going to offer G&T services then they must be put into the schools that have populations that are being under-served.

From my experience in helping lead many community engagement events at my daughters' school I have found the most successful events have the following; food, the kids are three having fun with each other, and time. This is a recipe for building community. Once a diverse group of people actually become a community they begin to advocate and empower each other. Creating and maintaining open and welcoming environments goes a long way to increasing family engagement.

Jennifer McPherson

I would first partner with colleges and Lutheran Family services for translators, make sure they have access to and know about all resources available, with monthly check ins.

I will have family fun days and have a family reward program based off of points.

I would allow Black families the option to have their child in this program because our first language isn't English it's Ebonics and we have to change at school so we won't get in trouble.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

Our city is lucky to have such a range of diverse ethnicities and languages spoken. Our schools need to feel welcoming more than just translating hello at entrances. We should offer classes where all our students can learn about our diverse student body either a Hmong language class or a history class about the history of migration in St. Paul. We need students to know they matter and that they are reflected in our curriculum. The more our students feel welcomed the more their families will be engaged, because school will be more than just a place their children go to for 5 days a week it will be a place that their story matters.

Uriah Ward

We need to allocate more funding to interpreters and social facilitators for our families that need non-English communication. These facilitators and interpreters need to be able to connect with our teachers and staff to help our students and their families to ensure the long-term success of our students. Too often, teachers seek out translation services so they can communicate with SPPS families, but are unable to find assistance. We cannot meet our obligation to all of our families without adequate investment in interpreters

The murder of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, has led to many institutions revisiting their relationship with police and policing. In Saint Paul, Black, Brown and Indigenous youth advocated for ending the SPPS contract with SROs. On June 23, 2020, the Saint Paul School Board voted to end the SRO contract. The removal of SROs is only one step in ending the policing of students.

- a. **What is your definition of “school safety”?**

James Farnsworth

School safety goes beyond physical safety. Students need to feel protected, nurtured, and cared for in the building each day. This means having robust social and emotional supports in place so students can focus on learning and developing lifelong relationships within the SPPS community.

Halla Henderson

The removal of SROs was a big step in disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, there are still obstacles in our students' paths. When I imagine a school system that works for all students, and where students feel safe in our buildings, it's one where we invest in mental health supports and proactive measures and move away from punitive ones. When we invest in additional Restorative Coordinators and Community Intervention Workers as opposed to relying on suspensions we shift the way our students view their experiences at school and how we engage in student-adult communication. Over the years, the conversation around school safety has been used against BIPOC students and I want us to move to a framework where we view it as investing in our students and within our district.

Clayton Howatt

All students are supported and nurtured. The diversity of students; including but not limited to, socioeconomic background, abilities, disabilities, religious background, gender, sexual preference are acknowledged and celebrated. This safety extends from the classroom, to the hallway, to the lunchroom, the bus, and beyond. This culture must come from leadership and be embraced by all in positions of power

Jennifer McPherson

A calm relaxed environment where everyone feels accepted and free to be themselves. Secured buildings, onsite nurses, counselors, and calming spaces.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

My definition of school safety is a place everyone feels safe because all of our basic needs are taken care of. Safety is built on trust and the mental, emotional, physical health of people. When I think of safety I imagine safe spaces that are created collectively and tended to when problems arise. A safe school is one in which people eat together, feel trusting of adults and students, a place to retreat to when life outside of school feels overwhelming. A safe school does not need cops to patrol within its walls because a safe school is one where the community watches out for each other.

Uriah Ward

School safety means that our students need to be physically safe AND emotionally secure while at school. We need to make sure that students, regardless of their background feel welcome in our schools. We need a holistic view of safety that recognizes the struggles of our students. It must be trauma-informed and recognize that safety goes beyond law enforcement or zero-tolerance approaches.

b. What steps will you take to include students, families, educators, and community in creating school safety policy?

James Farnsworth

I've been following the board level presentations since the vote to remove SROs from district high schools. The community engagement structure around what's next for school safety remains a little unclear to me. Knowing that this work will be well underway by the time I would be joining the board, as a current community member, I expect there to be a robust engagement structure in place that equally includes all district stakeholders and that centers the voices of those who are disproportionately impacted by traditional models of school safety.

Halla Henderson

I consistently hear from community that they feel as if they are only engaged with when a decision is imminent. I believe that the more engaged our students and stakeholders are in decision-making the more the outcome will resemble the community's actual needs and gain buy-in from its members. For instance, it's crucial that the students and advocates who led the charge for the removal of SROs are centered in the conversation around what comes next. I am committed to holding conversations with community members, educators, and students and pushing for their voices to be centered in decision-making spaces. We cannot roll out a plan without their guidance throughout the process. The next step is to co-create new practices and policies alongside our students and communities who have been targeted and harmed by SROs

Clayton Howatt

Listening to constituents prior to making any decisions on school safety policies, or any other policy is obvious. But our educational system and our criminal justice system have a long history of punishing Black and Brown students and people more harshly than their white counterparts. SPPS is also 79% Black and Brown students. That means that these discussions must be lead by Black and Brown families. We also do not want to wait until an event like the murder of George Floyd to work on these issues. We already have two groups in place that I feel could lead conversations and make recommendations in these areas. Our Parent Advisory Councils (PACs) as well as the Student Engagement and Advancement Board (SEAB) can provide tremendous help and leadership in this area.

Jennifer McPherson

Sending out surveys

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

I have since 2015 been working on what school safety is and means as a student. I experienced loss and trauma as a student and at times did not feel there was space for me to experience hardships. Having cops in schools never felt safe for me as I had seen a brutal side of cops before. I worked with the Board of Education as a leader in the Student Engagement and Advancement Board to make schools safer from the student perspective. We had an extensive process to engage the communities impacted within our district. It will be these tools of engagement and authenticity that I use to continue to be open to the voices of all those in our district.

Uriah Ward

Our policy-making process should be bottom-up and collaborative. We often create committees to work on issues like this. A committee process can be great if the district is required to act on the committee's recommendations, or at least explain why they have decided to amend or decline those recommendations. For this and other issues, I would like to see committees be given more power to see their ideas implemented or addressed.

Personally, I will continue to seek out advice from all stakeholders and will create a diverse group of advisors to assist me in my internal decision-making process as a Board member.

c. How will you center the voices of Black, Brown, Indigenous and immigrant students in discussion of school safety?

James Farnsworth

Centering the voices of Black, Brown, and Indigenous students in this process is essential. BIPOC students such as myself have faced tremendous inequities in our schools and communities for far too long. Creating and sustaining true systemic change requires centering and elevating the voices that have been the most impacted by the systems we need to disrupt.

Halla Henderson

The conversation regarding the removal of SROs has been predominately carried by students, particularly BIPOC students. I met with students this summer as they attempted to navigate board dynamics and determine how they could play a role in influencing the Board's decision. I believe as an adult, it's my role to offer advice when asked, use my own influences and political power to get them into the spaces they wish

to be in, and then step back and support them. I am committed to building with students and providing them the support they need to lead this conversation. Our students have been clear thus far, they don't need police in their schools. They need mental health supports and funding for restorative justice practices.

As with other pillars of the SPPS community, I will not just engage impacted students when making decisions. I will continue to listen and elevate their experiences from day one, as I have been platforming and empowering them on my own campaign

Clayton Howatt

By making space and providing time. As mentioned above, these discussions must be lead by Black and Brown voices. If they are not at the table in acceptable numbers to fairly represent our district then we have failed at the very first step. That first step being building the trust in the community at large that leaders will not just listen but act and put in place real change.

Jennifer McPherson

By continuing to do what I'm already doing.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

It is only when we are discussing school safety through the lens of BIPOC folks that we are understanding what school safety means for everyone. Without centering BIPOC folks we get "safety" that looks like cops patrolling our hallways for criminals when really all people need to feel welcomed. What I hear BIPOC folks speaking to is that safety for them looks like investing in our students through ethnic studies where accurate history is taught in every classroom, where our diversity is our strongest asset, where we see teachers that look more like our students. How I center BIPOC folks is by listening to their concerns and amplifying their voices. I cannot personally fix institutional racism, but I can give all people a seat at the table so that we can all work towards a better SPPS.

Uriah Ward

All of our students and families should feel welcome in our schools. We need to make sure that marginalized voices have representation at the table, that their concerns are heard, and that we craft policy together. We need to be adaptable for specific communities, but there are some things that are absolutely non-negotiable. For example, St. Paul Schools should never cooperate with or tolerate ICE enforcement.

- d. What role should Restorative Justice play in reducing discipline and suspension disparities? Specifically, how will you partner with SPFE in funding and expanding Restorative Justice to reduce discipline and suspension disparities?***

James Farnsworth

Restorative justice centers around reconciliation which is really important, especially right now. I'd fully support ways to incorporate restorative justice techniques and best practices into the work that's happening to reimagine what school safety looks like.

Halla Henderson

When I imagine what we could be, I see a district that leads in replacing punitive measures with restorative policy and proactive measures to reduce harm in the first place. To get there, I am committed to fighting with SPFE for additional funding for Restorative Justice efforts and to pushing the state for a deeper dive into data related to student suspensions and expulsions. The more we invest in students and keeping them in school, the better our outcomes will be

Clayton Howatt

The best place for a student to be is in school, especially the child that may be having a difficult time and in response acting out. Restorative Justice is one approach to achieve this while also addressing the possible harms done by a student. This seems like an obvious win win. But, before committing more resources to these programs I would need to see the data and academic studies that show that it is working. I would also take it upon myself to engage with an individual schools in SPPS that has implemented Restorative Justice in the recent past and talk with staff and hopefully families as to how they feel about the program. I would simply see this process as an appropriate due diligence.

Jennifer McPherson

A common sense role not everything requires discipline.

By working with natural healers and youth yoga instructors in the community.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

Restorative Justice is one of the best paths we have forward. Without these practices we will be leaving behind students of color because of our lack of willingness to meet students where they are at. I am all in on fully investing in Restorative Justice practices. I have been since I learned about them in 2015 when I had conversations with my teachers about applying for the grant to fund the program at Como Park High School.

Uriah Ward

We still have a long way to go in making sure that school discipline is applied equitably. The data is clear that BIPOC students are disproportionately punished. Overall, our disciplinary policy should aim to be more restorative. All of us, including our students, are more than any single mistake they might make. By bringing students who have harmed others, those who have been harmed, and other stakeholders together, we can create positive change within our communities. I believe that building a school to success pipeline through restorative programs is more effective than punitive school to prison approaches. The better we understand where our students come from, why they are acting out, and how we can heal together, the better off we are.

- e. ***SPFE has contract language for the creation of SCIT (School Climate Improvement Teams). How will you partner with us on the creation and use of SCIT in the district?***

James Farnsworth

The creation of SCITS at the building level seems very reasonable and straightforward. While inclusive and comprehensive district level planning is ongoing, things also look different and feel different when implemented at the individual school levels. As a way of ensuring ongoing feedback and engagement, the creation of SCITS seems like a no-brainer.

Halla Henderson

Crafting policy that is inclusive and representative of community requires an investment from our stakeholders. The educators who work in our buildings and students who sit in our desks need to be included in conversations regarding their individual school building and what school safety can and should look like. It is crucial that we engage with them and, from what I understand, the implementation of SCITs would help us to do so.

Clayton Howatt

I would be a strong advocate for SCITs. I have seen first hand the crumbling of a school climate and the serious impact that has on students and the school itself. I have also witnessed the opposite; the impact targeted resources can play in getting classrooms and a school back to their primary role of educating students. Of course details matter, I would need to see a detailed vision and plan. We also need tools in place to give us a greater warning of when a school may be approaching a point where an intervention like a SCIT may be needed. I will present my idea for that within my Equity Plan.

Jennifer McPherson

By giving my opinion and speaking up on areas that need improving.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

My partnership would look like making sure students and families are a part of climate teams. As well as asking for training/education on what others have done.

Uriah Ward

We need to bring all of the members of our school communities together to make decisions. We need an honest and open dialogue between teachers, administrators, staff members, parents, and students to craft the specific policies that our schools need. I want to work with SPFE to make sure that all of our schools have site-based teams to better meet their needs.

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?***

James Farnsworth

Co-governance and people-centered democracy to me centers transparency, accountability, and collaborative communication as founding principles. As a school board member and as a governing board member in my current and past experience, relying on community partners and all stakeholders of an institution/group/organization goes hand in hand with principles of good governance. Governance can oftentimes become an inaccessible and confusing process for many. I'm all about disrupting that in the spirit of bringing as many folks to the table as possible.

Halla Henderson

When I imagine a school board that works for all of us, it's one where the voices of those directly impacted by our decisions are not only centered but are leaders in decision-making spaces. Too often, decision-making happens behind closed doors and without input and guidance from community. That's not how I intend to govern. I see a working relationship with SPFE, students, and community members where we make decisions together and have an open and ongoing dialogue. I expect folks to push me and hold me accountable and I hope there's the capacity for me to do the same.

Clayton Howatt

Co-governance is of specific importance to me. Public education is governed by local decisions like the election of the Board of Education. Policy decisions are also made at

the state and federal level. The decisions the City of St. Paul make, also have an impact on SPPS. That means that as School Board members we must meet with our elected officials, especially at the state level to communicate where we need their help. If elected transparency and communication will be a cornerstone of my service. Currently we as community members rarely hear from the Board of Education unless we get in direct contact or watch a Board meeting. I plan to communicate with St. Paulites regularly through social media updates. The goal will be to keep people more informed as well as hopefully getting more people engaged.

Jennifer McPherson

Different parts of the government working together. Citizens voting on issues

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

Co-governance to me means power with not power over. So when we are working it is the understanding that we are working for and with people to nourish the needs of our community not to dictate what is done. People-centered democracy is really just what democracy is about as defined by John Dewey. It is the belief that people are the drivers of our democracy.

Uriah Ward

I believe that an organization works best when it values the experience and perspective of its frontline workers. Our educators aren't just serving our kids; they're constantly collecting quantitative and qualitative data about what does and doesn't work in our schools. The more we can utilize the perspectives of our educators in our decision-making as a district, the better off everyone will be. That's how I picture co-governance between SPPS and SPFE. We also need to realize that schools are sites of governance beyond just school board, site-based, and local policy. Our schools are a place for us to listen to each other as a community and act collectively. I know I was heartened to see students standing with teachers on picket lines during the strike, as well as teachers and students demonstrating shoulder to shoulder for climate justice.

b. Since 2015 there has been a pattern of behavior by a majority of board members: as candidates they engage with SPFE members to gain our endorsement but once elected do not communicate with us. Why should we expect you to be different?

James Farnsworth

I expect to be held fully accountable for not only what I've stated in this public questionnaire but for my words, votes, and actions as a school board member. If communication from my end is ever lacking, call me out on it. Collaboration, communication, and accountability in governance are more important than ever.

Halla Henderson

I understand that there is a historical relationship between the Board and SPFE. I don't expect history to be forgotten or walk into this role with all of the answers and solutions. I do expect that we will be able to enter into spaces with a restorative mindset and the shared goal of safe and supportive schools for our students and community. I am committed to working alongside educators for schools that support them and provide them with the things they need to succeed.

I am not seeking this endorsement for a transactional relationship. I'm seeking it so we can build together.

Clayton Howatt

I have long standing relationships with not only SPFE leadership but dozens of SPPS teachers and other staff members. I would say that I am a person of my word and I would hope that if you asked members of SPFE that know me they would agree. I also see it as mandatory that the lines of communication between myself and SPFE would be open irrespective of who received SPFE endorsement. One of the many roles of the Board of Education is to support all SPPS employees, I would not take that responsibility lightly.

Jennifer McPherson

I'm naturally loyal, I'm a team player, I want change, your endorsement is a partnership and this position isn't permanent so I will need to prove myself every election.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

I am different because this is not just a job or a political campaign for me. This is my passion, something I have been committed to since I was a student at SPPS. I respected my teachers and all they gave to me I wouldn't be here without their investments. The teachers union is not just a political pawn for me, they are a partnership that I, as an elected official and caring citizen, have a responsibility to support and work with to do what is best for our students and our collective future.

Uriah Ward

I have intentionally invited SPFE Board members to be part of my campaign team. I will continue to make certain that teachers are on the inside of my decision-making process as a School Board member. I have also worked with SPFE leadership in the past. We worked together on the 2018 referendum campaign and I was a vocal and public supporter of SPFE during the 2020 strike. I also understand the value of organized

labor. I helped unionize my workplace and have demonstrated my commitment to having bargaining units be included in governance.

- c. ***SPPS and the BOE have engaged in a pattern of positioning parents and bargaining unit members on committees and then refusing to act on input. What actions will you take to end this practice? What steps will you take to make sure that decisions are made with stakeholders, not for them?***

James Farnsworth

I've experienced this firsthand. If the district asks for the time and energy of a parent, student, bargaining unit member, or community member to serve on a committee or task force, they need to take the input of the folks that participate seriously. I've seen many instances of participants who feel discouraged or frustrated and that can't continue to happen. Witnessing the repeated lack of authentic engagement is a major reason I decided to run for the school board. I will do whatever I need to do to ensure that our internal and external engagement systems and processes as a district are inclusive, authentic, and yield productive, identifiable outcomes for everyone involved.

Halla Henderson

The first step is engaging with stakeholders outside of board meetings. Engaging with community cannot begin when we need input or support. Additionally, authentic relationships aren't built through committees -- they're built through intentional organizing and outreach. My history in working with those most directly impacted and my presence in community has strengthened my relationships with stakeholders. Additionally, I hear from students that they feel unseen during decision-making processes. I want to be a visible presence with our young people and working with them to ensure they understand the decisions and the opportunity for them to engage with the Board.

Clayton Howatt

I have spent countless hours on committees that have been completely ignored. This is an incredibly disrespectful practice, especially to those that are not employees of SPPS and are volunteering their valuable family time to try and make a difference. Some committees should not be formed because there is not an intention to even take input. Then there are committees that should be formed. I will always be a strong advocate for those committees to receive responses from leadership, even if that response is that they disagree with the findings or recommendations.

Jennifer McPherson

By communicating often. I will double check with stakeholders before I give a vote.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

This is not a practice I want to continue. We need to be open to the public otherwise we will continue to lose students to charter schools and private institutions. If we all want to continue this work we need to make sure that stakeholders are not only heard but given real answers to. Things need to change when we are discussing the future of SPFS it must be with the input and consent of all the lives impacted by our schools.

Uriah Ward

As I mentioned previously, I want to give committees more power to have their ideas heard and implemented. If an issue is important enough to create a committee for, the committee's work is important enough to be taken seriously by the district. If a committee submits recommendations, those recommendations should be utilized or addressed.

- d. Specifically, how will you build both personal and institutional relationships with SPFE? How can we best hold you accountable if you don't follow through?***

James Farnsworth

Building relationships and trust within governance structures is essential. Strong relationships are at the center of co-governance. I'm always open, willing, and eager to connect with folks about what's on their mind. I believe that engagements of all sizes (1:1, small group, larger groups) can be effective in increasing collaboration and doing good work together. If for whatever reason I don't follow through with relationship building and maintaining transparent and consistent communication and I don't immediately recognize it myself, I'm very comfortable being called out and engaging in direct dialogue on how I can improve and be of service in the most accessible way possible.

Halla Henderson

I am seeking the SPFE endorsement because I want a relationship that exists beyond the election. I am not looking for transactional relationships, rather I want to be pushed and for this to be a relationship based on trust and growth. I value the guidance and experiences of educators and am running to lead alongside those directly impacted by our policy decisions. My intention is to run a campaign and to govern in a way that doesn't force stakeholders to seek me out and convince me to engage with them. I am committed to being available to educators, students, and families when it works best for them and in their space. Should I fail to do so, I would hope that SPFE would come to me early and engage with me.

Clayton Howatt

I want to hear input from SPFE Members on several things. I want to hear from leadership but also teachers in the classroom. I want to have conversations around literacy, curriculum, recruiting and hiring of Black and Brown teachers, dyslexia, and more. As a member of the Board of Education I want to have these conversations immediately. To hold me accountable please be straight forward and honest and a personal conversation will go a long way.

Jennifer McPherson

By having an open mind and listening to what is being said. By being honest with me and letting me know when I'm wrong.

Zoe Sblendorigiebel

The best way to build relationships is trust and mutual respect, to me this looks like committing to a retreat of sorts where we create circles of trust. I have created and facilitated workshops around racial equity and relationship building with many of my own teachers as a student. Falling back on relationships is how we can best hold each other accountable. I expect and welcome that if I am not meeting my words with actions then I will be called out for it.

Uriah Ward

As a Board member, I would be in regular communication with SPFE leadership. I would attend bargaining sessions and other functions wherever possible and appropriate. I would seek out opportunities to work with SPFE on our shared policy goals.

I expect SPFE to hold me accountable. If the membership of SPFE ever thinks that I am ever not living up to my responsibilities, I want to know about it and I want to do better. My campaign has done significant work to include teachers in our outreach and I want to continue to do so as a Board member. I plan on doing as much as I can to reach out to SPFE membership and leadership concerning issues before the Board. We ask so much of our educators, so it is only fair that we demand the same level of professional accountability from our School Board members.