



SAINT PAUL FEDERATION
OF EDUCATORS LOCAL 28

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

- I. The Saint Paul Federation of Educators (SPFE) believes parents, educators, community members, and students should be at the center of decision making around educational policy. However, increasingly out of state millionaires with a vested interest in pursuing a corporate education reform agenda have poured money into political races with the goal of removing local voices from discussions about our children's education.
 - a. **Will you and your campaign reject contributions and independent expenditures from wealthy donors who live outside our community and from market-based education reform organizations?**
YES

- II. Despite recent increases, public education statewide is severely underfunded, and has not kept pace with inflation. Communities have increasingly been called on to make up the lack of funding by passing levies that increase property taxes for home owners, while wealthy corporations continue to receive tax cuts – allowing them to benefit from our communities without contributing to them.
 - a. **Will you as endorse, support, and campaign on increasing revenue that will go directly to public education funding?**
YES

- III. SPFE Everyone who works in public education deserves the same things. Respect for their contribution to the care and education of our students. Fair compensation for their work, including affordable health care. Safe working conditions. Most Education Support Professionals do not receive these necessary protections. These critical educators are often BIPOC and immigrant women, many working multiple jobs during the pandemic to make ends meet, putting them at the most risk of contracting COVID 19.
 - a. **Will you endorse, support, and campaign on passing legislation that supports the ESP bill of rights, including requiring all districts to increase ESP pay to a minimum of \$20 per hour?**
YES

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



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Please limit your response to 150 words or fewer for each part of the questions below.

- ***What is your personal experience with public education as a student, or parent? How has public education benefited you personally?***

In my freshman year of high school I was diagnosed with an auto-immune disease. I was very sick for most of that year, but recovered. When I came back better the next year, I was very shy and it made for a difficult time to be a kid.

That year I was introduced to speech and debate. My teacher, Mr. Abel, taught me the principles of debate. He helped us write arguments and expand our understanding of politics and policy. Without him the literal path of my life would be radically different. Public education really taught me that my voice has power.

- ***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?***

I went to public school my whole life including public college at the University of Kansas. As a member of the St. Paul community, I have a deep interest in a quality public school system. I also have friends that are teachers (both SPPS and other districts) and who work for SPFE.

- b. ***How would you define “public education champion”?***

A public education champion understands that our schools are the cornerstone to our democracy, to fighting poverty and to building the type of world we need. They understand that EVERYONE deserves a quality education and that public school benefits us all regardless of our direct connection with them. It is all of our responsibility to invest in our future.

- c. ***How would you describe your current relationship with SPFE member leaders?***

In my position as Secretary Treasurer of UNITE HERE Local 17 and throughout this campaign I have gotten to know a number of member leaders and staff of SPFE. I was able to both volunteer and recruit volunteers for the last contract campaign. I am excited to continue to stand with them in the fight for quality public schools.



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- d. ***Why are you seeking an endorsement from SPFE?***
I am a public education champion who deeply understands the power of Unions. I am seeking an endorsement from SPFE because I want to work in partnership with the Union fighting for quality public education. Also, as a trade unionist I firmly believe in Bargaining for the Common Good and I would like to partner with a Union who also believes in it.

- e. ***How do you envision working in partnership with SPFE? What does that look like when we disagree?***
Partnership requires building trust and understanding that we are working together in good faith. I believe that building that trust starts with understanding, listening and on my end acknowledging that SPFE is the expert in our partnership when it comes to education. It is important to me to know that I have an expert partner I can turn to when education bills are introduced or I need a better grasp of a specific issue. If/when we may disagree it is important for me to understand that part of your job is holding me as an elected official accountable. I hope and expect if a disagreement happens, we are able to accept good faith and communicate upfront about it.

- ***In March of 2020, as the pandemic was beginning, SPFE went on strike for the first time since 1946.***
 - a. ***What do you understand to be the reasons SPFE went on strike?***
More mental health support with fully staffed teams in every building also, including training for teachers. Multilingual staff to support students and families, and 1-1 support for students and more educators to support special needs students.

 - b. ***SPFE is currently in negotiations with SPPS. What do you understand to be SPFE's top priorities?***
Preserving the class size caps so students can get more individualized attention. Reasonable wage increases for educators particularly support staff. Increased staffing for mental health teams. Creating culturally affirming schools, including more training, hiring multilingual staff and focusing on racial justice.



- c. ***Across the country, educators have been willing to strike so they can bargain for the things they know their students need. While no one wants a strike, sometimes this drastic step is necessary. How will you support Minnesota educators that avail themselves of this tactic? Under what circumstances would you support the hiring of replacement workers?***

I deeply believe in Unions and the right to strike. In the lead up to this strike vote, I showed up to rallies, BOE meetings and pickets. I recruited needed volunteers for the Strike vote and was preparing to do so for strike picket lines. I would do the same and more if needed/asked to support striking/potentially striking educators. As a Senator I would use the power and voice to stand with educators during bargaining and into a strike if it is needed.

I do not in any circumstance support the use of replacement workers.

- ***Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) has a diverse student population, with over 75% identifying as BIPOC and/or immigrant students. Parents and educators agree that in order for students to be successful, we must have culturally competent curricula and educators that reflect the diversity of our city.***

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

We need a deep focus on affordable housing in every part of our city. I would support allocating money from the state to build quality public housing that is accessible to everyone. This housing would need to be built across the city, allowing families in poverty to access living in neighborhoods they couldn't before.

- b. ***Our students of color deserve educators that look like them. While tiered licensure provides pathways to bring BIPOC and immigrant educators into relationship with students, it also prevents many from accessing the benefits and important worker protections of union membership. What are your ideas for expanding protections for these educators?***

I believe Tier 1 Teachers should be able to be protected under the Union contract and become members of the Union. I am also in strong support of SPFE's BIPOC teacher retention proposal



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- *At a time when our country and our state are facing many challenges – workers struggling with stagnant wages, BIPOC and immigrant communities are facing increased instances of race-based discrimination, communities being devastated by gun violence, and the ravages of COVID to name just a few examples – SPFE believes that bold steps and leadership are required to create a more just and secure society. It is no longer enough to “take the right votes”.*

- a. ***Aside from increased education funding, what one piece of legislation will you bring forward to improve the lives of working families? How will this improve the lives of our students?***

As I have been talking to people in our community it is clear that the biggest concern of working people is affordable housing. The majority of people in this district are renters who, even with the rent stabilization ordinance, are having a hard time affording housing. Many times, if they are able to find something to rent the landlord is absentee leading to bad housing conditions.

I am proposing a system of quality public housing that is funded by the State and administered by cities. This housing would be built throughout a city so that we build mixed income communities. They would be truly affordable and quality. Studies show that kids who have safe and stable housing are more likely to graduate high school.

- b. ***What past work (either at the legislature or your capacity as a private citizen) would you point to as bold leadership? How has this work positively impacted public education?***

I've proudly played a role in community campaigns across the Twin Cities that have won workers: Rent Stabilization in Saint Paul, Twin Cities \$15 minimum wage, Sick and Safe Time in Saint Paul and I helped to lead the MSP Airport \$15 minimum wage campaign mobilizing hundreds of workers to win.

I am particularly proud of the MSP Airport \$15 minimum wage campaign which led to thousands of workers receiving an immediate \$3 an hour increase. A minimum wage increase of this level is how we pull families out of poverty and we know poverty has long lasting impacts on a student's education and educational successes



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c. ***How are you creating pathways for young and emerging political leaders?***

I am proud to say that my campaign is offering paid internships. We currently have 1 intern with a goal of hiring 4 more before the primary. We are also working with the Young Democratic Socialists of America in the Twin Cities to build a stronger understanding of how they can get involved in Unions and Political Organizing.

As a Union organizer I have been building power with dozens of young workers in their workplace. Many of whom have gone on to be leaders in my Union and/or other hospitality organizations in the Twin Cities

- *Public education is the center of our democracy, and yet many support the “disrupting” public education through “school choice” and privatization in the form of online learning, charter schools, increased reliance on standardized testing and vouchers (sometimes called scholarships).*

a. ***What is your understanding of how education reform policies impact public education?***

Market based education reforms exist to allow the corporatization of our children’s education. Systems like vouchers and school choice allow public dollars to be funneled into a for profit education scheme. It’s about moving education from a public good for everyone to a private for-profit system for those that can afford it.

The philosophy of public education is that everyone regardless of income, race, religion, or anything else deserves a quality education. Market based education reforms have the ability to destroy public education.

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

Charter schools receive public funding and educate students in the community. They are run as autonomous programs through a non-profit sponsor. Charter schools differ greatly on oversight, which has led to financial mismanagement (most prominently the Hmong College Prep school losing Millions of Dollars). They also are not held to the same educational standards as traditional schools. Charter schools also can choose who or importantly *who not* to educate.



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- c. ***Will you support a moratorium on new charter schools and charter school expansions so that a comprehensive study can be done on the impact of charters schools in our communities (including segregation, tax base, land use, and neighborhood impact)? Who would you partner with for this study? Who would you include as stakeholders?***
- Yes, I would support the moratorium. I think we would need to build a broad group of stakeholders to work on a robust study to understand how Charter Schools impact our community. I would work with Educators, Parents and Community Members, Union leadership, Education Experts/Academia, Elected Officials, and District Administration
- *The state of Minnesota presently does business with institutions that engage in practices that destabilize our community through predatory lending practices, investing in private prisons, and corporate tax avoidance. These practices have led to economic injustice and racial discrimination in our city.*
 - a. ***How will you use your role to make sure that the largest corporations in Minnesota pay their fair share?***

In SD65 we have multiple multi-billion-dollar corporations and yet the St. Paul School Board has shut down multiple schools due to a funding problem. Currently, Minnesota corporations are taxed at 9.8%, but that's down from previous highs of 12%. As a Senator I would introduce and/or support legislation increasing corporate tax and introducing a wealth tax on the wealthiest people and largest corporations in MN.
 - b. ***Predatory lending practices increase foreclosure rates, destabilizing families. Will you join with SPFE in calling on banks to refrain from foreclosing on homes of school age students during the school year? What steps will you take to separate the state of Minnesota from institutions that participate in predatory lending?***

Yes, I would support a bill that would immediately divest/discontinue business with institutions that participate in predatory lending. I would be a co-sponsor of a bill that would mandate such.



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- c. ***Will you commit to working with SPFE to seek the revenue we need to have racially equitable schools? What does this look like to you?***
Racially equitable schools are schools where children of color have the same opportunities as white students. It means that there is no achievement gap. Families of all types are welcomed through culturally affirming schools that have multilingual staff. It means there are educators of all sorts who look like their students and have similar backgrounds to their students. It means an administration that actively seeks input from families and earnestly listens to that input. Taking on the task of building racially equitable schools is radically important. I will stand for all of these things, and stand with SPFE as you fight for them.
- *The COVID-19 pandemic has made clear to all what educators have always known. Our communities and public schools have been harmed by decades of white supremacy and systems of oppression. Repairing this harm will require time, commitment, and funding, especially in our urban districts. Even with the recent influx of federal dollars via CARES and ESSR, our urban districts do not have the financial security necessary to provide the targeted funding our students and families need. Consistent underfunding by the state has mean that local school districts must ask local tax payers to increase their education levies, a solution that is unfair, and unsustainable.*
 - a. ***Everyone says they want to fully fund public education. Doing so would require new taxes, and it would only be fair for those to come from corporations and the wealthiest Minnesotans that currently don't pay their fair share. How will you support the move to a more fair tax structure in Minnesota in order to fully fund public education?***
The wealthiest few and large corporations made billions during the COVID crisis, meanwhile working families struggled to survive. I am not afraid to be vocal about my belief that they need to pay their fair share. We need to increase taxes on large corporations and wealthy Minnesotans. Currently, Minnesota corporations are taxed at 9.8%, but that's down from previous highs of 12%. I also support a wealth tax on the Minnesotan Billionaires that hoard their money. I would be an author or a co-sponsor of any bill that raises taxes on the top earners in MN.



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- b. Using property taxes as a stopgap measure to fund public education is unsustainable. How will you bring urban and rural legislators together to end this practice and fully fund public education statewide?***

Urban districts are not the only places that lack proper education funding. We can have common ground with people from all over the state who agree that public schools are important. I would start building with legislators from other areas of the state that need education funding. As an organizer I understand that power comes from people, that means if a legislator is not interested, we bring our vision and organize to their voters.

- c. In urban districts, public schools have seen their budgets slashed. Schools that serve white, wealthy communities often raise additional funds through parents, an option that many BIPOC, immigrant, and poor white communities do not have, increasing the disparities these students face. What are your ideas for supporting our schools in the most financial need? What steps will you take as a legislator to repair this harm?***

I believe that most fair taxation system is a progressive taxation system. One in which, the richest few pay a higher portion of their income in taxes. Just as in taxes I believe the state needs to implement a progressive school funding system. I would propose the state have a base level of funding (not lower than now and increased by the inflation rate yearly) and if a wealthy community is able to raise fund for their schools, they should. The state should attempt to balance that out by then increasing its funding to more improvised districts or districts that have a higher need per student.

We can fund this through the increased taxation I spoke about in Question 8 (1). As a legislator I would work with partners and experts to endeavor to craft legislation addressing this need.

- 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.***



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a. ***What do the terms co-governance and people-centered democracy mean to you?***

Co-governance starts with understanding that representation does not mean making decisions without input or accountability. It is about building deep partnerships with organizations and community groups and then being accountable to those partnerships while governing. It also means that when something is proposed you talk to the affected groups before taking action on it.

People-Centered democracy to me means building a government that works for working families not corporations. I believe people are turned off by politics because they don't feel like elected officials are truly there to do the most good. People-Centered democracy demands transparency and increasing engagement with the community.

b. ***What groups and individuals will you look to for guidance? Please be as specific as possible.***

As a Union member and leader of my Union for nearly a decade I care deeply about the guidance of Unions and Union members. I look to my Union colleagues and friends who understand organizing and what working families need. I have built a relationship with the Twin Cities DSA through years of organizing with them.

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

I know that making decisions with, instead of for communities starts with listening. As a campaign I am proud that we are engaging with people who have been left out of the political process in the past. We are also holding meet and greets, both in person and virtually. I am excited to continue engaging with people after I am elected. I will continue door knocks and phone calls, hold listening sessions and (if we can fundraise it) open a part time office to make reaching me as accessible as possible. It's also important to meet people where they are at and to me that means showing up.

d. ***How will you separate your accountability to the public good from your personal feelings?***

As a leader of a Union of 6,000 people I have learned that accountability starts with listening and vulnerability. If there ever is a time that my personal feelings conflict with the public good, I would first listen and allow



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myself to trust the partnerships that I have built. I believe that there are vastly varying experiences and that as an elected official I may need to set aside my own to understand what is best for the public good. There is always room for growth and understanding if you allow it.

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

I am a fiercely proud Union member and a leader of my Union. The best and only way for workers to fight back against our system that does not value them or frankly their lives is a Union.

I have personally led many organizing campaigns from which thousands of people have won a Union at their workplace. My campaigns include groundbreaking craft beverage organizing, which led to the first ever unionized microbrewery. I will do everything in my power as an elected official to combat Union busting and show up for workers unionizing their workplace.

I hope to author legislation to: outlaw captive audience meetings, protect workers benefits while on strike, allow striking workers to get unemployment while on strike, fully fund the MN PERB, mandate neutrality by public employers, simplify public sector elections to a card check, expanding union rights to ap based workers and support PLAs and neutrality agreements.

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