

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

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

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

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

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?**

Public Education provides access to education for all students regardless of their socioeconomic. Public education provides the knowledge and skills students need to participate and be successful in society. Public Education also provides personal and professional growth. Public Education can lead to an increase in economic growth, and innovation for the city of Saint Paul. One of the biggest values of Public Education for the city is that public education results in a decrease in inequality and leads to a stronger and a more cohesive community.

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?**

I have been a student of SPPS for 13 years. Once I graduated, I found passion in youth work, and education. This has resulted in me working with St. Paul students through various organization and none profits. As a program coordinator the students I currently work with our Saint Paul Students As a graduate of Saint Paul schools, Public Education provided my sibling and I the knowledge, skills, and opportunities we needed to be successful, and pursue are passions. The students at Saint Paul public schools are my brother, cousins, nephew, Niece and Students. The teachers and administrators at St. Paul Public schools are my aunt, uncle, sister, cousins, neighbor, and friends. SPPS has helped shape me to be who I am.

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

I will demonstrate that I am a public education champion by sharing with the people in our community the benefits and value of Public Education. I will be an advocate, and support public schools, their students, teachers, and families. I will get involved and participate in meetings, and events that benefit and strive to better public schools. I will volunteer my time and resources. I will stay informed about education Policies and promote positive change.

c. **Why are you seeking an endorsement from SPFE?**

The reason I am seeking an endorsement from SPFE is because I understand that SPFE represents teachers, educational support staff and community service

professionals in Saint Paul schools. These are some of the most important stakeholders when it comes to public education. Endorsement with SPFE is a start to establishing a relationship and partnership with this organization; A relationship I believe to be essential for anyone who is a board member or is looking to be one.

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

My partnership with SPFE will be a partnership that involve strong commitment to students, staff, and public education. It would be a partnership that focuses on collaborating to achieve common goals. This partnership will include consistent communication, collaboration, and a willingness to listen and learn. This would also mean having the willingness to take feedback from SPFE members, and Educators and applying it to better our partnership, and my work with Public Education.

In any partnership disagreement can happen, but through this partnership disagreement will be approached with an open mind, and a willingness to see this from other perspectives. There will be open and honest Communication and listening to all parties' perspectives and suggestion. We would work together to find common ground and find a solution that meets the needs of all those involved. If necessary, during disagreement we can use other methods to come to an agreement such as getting input from a third-party expert.

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?

I will first start with acknowledging the action that resulted in the loss of trust, and share with Parents and bargaining units my plans, and course of action to not repeat the actions that resulted and the loss of trust.

I will be proactive and transparent. I will do this by sharing regular updates, and seeking input and feedback to ensure all parties' needs are addressed

I will work to provide multiple channels of communication, so all stakeholders have the space to share their voices. I will set clear expectations for effective and timely communication.

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

I would first gather data, and information on what language needs there are in school communities. From there I would collaborate with internal resources such as bilingual teachers, staff, and school volunteers. I would also create partnerships, and collaborate with external resources such as community organizations, and translation services.

I would also make sure that all materials, and communications from schools are available in multiple languages.

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

I will set clear expectations, and protocols.

I will have regularly scheduled meetings with staff, teachers, parents, and community members. We will provide regular updates on issues, concerns, and on-going plans. I will also provide space for all stakeholders to share in put, feedback, ask questions, and voice concerns.

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)

The main role of a school board member is to ensure that all students have access to quality education. In order to do this, members will need to set policies and goals that benefit students, staff, teachers, and families. Board members oversee budget decisions, and they need to make sure that all decisions are made to ensure students' success, and the benefit of the school. School board members are also responsible for selecting the best candidate for superintendent, a superintendent whose primary focus is the betterment of schools, and student education.

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

A healthy board governance is one that communicates well with its board member and stakeholders, it's a governance that is transparent and collaborative. It's a governance that takes accountability, and one that understands that in order to achieve its goal, it needs the help and support of all stakeholders. A Healthy board governance is one that works with stakeholders and members to set clear goals and expectations and monitors those goals to

ensure progress. A Healthy board governance consistently provides results, solutions and meets the needs of those that it serves.

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)**
Community would be all those are impacting or are impacted themselves on the decisions and policy surrounding schools. This includes parents, teachers, school staff, local businesses and people living in school neighborhoods. Community can also include community and nonprofit organization.
 - b. **What is the role of the board in identifying and advocating for the supports students need to achieve academic success?**
The board’s role is to create policies that allow access to equitable opportunities and resources. It’s to make sure that schools have teachers who are qualified, and are striving for student success, to have curriculums that not only ensure academic success but foster student engagement. The board’s role is also to ensure equitable access to technology. They are responsible for allocating funds in ways that support and benefit all stakeholders. Most importantly the board’s role is to listen to, and address concerns that students, teachers, staff, and families are facing, and to advocate for all stakeholders in order to ensure all parties’ needs are met.
 - c. **How will you as a board member hold the district and superintendent accountable to achieving academic success?**
*I will set clear goals and expectations for academic success and hold the district and superintendent accountable for meeting these expectations.
I will revisit the goal which we have set to ensure that we are on track to meeting it by our given timeline. I will pay attention to and share data on student achievement. Such as graduation rate, and academic growth.
I will ask questions on budget decision, curriculum and other things that directly impact students’ academic.*
 - d. **What does partnership between the board and educators look like in helping students achieve academic success?**
Educators have an insight when it comes to understanding the needs of students and the classroom. The board’s collaboration with educators is significant to students achieving academic success. A partnership that is aimed to help

students achieve academic success looks like a partnership that includes regular meetings to discuss areas in which students are struggling and ways to improve student education. It's a partnership that allows discussion on what resources are needed to improve students learning, and how can we obtain these resources. It should be a partnership that allows for feedback and input on decisions and policies. In order to ensure that the actions the board is taking is one that meets the needs of the classroom, students, and teachers.

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 overlooked 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”?**

My definition of School safety is the measures and practices that is put in places to ensure the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of students, teachers, staff, and school guest. I define school safety as whatever contributes to creating an environment that promotes academic success, and positive development while protecting the minds, and bodies of student, staff, teacher, and school guest.

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

I would create spaces within the schools and community for all stakeholders so they can share their concerns surrounding safety. I would work with schools to find ways for families, students, staff, and teachers to share their concerns anonymously. I would create both physical and virtual spaces, so we can get the conversation started and make an ongoing dialogue in a space that is convenient and comfortable for all stakeholders. I would have an ongoing dialogue and collaborate with all stakeholders on possible solutions to make sure SPPS is safe and stays safe. I would also host meetings and give other opportunities for feedback and input. I would look at data and information that can help us find methods that work for all stakeholders. In addition, I would consult, and work with external experts such as law enforcement, psychologist, therapists, and social workers.

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

When we are discussing school safety, we are discussing the safety of these students therefore I believe it's crucial for these students to be a part of the conversation and to be in spaces where safety policies are being discussed. I would create opportunities for these students to share their thoughts, perspectives, experience, and ideas. I would create student leadership opportunities like a committee that will be city wide, where students can advocate for themselves. I would meet regularly with the student committee to collaborate and to discuss issues.

- 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?**

Restorative Justice can provide a better more effect approach to conflict resolution. Rather than resulting in punitive measure, which hasn't been proven effective in getting the desire results. Restorative justice will bring forth an approach that includes dialogue, understanding, and support while also addressing the concerns and having accountability.

I will collaborate with SPFE by spreading awareness of the benefits of Restorative Justice to all stakeholders and the community.

I would discuss with SPFE ways to train staff on having Restorative Justice, as an alternative to discipline and suspension

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?**

I believe the school board's role in increasing enrollment is first understanding the main factors of the decline in enrollment. By understanding the barriers and issues to enrollment, the school board can take actions to eliminate the barriers and the issues facing enrollment. Focusing on equity and inclusion is crucial to

increasing enrollment. It's very important that a discussion is held with the school board, schools, and the community about why families are seeking educational opportunities at charter school over public. The boards efforts to build partnership with community organization can play a significant role in the increase of enrollment.

- 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?**

Yes, I would be willing to advocate for and support a comprehensive study on the impact of charters schools in our communities. I believe the study would give us a better understanding of the effect of charter schools in our communities. It would also help determent the best course of action.

I would partner with schools, community organizations, teachers, staff, students, and families in order to understand the impact of charters schools from various perspectives. I believe stakeholders include all parties that are affected by the increase of charter schools, which will include school staff, teachers, students and their families, and the community.

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

I would do the study during the academic year. I would start a study at the beginning of the school year. Throughout the school year I would collect data and make observations on the changes and impact that public schools and communities are facing. This would allow enough time to collect meaningful data and compare changes over time.

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?**

The steps that I will take are understanding what races and ethnic groups make up our student population. I would use data and surveys to gather and analyze this information.

With this information two courses of action will take place, first I would make sure that the races and ethnic groups that make up the school populations are recognized, supported, and represented. I would make sure that our students and their families know that SPPS is their school, and they are welcome there. Second, whatever data is gathered will be used to identify any inequities in enrollment. I would like to seek input from community members and community organizations. I would put in place policies that will prevent any discrimination.

racially equitable enrollment plan looks like a plan that ensures that all students no matter their races, ethnicity, or background can get access to education. It's a plan that focuses on diversity and inclusion.

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?**

To strengthen the partnership between SPFE and the board I will ensure that with regular meetings we will discuss any major plans and decisions that the board would like to take. As a partner SPFE should have input on current and future plans that the board is working on. As a board member I will have clear and consistent communication with all partners including SPFE on the direction the board is heading. By offering space during regular meeting to discuss the boards plan, and setting the expectations to have consistent Communication this will allow me to hold myself, other board members and the district accountable to the partnership with SPFE