

2023 SPFE Public BOE Candidate 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
Chauntyll Allen	X	
Yusef Carrillo	X	
Carlo Franco	X	
Erica Valliant	X	

2. 2023 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
Chauntyll Allen	X	
Yusef Carrillo	X	
Carlo Franco	X	
Erica Valliant	X	

3. **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
Chauntyll Allen	X	
Yusef Carrillo	X	
Carlo Franco	X	
Erica Valliant	X	

4. **Do you support collective bargaining for public sector unions?**

	Yes	No
Chauntyll Allen	X	
Yusef Carrillo	X	
Carlo Franco	X	
Erica Valliant	X	

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

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

Chauntyll Allen: As a person raised by parents who attended St. Paul public schools, who attended SPPS myself and whose children were students there, I have experienced the value of public education firsthand. Public education is where we – as taxpayers and community members – use our tax dollars to provide free and equitable education to our young people. Our public schools shape our community and society.

Yusef Carrillo: Public schools gave me the opportunity to grow and thrive in this world. I was educated not because of my parent's income which was not much, nor because of my social standing, but because we all have agreed to educate our kids, universally, for the benefit of all. Saint Paul is a richly diverse city, with many voices and experiences. Public education, funded and managed by the people through their democratic power allows us to sustain a society that rejects the rule of the rich few, and instead fosters independent critical thinkers, creative artists, thoughtful workers, kind and generous people who are inclined to build strong communities and foster a Saint Paul that thrives and is welcoming to all.

Carlo Franco: As a product of Saint Paul Public Schools, I believe that every young person that lives in our city should have access to a high quality education regardless of their zip code. Each school within our system should have sufficient resources to ensure that our youth have the opportunity to thrive in their pursuit of higher education based on the needs in each building. We must lean into our diversity, uplift the cultural differences that we see in our Public Education spaces and ensure that we see the strengths in our communities. We have a lot of greatness in our communities and it is critical that we make sure our spaces meet the differing needs of each young person in our spaces.

Erica Valliant: The value of public education for myself and the city of Saint Paul is that it is a means of equipping our young people regardless of social class with access to free academic education, a common political and social philosophy and experience. Public education provides and opportunity for children and adults to be immersed in a more diverse student body with exposure to others of different cultures, economic backgrounds, and physical and mental abilities which is of educational value that can't be otherwise obtained. Our city is diverse with many different cultures, languages, and all things represented buy our students, faculty, and community members that are a part of the public education experience. In order for equip our children to be the best representatives, leaders, law makers, trail blazers, story tellers, historians and visionaries for St. Paul, we need continue to invest in our students and families and the quality of our public education system.

2. An endorsement from SPFE is only given to candidates that show they are champions for public education. We do not endorse in all races.

a. What are your direct connections to SPPS, SPFE, and/or public education?

Chauntyll Allen: My personal connection to SPPS started in Kindergarten at JJ Hill and continued through middle school at Hidden River and St. Paul Central High School. My children both attended St. Paul public schools, and when I decided I wanted to work in public education, there was no doubt that SPPS was where I wanted to be. I started my education and youth work career at Rondo Community Ed, and then shifted to classroom work at JJ Hill – back to where I began as a student. When I came back to SPPS after a few years with Hennepin County Child Protection Services, I requested placement at Hidden River. I've also worked as a basketball coach in our public schools, including as the Assistant Coach at Central when we won the state tournament.

Yusef Carrillo:

- I am a proud husband of an SPPS teacher. I have learned through my wife's experiences how SPFE strives to build a truly equitable and thriving school district.
- My two kids attend elementary school at Wellstone Elementary. I deeply value the unique programming that the school offers and the culture they have built.
- I have served as a board member in SPPS to fill a vacant seat from March 2021 through December 2021.
- I worked as an enrollment program manager at Oakland Unified School District for over 8 years. This experience opened my eyes to the inner workings of an urban school district's administration and it allows me to understand when initiatives and engagement are not fully transparent.

Carlo Franco: I am a 2013 Graduate of Humboldt High School. I was a Union Steward and on the Executive Board of SPFE in 2020-2021, and spoke at Rally's on school needs, and kept our building membership informed on our organizing priorities. I was also a strike captain in March 2020 and organized our school community to stand up and strike for the schools our students deserved by providing training to all staff on what to expect throughout the strike. Through my current role with the City of Saint Paul I still get to interact with thousands of SPPS Students by connecting them to paid summer employment and training opportunities.

Erica Valliant: I have a 21-year-old son who started with the SPPS birth to 3 programs with an IEP for speech. In 2020 he graduated from Central High School during the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently I have 3 children in SPPS schools, a rising 8th grader at Hidden River Middle School, a rising 6th grader at Benjamin E Mays IB World School, and rising 1st grader at

Maxfield Elementary, as well a 4-year-old in Head start who will be attending a SPPS for Pre-k. I attended public schools myself and graduated high school in 1998.

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

Chauntyll Allen: First, and most importantly, I will continue to champion public education by serving on our school board, listening to the community, and engaging with educators and students to make SPPS a vital and healthy district for all. I believe in our Grow Your Own pathway to create our own educators from our community. As a former educator and youth worker, I have helped create a pipeline of educators and coaches by encouraging youth to pursue educational careers. And, over the course of my first term, I worked with community to advocate for an increase in paraprofessional pay to bridge the gap and help more educators of color to get into the SPPS pipeline.

Yusef Carrillo:

- I will defend Public education against practices, ideas and behaviors that treat our schools and students as commodities.
- I am against market driven education management, and I will make sure to challenge our administrators to see themselves first as public servants, co-educators and members of the community.
- I will work to build a district culture where goals are created based on the needs of the school communities, including our students, that the actions of the District match those goals and that our community has a voice to ask and show their concerns to how we are doing as a District.
- I will advocate for our Board and Administration to lead with trust, listening first and building goals together with educators and families.

Carlo Franco: I am committed to continuing being a champion for Public Education by:

1. Digging in, doing the work and asking the questions about the budget to ensure we are prioritizing the front-lines when adding additional positions, considering wage increases, and ensuring our school communities are reflective and responsive to the needs of the immediate community.
2. Remaining connected to the daily grind that our educators and families are committed to and ensuring that our agenda at board meetings reflects the current priorities of our district - by being present in the community.

Erica Valliant I will demonstrate that I am a public education champion by: Keeping my children enrolled in SPPS, encouraging others to enroll or keep their children enrolled in SPPS, being an advocate for problem solving and relationship building between families and district staff, advocating for funding, helping to foster a culture of accountability, and making sure that we are putting our students first.

c. Why are you seeking an endorsement from SPFE?

Chauntyll Allen: If teachers and educators don't believe that I can effectively govern the school district and represent them, I shouldn't be in the role. Students, teachers, and educators are the reason I do this work. I recognize the gap that often exists between the administration and the classroom and I want to help bridge that gap. I believe that solutions to many of our challenges can come from educators because they see firsthand what is going on. As a school board member, I want to be an effective conduit for educators, students, parents, and community members to be heard.

Yusef Carrillo: I want the SPFE endorsement because I believe that the core work of a school District is educating our children. Our educators in Saint Paul are highly skilled and talented professionals that need to be listened to and consulted, not sidelined. I want the Saint Paul Federation of Educators to know that I will stand with them in the goal of making SPPS an organization that is safe, welcoming and stable for all. I want to reinvigorate our schools, and that can only start and include the voices of our educators who day in and out are in touch with our students and know first hand what the biggest needs are.

Carlo Franco: I am a former member of SPFE and understand the importance of collective bargaining. I come from a Union family that has been able to provide a sustainable living through Union jobs and know how critical it is to people's daily lives. I also see how SPFE has pushed SPPS to think more about our young people in budgeting priorities by making their contract demands reflective of the staff ratios, more conducive and more effective to serving our students. I also recognize that in recent years, SPFE has had to dig in even deeper to meet those needs, as our current District Administration has been attempting to lead in the confines of spaces that are disconnected to the direct needs of the community and the everyday operations of our schools.

Erica Valliant I am seeking endorsement from SPFE because I value our educators, their experience, perspective, and the reality that they have families too! Our students are with our educators for a good chunk of their lives, our educators and our school system is partly raising our kids, even if that isn't the intention, that's the reality.

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

Chauntyll Allen: My approach to disagreements is to relentlessly pursue mutual understanding – to stay in conversation until we get to a place where we understand each other and can find a mutually-agreeable solution. I believe that we all want the same outcome: a vital, equitable school district where students and educators thrive.

I will partner by continuing to be an advocate for educators, just as I did in my first term. As one example, a request for MacBooks was a sticking point. As a former EA, I was able to bring context to the board: on iPads, paraprofessionals could not access certain student information such as IEPs. That made the working environment ineffective, and put vulnerable students at risk. We were able to approve MacBooks once the board understood the why behind the ask. I commit to continuing to do my best to represent the reality of teachers and educators in negotiations.

Yusef Carrillo: The main goal of my campaign is to build meaningful engagement and trust in our governance. I will have open channels of communication with SPFE on many issues. But more importantly I want to engage and move our Board to be more attentive to what is happening in the classrooms and to learn from educators. I also want to be able to publicly field questions from our teachers and SPFE leaders to listen to needs and create a culture of transparency. I am not an educator myself and I would have to question myself internally if there was a big disagreement between myself and SPFE. I want to bring a spirit of learning and of curiosity into every contentious issue, which will lead to better collective decision making.

Carlo Franco: I believe that working in partnership with our frontlines is key to our overall successes as a district. Working in partnership with SPFE is regular check in's with SPFE Leadership to understand the concerns that are occurring on our front lines. I believe an essential partnership with SPFE must involve building off of my current relationships I have with frontline members, and building a coalition to ensure that the folks doing the work everyday not only stay informed in the work happening on a board level but also have regular access to the people governing our district. I will commit to regular site visits to schools within our district, and remain eligible in the Sub Pool within the district to stay connected. When there are disagreements, I think it will be important to be transparent with where the disagreements are on both sides. Communication is key, and being clear / transparent about the tangible impacts of any decision we are making where we may disagree, needs to involve as many voices as possible. From the people leading the work, to the young people and families who will be impacted by the decisions we are making, we must center on our community and young people. When we make decisions and loop the stakeholders into the conversation early, we can avoid most disagreements because we are co-creating.

Erica Valliant Our educators leave a lasting impact on our students so it makes sense that relationship building, collaboration, and conversation with educators should be a priority whether or not there is agreement. If our educators aren't valued, aren't doing well, or don't feel included or heard how can we expect them to show up fully and as their best selves for students and families.

I think that when we disagree, we should have a process(es) in place to facilitate discussion and hopefully resolution or at and least understanding and/or compromise that values both sides.

3. *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?**

Chauntyll Allen: I will continue to make myself available for listening and conversations, maintain a strong connection to our SPPS community, including teachers, educators, students, parents, and taxpayers, and press the district to engage in ways that are meaningful to the communities we serve.

Yusef Carrillo: It seems from the outside like the Administration rolls out initiatives faster than they can absorb the impact, engagement, resulting communication delays and public backlash that they experience. This does not stem from poor communication skills or planning. It is a deeper symptom of placing priority on delivering results from a top down rather than building goals and objectives from the bottom up. Communication begins when we are open about our needs and our hopes, before we make plans and roll them out. The first action I would take would be to ask Administration to publish a transparent list of the initiatives at work across the District and the needs driving them. Then, we need to prioritize those needs to align with what our school communities are voicing.

Carlo Franco: I think leaning into our Bilingual EA's and Bilingual staff in the district is essential. They have voices that are constantly processing information with so many of our families who speak languages different than english. As a community member, I am in community (attending community events, sports events, fundraisers, showing up to schools, rec centers and more), which I will continue as a board member. Families that have been marginalized within not only our communities but our district need to know that they have direct access to leadership in their community. Our staff who currently feel like they have not been heard, needs to be listened to - and not just in the boardroom or in a formal setting. We need to meet them where they are at. Having a streamlined way (and public way) to ask

questions that are pressing in community to administration and expect a public answer, where we provide that information back to the requesters is essential to solid leadership and rebuilding trust.

Erica Valliant our Board and district staff to create a robust communications plan, this may take some time as the first steps will be assessing where gaps are internally and building up from there.

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

Chauntyll Allen: First, I model inclusion of translation and interpretation services in my personal actions, ensuring that translators are available if I need help communicating effectively with community members. As a board member, I know there are 144 languages spoken in St. Paul Public Schools and I commit to asking questions of the administration to ensure that accurate communication is provided for as many communities and families as possible. I will advocate for operating procedures that are equitable for families and students, regardless of which language they speak.

Yusef Carrillo: This is an area that I would have to lean on other Board Members, the larger community and the professionals at the Family Engagement office to help me clarify what the obstacles are currently and how we can work together to improve our service to those that need these services. Translation and Interpretation are essential to make sure we are equitably reaching out and making our communication available to all Saint Paul.

Carlo Franco: I believe we need to invest more in our Bi-lingual EA's. We need to ensure that there are people in each school who can communicate with our families who speak languages other than english. We know that robust community engagement is essential to thriving community schools and in order to do that, we need to invest in our efforts.

Erica Valliant There are a few things we can do, we can invest in partnering with a translation service and/or invest in hiring a translation team as well as a service for languages that we don't have physical translators for. I'd suggest that we figure they best way to address this out with a team that includes staff, board members, and families.

c. Specifically, how will you hold the district and the superintendent accountable to open, timely communication?

Chauntyll Allen: I am never afraid to raise my voice to hold people and systems accountable to open communication and I will continue to do so.

Yusef Carrillo: The board can ask, direct or even mandate the superintendent to do something or deliver a specific result we see as important at any given moment. However, nothing will change until we sustainably build a culture in our School District that promotes real two way communication. Specifically, the board should stop any initiatives that have not been clearly communicated and have not received any community input. As I mentioned before we should have a clear and transparent list of initiatives, and their relationship to our goals. We can then hold our superintendent accountable to not begin anything new until we have accomplished or deprioritized the existing initiatives.

Carlo Franco: Asking clear questions at the board meetings, and expecting responses. It would also be my responsibility to follow up to ensure that there is a public response to these questions. Tracking the follow up on responses to questions and requests for the administration should be included and documented to contribute to the Superintendent's Annual Review and addressed accordingly.

Erica Valliant We can work together to put in processes in place as well as a communications plan with time parameters, for example certain types of decisions, issues, etc. must be shared out within a certain timeframe.

4. *Recently the Board of Education considered changing their governance model. This new model, [SOFG](#), would have the board limit their involvement in policy development, budget decisions, and narrow the scope of how the board would evaluate the superintendent.*

- a. **What do understand the role of School Board member to be? (Please be as specific as possible)***

Chauntyll Allen: The role of a School Board member is to hire and manage the performance of the district superintendent and ensure that the district budget is fiscally responsible and balanced. Our role is also to ensure that the voice of the community – students, parents, caregivers, educators, and taxpayers – is represented in all decisions regarding how tax dollars are spent.

Yusef Carrillo: The MN Statutes on boards of independent school districts clearly define the role of the board of directors as having vested care, management and control over the district. A board member has both the responsibility and the governance tools to be accountable to the community and voters that they represent. I even go further in the definition that the board member has a responsibility to listen and communicate to both other Board Members but more importantly to all stakeholders of our School Communities such as families, students and educators. As such, the role cannot be curtailed by any governance model imposed or implied, governance can only exist through consensus and healthy trust building.

Carlo Franco: A school board director has responsibilities that include: appointing and managing a superintendent to provide leadership to our district, representing community voices and concerns as it relates to the status of our district, seek additional funding sources for our school district whether at the state or other options, approve and provide goals/direction around our budget and priorities and ensuring that we do whatever it takes to ensure the successes of every student in our City and District.

Erica Valliant In Minnesota, the school board is a governing entity that sets and oversees the policies the school district must adhere to and sets educational standards passed down from the Minnesota Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education. School board members are responsible for the care, management, and control of independent districts. The board shall make, and when deemed advisable, change or repeal rules relating to the organization and management of the board and the duties of its officers. The board must superintend and manage the schools of the district; adopt rules for their organization, government, and instruction; keep registers; and prescribe textbooks and courses of study.

b. What does healthy board governance look like to you?

Chauntyll Allen: Healthy board governance is:

- Setting a strong vision for the district
- Focusing on student success
- Advocating for healthy and equitable public schools
- Monitoring and managing the fiscal health of the district
- Engaging regularly with community
- Representing the voice of the students, educators, parents and taxpayers
- Asking the district hard questions that push them to consider the perspective of the community and the people they serve.

Yusef Carrillo: I am a firm believer that healthy board governance has a deep connection to what healthy leadership looks like. The idea of healthy leadership stands on three bases or legs:

- **Integrity:** Our board members must have deep integrity to seek good outcomes for all of Saint Paul
- **Trust:** Board members must build trusting relationships with our educators, families, students and staff, and also with each other. Trust means listening, it means slowing down our initiatives until we have enough trust to co-create, co-govern, communicate and execute a plan with kindness and care to our community.
- **Consensus building:** Good leadership seeks to build a united front to tackle big issues, not run ahead of the organization in an attempt to drag people

against their will and better judgement. We ought to build consensus to do the good work of leading with humility and with care to listen.

Carlo Franco: Healthy Board Governance looks like:

1. The ability to have open and honest conversations
2. Being consistent in the goals that the entire school community works towards while monitoring the progress towards those changing goals
3. Uplifting the voices who are most impacted by every decision that we make
4. Bringing quality leadership to the board that can build bridges between all stakeholders in SPPS/St. Paul.

Erica Valliant Healthy board governance looks like effective execution of policy, decision making involves making choices about and based in the organization's vision, mission, and strategies. The board should work towards consensus in decision making and should have effective methods of oversight being mindful not to step into the management space. There should be respect for and community agreements or agreements that the board agrees to hold space by and hold themselves and each other accountable to, for example:

Community Agreements

- Listen from the inside out, or listen from the bottom up (a feeling in your gut matters!)
- Engage Tension, Don't Indulge Drama
- W.A.I.T- Why Am I Talking?
- Make Space, Take Space- a post-ableist adaptation of step up, step Confidentiality- take the lessons, leave the details
- Be open to learning
- Be open to someone else speaking your truth
- Building, not selling-- when you speak, converse, don't pitch
- Yes/and, both/and
- Value the process as much as, if not more than, you value the outcomes
- Assume best intent, attend to impact
- Self-care and community care-- pay attention to your bladder, pay attention to your neighbors
- Be respectful and treat others the way you want to be treated.
- "One Mic"
- Judgement-free zone
- Be creative
- Have Fun!

5. The SPPS Board of Education is currently considering entering into a contract with the Council of Great City Schools to receive coaching on how to do robust community engagement. This engagement would focus on student outcomes, defined as “a measure of that students know or are able to do”. It is unclear how this community engagement will take place, and how information gathered will be reported out.

a. **Who should be included as “community”?** (Please be as detailed as possible)

Chauntyll Allen: Community includes students, parents and caregivers, taxpayers, teachers, educators, and other residents and employees of the district.

Yusef Carrillo: I believe our community needs to be defined in two ways: School communities and the wider community. School communities are the leadership staff, educators, facility staff, families and students at each site. When I say educators I am talking about teachers, Educational Assistants, Teaching Assistants, Counselors, and all the other talented professionals who help to educate our students. The wider community needs to be also reached in meaningful ways that are not difficult or onerous in terms of time and location.

Carlo Franco: Community is everyone who is connected to the school community, directly and indirectly. Families, students, educators, other school staff, alumni, current neighbors that live in the community, prospective families, district administrators and everyone else who lives in Saint Paul.

Erica Valliant Students, families, staff, board members, community members, former students, other stakeholders and partners.

b. **What is the role of the board in identifying and advocating for the supports students need to achieve academic success?**

Chauntyll Allen: Our role is to set goals for student success and hold our superintendent and administration accountable for reaching those goals. We should be aware of best practices and listen to the voices of students, parents, and educators to inform, guide and advise the superintendent and district administration on necessary student supports.

Yusef Carrillo: I believe the board will not be the best at actively determining such a key component of student success. But what the Board can do, in their power, is to co-create with our educators what are the needs and how they differ at each school site. We ought to highlight the reality that the one size fits all approach is not appropriate. Meaningful engagement needs to be directed at a leadership team at individual schools.

Carlo Franco: The board should be responsible for providing the directives of strategic budgeting and ensuring that more of our district resources are being spent on direct services that would better allow our school communities to make individualized decisions. When we have more front line support, we could see smaller class sizes that could result in higher academic successes. We should also be working with SPPS families and students in re-identifying what their priorities are and it is our responsibility to ensure that is followed through on.

Erica Valliant The role of the board in identifying and advocating for the support's students need to achieve academic success is to work with and listen to students, families, and staff as well as paying attention to trends and data that we see coming out of our schools and what's happening in the community.

c. ***How will you as a board member hold the district and superintendent accountable to achieving academic success?***

Chauntyll Allen: I commit to setting clear goals, pushing our superintendent to implement effective and equitable strategies, and holding administration accountable to our goals through superintendent evaluation.

Yusef Carrillo: We need to start looking at a holistic approach of measurement that includes the voice and opinion of our educators in measuring how much support and tools they are being given to succeed at their job. The idea that the whole of our academic success solely lies on one person is a fallacy that enables a very top down management structure to continue to exist when it has already proven to be failed and antiquated. We need to empower our educators to be at their best, to succeed in their visions, to help them build on their professional development and make Saint Paul a shining beacon of what can be done in Public Education when we are listening to each other and partnering for our students and families.

Carlo Franco: Ensuring mutually agreed upon plans for academic successes are adopted and are regularly reported on. We should hear about what steps they are taking, and actually know what that looks like in practice. It really comes down to ensuring adequate staffing ratios and targeted intervention. This should come through budget allocation, and ensuring we allow our expert staff to implement the basic programs that contribute to academic successes.

Erica Valliant As a board member I'd like put in a system to help hold the Superintendent and the district accountable by setting a plan in place that we can use to identify and track progress, identify areas of success, challenges, opportunities and threats or disruption. This is something that we can continually update and evaluate on quarterly basis.

d. **What does partnership between the board and educators look like in helping students achieve academic success?**

Chauntyll Allen: Partnership is about open and frequent communication, and holding ourselves and each other accountable to student success.

Yusef Carrillo: I think we need to have educator's voices be much more present in the way the Administration creates, plans, executes and communicates initiatives. While it does take a community to have healthy governance, we need to rely on the professional expertise of our educators to help us see what is really happening on the ground and not impose rules and plans on them but have them help us connect the dots between large scale policy and the classroom.

Carlo Franco: The board should be on the ground to see how the academic programs are being implemented, hear from educators on the successes and challenges, partner with educators and educational leaders in making sure that we are constantly working to improve outcomes. This comes with being able to assess and hold the Superintendent/Administrator accountable to ensuring that recommendations of the educators and on-site educational leaders are being honored and attempted. We need to be innovative in the ways that we attempt academic interventions to make sure our youth are obtaining the educational outcomes that are needed to prepare our youth for life post-graduation.

Erica Valliant Our educators and support staff are the direct service providers when it comes to delivering education. They know what is going on in our schools, classrooms, and with our students so its imperative that the Board have a good working relationship/partnership with educators, even when there is disagreement. We can all agree that we are here for our students first.

6. *SPFE began notifying SPPS and the Board of Education of safety concerns for building staff and students shortly after the return to in-person learning. Those concerns were overlooks by district staff. In 2023, the number of violent incidents in our buildings increased, sadly including the tragic killing of Devin Scott by another student. While the current board has been holding listening sessions to address safety, no information has been publicly shared, and many building staff and students still feel unsafe.*

a. **What is your definition of "school safety"?**

Chauntyll Allen: School safety is a community learning environment in which students and staff feel physically, mentally, and emotionally safe, and where all people feel included, seen, and valued.

Yusef Carrillo: School safety means more than just having a plan to mitigate crisis incidents. I have seen the district come to safety meetings with the community continue to simply inform parents of what lock outs, lock downs, and other crisis responses are. I support our safety team and I want to continue to build upon what we already have. But real safety in our schools means having a learning place that is free of retaliation towards our staff and educators, a learning place where students are not worried about bullying, where students don't feel like they need to bring weapons to defend themselves. Safety is a state of mind, and we as a district need to be proactive at building safe schools and helping our partners in the city and county to also build safe neighborhoods around our schools.

Carlo Franco: My definition of school safety is having spaces that every student feels comfortable talking with all adults in the space. Where every staff has the best interest of our students demonstrated through their daily interactions. A space that is proactive in providing intervention and dispute resolution training through a restorative and community centered model. Where there are clear expectations and guidelines that are agreed upon and committed to by every person with a stake in the School Community.

Erica Valliant School safety means that everyone in and around the building feels safe, from physical violence, emotional violence, racial violence, or any other form of violence. It also means that everyone has a sense of belonging or feeling safe as a person in the space that they are in, and in the skin that they are in. This also means that people feel safe from repercussions when they report something, question policies or practices, or advocate for families or for themselves. There is no way to ensure absolute safety however, we can work towards getting as close to it as possible.

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

Chauntyll Allen: Just as in other areas of focus for the Board, I commit to regular communication with and connection to youth, caregivers, and school staff to understand the needs of the community and how we can best meet those needs. School safety is an integral part of creating a healthy and equitable school district that will serve our city for many years to come.

Yusef Carrillo: A school safety policy needs to include our school communities. Rather than create a top heavy committee that is managed and directed by administration I would have each school site build and train to develop a healthy leadership team, or safety committee team that includes Educators, site leaders, support staff, facility staff, students and parents. They could inform us of the issues, needs and potential solutions their site needs better than a committee composed of people who are distant from the classroom. We

need to bring governance down to our communities and I believe that the Board needs to interact with school communities to build trust that their voices will be heard.

Carlo Franco: I would be in the community asking youth and families what they believe should happen. What are appropriate consequences for each action? How should the school hold their youth accountable? I would also work to invest in a thriving restorative justice program in every school community prioritizing the schools with the highest need. Staff training and family engagement being a huge component of the primary implementation phase. I have had many conversations over the past few months (and before), about these concerns and will be ready to stand strong on implementation of restorative, redesigned, comprehensive safety policies that are school based.

Erica Valliant The district has been doing some community engagement around school safety that includes families, educators, and community, although I don't know what is going to come out of it at this point, that is where I would start. I make sense that we also have a school safety and improvement committee that includes families, educators, and community, possibly for each school.

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

Chauntyll Allen: Everything I do is about centering and serving the needs of all youth and families. I will continue to connect with Black, Brown, Indigenous and immigrant students and families, create space for their voices to be heard, and advocate for their needs in rooms where they are not at the table.

Yusef Carrillo: We need to have a broad discussion about what it means to be safe. I have interacted with members of communities that are advocating for more police presence and other members of communities that have historical and present reasons to be very concerned about how they would be treated by armed SROs. In my opinion we need to center the voices of those who are most impacted by this discussion in making sure our school leadership teams are representative of our populations and that we can deliver plans and solutions that are sensitive to their safety.

Carlo Franco: By speaking with them. Speaking with their families. Providing directives to the district administration to report back on their engagement efforts. Our black and brown families who have been most greatly impacted by our education system and all other government systems, should be at the center of our policy revisions to school safety. If we have a solid relationship with them, we will be able to have their trust when responding to the concerns.

Erica Valliant I would center the voices of Black, Brown, Indigenous and immigrant students in discussion of school safety by making sure that they are represented and making sure that everyone involved understands that the safety conversation can look/be different or more involved due to institutional racism, cultural and racial bias and unconscious biases.

- 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?***

Chauntyll Allen: Restorative Justice has been proven to create positive student and school outcomes in other districts and I support its full implementation in SPPS from Pre-K to High School.

Yusef Carrillo: I learned how powerful Restorative Justice is in one of the schools that my wife taught at in Oakland, CA. I have seen that if it is done well and with adequate resources restorative justice has the capacity to build a truly safe school community. The issue that SPPS has is that they focused on the reduction of suspensions portion of the framework but did not hire the staff needed to properly implement the justice and restoration of the framework. As such we have not given restorative justice a chance in SPPS and we are hurting our students and our educators. I believe we need to fully commit to fund schools having the full restorative justice experience and have educators review and decide how they could build these plans in our communities. That said, I would always defer to more experienced board members who have active work experience as restorative justice coordinators.

Carlo Franco: The expectation of Restorative Justice should exist within our school communities. Understanding and training about what it truly means to practice in a restorative community is key and needs everyone to be committed to the work. This is a way of being in community, and localizing ownership to the impact on how certain behaviors disrupt our community. We would need to partner in ensuring that this is a priority to spend time during opening week, PLC's, and PD days to provide in depth training on restorative strategies. Implementing an MTSS Model paired with predictable responses that all implement with fidelity will be essential. It will be the Board and Districts responsibility that workload is manageable and these initiatives are prioritized.

Erica Valliant Restorative justice practice should be used to reduce the suspension disparities by aiming to prevent suspensions. I will partner with SPFE to identify where to focus our restorative justice efforts/funds where suspensions and other issues that our kids are experiencing are at the highest and make sure that there is adequate funding and on-going training for educators and staff.

7. The rampant growth of charter schools in the city of Saint Paul has caused great harm to our public schools and our communities. Per the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) the, the [number of charter school programs has grown to 81](#) in just the city of Saint Paul. This rise has led to the [resegregation of schools and communities](#), and includes a Saint Paul charter school that has been [under investigation since 2019](#) for investment practices.
 - a. **SPPS recently made the decision to close or combine several schools due to declining enrollment. Out of control growth of charter schools has led to the disastrous result of more “seats” available than there are school-age children in the city. Unlike charter schools, SPPS must be available to serve all children. What is the role of the school board in increasing enrollment in SPPS?**

Chauntyll Allen: Our role is to guide the district to provide strong programming and high-performing schools that attract students, families and educators.

Yusef Carrillo: The school board can not directly increase enrollment, but the school board can change the culture of the district to be healthy and supportive so that the enrollment office, human resources and the schools can work together to increase enrollment. To increase enrollment the district needs to first look to our own operations and build a district that is academically excellent, deeply safe and welcoming. We will do this by leaning on our educators expertise and actively seeking to recruit back those students that have left to other districts. Only when we can offer the kind of community that our neighbors want to invest in will we be able to stem the tide of low enrollment. While this work is being done, the school board needs to seek to create a moratorium of charter expansion in Saint Paul.

Carlo Franco: It is our responsibility to be ambassadors of the District. It is also our responsibility to ensure that our schools are meeting the needs of all students and we are transparent on what strategies we are implementing in order to retain the trust with the district. We also should be ensuring that we are moving in a positive direction in hiring and opening doors for leaders in our communities to have access to our schools and work in partnership with our district to regain trust. Cultural relevance, community responsiveness, robust extracurricular activities and providing access to our public infrastructure could increase the enrollment, while ensuring we offer competitive programs that all have access to.

Erica Valliant What is the role of the school board in increasing enrollment in SPPS? I think the role of the School Board is to make sure that SPPS is delivering the safe, quality and diverse educational experience that parents are looking for their children. This includes educator diversity and cultural and racial representation.

- b. ***Will you advocate for, and support a comprehensive study on the impact of charters schools in our communities (including segregation, tax base, land use, and neighborhood impact) and steps to address the harms done by unchecked charter school growth? Who would you partner with for this study? Who would you include as stakeholders?***

Chauntyll Allen: I will advocate for the study. I understand both the impact of charter schools on our community and the desire for cultural communities to create schools that can serve their children. My priority is to create those culturally-relevant programs within SPPS to retain students and increase enrollment in public education.

Yusef Carrillo: Yes, I believe that a study needs to be done on the role of charter school expansion and loss of district students to other districts. I would need to work with a diverse group of community members with expertise and SPFE members to make a more specific plan of how this would be done.

Carlo Franco: Yes. In order to stabilize and grow our enrollment, we must get an assessment on our entire ecosystem of education in its current state. We need to halt the addition of any new schools within our city during this study. I would like this work to be led by union members within SPPS. Stakeholders should include all people within the Saint Paul ecosystem of education including: families who chose SPPS, families who chose Charter (and left SPPS for charter), our students, Public Charter School Authorizers, Nonprofits in communities that have true connections to community, State of Minnesota, Ramsey County and other community leaders.

Erica Valliant I would include SPPS students and families and St. Paul Charter schools, and community members and partners.

- c. ***What is your timeline for beginning a study of the impacts of charter schools on our public schools and our communities?***

Chauntyll Allen: Since my first term began in January 2020, I have been working to create programming that retains and attracts students and families. I will continue to prioritize the creation and evolution of such programming in an effort to increase SPPS enrollment.

Yusef Carrillo: I believe it should be done immediately.

Carlo Franco: I believe conversations and collecting anecdotal data around the family decisions to choose charter schools outside of our traditional SPPS district. These

conversations and collection of data would be a component to this building, that has already started by being in communication with families I know have chosen this path. I believe we would need to assess the costs/budget for the study and determine it within a budget cycle.

Erica Valliant My timeline for beginning the study would be within 3 months (90 days) of the start of the moratorium.

8. *SPPS is facing declining enrollment. While charter schools play a large role enrollment concerns, SPPS is also responsible for creating an environment where students feel welcome. Despite forming an enrollment committee and developing a marketing plan, SPPS has not identified steps to address concerns around race, culturally appropriate affinity spaces, or the systemic lack of investment in BIPOC and immigrant communities and the schools that serve them.*

- a. ***What steps will you, as a board member, take to include race and equity in creating an enrollment plan? What does a racially equitable enrollment plan look like to you?***

Chauntyll Allen: I believe in co-governance with community. The district needs to do a better job of listening, and I will continue to push for the administration to connect meaningfully through culturally-responsive engagement and following through with community-recommended processes and programs.

Yusef Carrillo: In my work in enrollment in California I spoke to many families who were leaving the district first hand. Parents were being actively recruited by charter schools, some with very key populations in mind. We need to be aware that communities seek to find schools that are culturally responsive and teachers that are diverse and look like their children. We should be hiring and retaining teachers of color, and we should work to foster culturally responsive practices. Recruiting students may mean sustaining and building upon our unique programming, not trying to standardize all schools to look the same in the name of equity.

Carlo Franco: Prioritizing their voices in understanding why they are leaving our district. Ensuring that we are able to immediately adapt our school communities in order to retain and recruit families back into our district. We as board members need to be prepared to also lead and respond to community concerns about “change”. We know that change can be difficult, and sometimes messy, but what I also know is that in order to do systems change work that prioritizes race and equity when creating an enrollment plan, we will need to make sure that every stakeholder is adaptable and willing to do what is best for that plan in action all the time. This would look like robust community engagement, meeting families in their own communities, compensating community engagement experts (many of whom already work in our district) to provide guidance on best ways to engage with communities and

actually allowing our equity department within SPPS to lead in various PD and community engagement avenues that show up in practice.

Erica Valliant I would make race and equity a centering factor. A racially equitable enrollment plan at a high level looks like having a plan to increase the numbers of educators of color, finding out what's important to families and students, and making investments in those things/areas.

9. *Recently SPPS has made the decision to add two new educational offerings (Fee based Nature PreK and East African Magnet School) without SPFE engagement or input. This is just the most recent example of an ongoing pattern from SPPS district leadership of refusing to partner with the largest bargaining unit in the district, and the workers that will be held responsible for the success or failure of programs.*

- a. **Specifically, what will you do to change this pattern of behavior, and hold the district accountable to partnering with SPFE?**

Chauntyll Allen: Throughout my first term, I have suggested, questioned, and directed the administration to engage with community and I will continue to do so. I will also continue to have transparent communication with bargaining units and push the district to build stronger relationships with union leadership.

Yusef Carrillo: A lot of the issues stemming from this lack of communication and collaboration are an organizational culture of top down initiatives that are often fast and frankly a bit haphazard. The district's administration may see opportunities that they feel the need to jump on but this ends up hurting us more than helping. No strategic decision borne out of secrecy or immediacy builds trust. A thorough engagement would still have resulted in new programming being approved by the Board, but we missed a valuable opportunity to demonstrate trust by keeping our partners aware. If we build a cadence of collective planning, engaged building and transparent communication we will demonstrate to our community that we are all connected, united and working towards the same goals.

Carlo Franco: I will say, I think that the cultural East African Magnet School is going to be a good addition to the SPPS Community, as it has been a call from the community for a number of years. I do, however, recognize that the current district administration far too often acts unilaterally in decision making from a relatively disconnected space in their district offices. I come from a background of community engagement and organizing, and know what effective community engagement looks like (balancing all stakeholders). When the Administration presents plans that should be including community engagement, I will expect them to answer questions about who they've connected with and to what extent their feedback influenced the plan forward. The success/failures of any program in our district is the responsibility of leadership. It begins with being able to appropriately allocate funds and

provide effective, engaging and authentic leadership to get all our School District Staff aligned on the same page. That can only start when there is shared decision making, and those are some of the questions that I will be asking and expecting follow up on.

Erica Valliant The Board can work to create and foster a culture and practice of inclusion, when decisions are being made that impact SPFE there should be SPFE representation included in the conversation regardless of the ultimate outcome.