2017 SPFT Public BOE Candidate Questionnaire

**(CONFIDENTIAL– DO NOT CIRCULATE)**

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

1. The Saint Paul Federation of Teachers believes that parents, educators, and 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, removing local voices from discussions about our children’s education.
   1. **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**

1. Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) is currently facing a budget shortfall. This is a major obstacle for expanding initiatives like restorative practices that help us address the racial equity gap. In addition to identifying new funding mechanisms, SPFT believes we must ask for support from residents for our public schools in the form of a funding referendum increase in 2018.
   1. **Will you as a board member endorse, support, and campaign for this referendum increase?**

**As a sitting board member, I feel it would be inappropriate for me to comment. I have supported a four of the previous referendum campaigns.**

1. The Twin Cities has been named one of the best places to live, yet many of our residents - particularly in communities of color - struggle to make ends meet, often working two or more jobs and struggling with little or no benefits. Many labor and community organizations have championed a $15 minimum wage and earned safe and sick time, issues that affect SPFT staff, parents, and community members.
   1. **Will you and your campaign support and endorse a $15 minimum wage, rejecting carve-outs and tip penalties, and earned safe and sick time for all workers? YES**
2. **Do you support collective bargaining for public sector unions? YES**
3. **Will you abide by your political party endorsement? 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?

The future of St. Paul is in the hands of the citizens. The key to productive and virtuous citizens is education.

1. SPPS has a diverse student population, with over 75% of students identifying as People of Color. 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. People of Color graduating college often choose professions other than teaching – in part due to the prohibitive costs of higher education. The scarcity of educators of color means that many are often quickly recruited into administrative positions, leaving our classrooms lacking the diversity our students need.
   1. **Will you support the language in our Educational Assistant’s contract, which provides support for EAs to become licensed teachers? How would you strengthen this grow-your-own program?**

Yes

* 1. **Data shows that our city and our schools are becoming more segregated. Segregation and poverty are harmful to all of us, especially our students and their families. How will you use the district’s funds to address segregation to reverse this trend? How will you hold the Superintendent accountable to combating segregation?**

I have been a voice for equitable funding for all our schools. SSSC should mean and include both a strong magnet program and a dedication to our community/neighborhood schools**.**

1. SPPS is entering a transitional moment with the hiring of a new Superintendent. Many parents, educators and students have raised concerns regarding the past relationships between the board and superintendents.
   1. **It is the role of the Board of Education to provide direction, supervision and accountability for the Superintendent. How will you embrace these responsibilities?**

I am the “poster child” (albeit an old one) for keeping an eye on the superintendent.

* 1. **What three issues do you believe should be the top priority of our new Superintendent?**

Rebuild Trust.

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1. Across the Twin Cities, more and more students are choosing to “opt-out” of standardized testing. Recent reporting by MPR, MinnPost and the Saint Paul Pioneer Press suggest that testing is costly, time consuming and does not provide useful information for educators.
   1. **What is the appropriate use of data from standardized test and interim assessments? What changes would you recommend? Please comment on the use of standardized tests and interim assessments in high stakes decisions such as school closure and staffing.**

Standardized tests have a use as a tool. This tool should not be overused, and should not be a hammer to pound teachers.

* 1. **How will you support parents and educators in the “opt-out” movement?**

Make sure they are aware of their options.

1. Brain research shows the importance of stimulation starting at birth. Quality day care and pre-school programs staffed by trained educators are critical to helping children to be school ready**.** 
   1. **How will you partner with SPFT to insure that all families have access to quality Pre-K programs in our city?**

I have consistently been one of the strongest supporters of Pre-K, ECFE, and Discovery Club. Once again, the key is the legislature; and re-electing a Democratic Governor in 2018. The 2018 election is the most important ever in Minnesota for the future of education and the preservation of organized Labor.

* 1. **New research shows that many Minnesotans live in a child-care deserts without adequate access to childcare options. How will you work with SPFT to provide additional early-learning options for parents?**

We have to identify these pockets or “deserts” of need, and work with the city and county to get the services delivered to people who are not good at accessing these services.

1. Saint Paul is home to diverse communities, including many newcomers to the United States. SPPS plays a large role in helping newcomers feel welcome in their new city, while still valuing and retaining strong cultural ties.
   1. **How will you use your position on the Board of Education to prioritize support for English Learners, especially for newcomers and their families? What steps will you take to increase family engagement? What policy recommendations do you have for English Learners at the district level?**

Actually, this current board has embraced wholeheartedly the concept of family engagement. We need to listen intently as we do this engagement.

* 1. **How will you work to protect immigrant students and their families in the face of a hostile federal government?**

The board has gone on record to ensure and assure that our schools are a safe place for all our students and their families. I am personally pledged to that stance.

1. SPPS and the City of Saint Paul presently do business with institutions that engage in practices that destabilize our community through predatory lending practices, investing in private prisons, and corporate tax avoidance. Additionally, TIF Districts (Tax Increment Financing) have been created in a way that disproportionately enriches corporations and big banks. Currently 30% of properties, including many of the most valuable pieces of land in the city, pay no taxes to the city of Saint Paul, placing a heavy burden on our families. These practices lead to economic injustice and racial discrimination.
   1. **How will you use your role on the Board of Education to make sure that the largest corporations in Saint Paul pay their fair share?**
   2. **Predatory lending practices increase foreclosure rates, placing our families and students at risk. Will you join with SPFT and SPPS in calling on banks to mitigate the impacts of foreclosures during the school year? What steps will you take to distance SPPS from institutions that participate in predatory lending?**
   3. **Will you work with SPFT to ask Saint Paul’s wealthiest non-profits to pay their fair share and institute a Payment In Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) Program that benefits our public schools?**
   4. **As a Director, will you commit to working with SPFT to seek the revenue we need to have racially equitable schools?**

I am in complete agreement in principle with SPFT in all the areas reflected in a, b, c, and d. I need to know more about specific strategies, but I am ready to assist

1. Teachers want to do their best and have many great ideas and solutions for ensuring all students can be successful but their voices are often not listened to.
   1. **What are your ideas to help teachers, in partnership with parents and community, have a voice in education policy so that their professional expertise and deep knowledge of each learner can best benefit our students?**

We need better communication between all rank and file employees and the district. As a board member, I have stated that often, and have facilitated many such discussions. I want to return to the kind of respectful relationship between SPFT and the administration that we had when I was a teacher.