St. Paul Students Deserve:
More Support for Special Education and English Learner Students

Your SPFE bargaining team proposes weighted class sizes and caseloads for SPED and increased EL student support

Support for Special Education Student Learning

Ensuring our Special Education students get the support they deserve is one of the top priorities of SPFE members, according to the bargaining survey. SPED teachers Joan Duncanson and Lindsay Jackson, and Occupational Therapist Deea Galifus presented our proposal on increasing support for students by creating weighted caseloads and class sizes. The educators spoke about how our students eligible for SPED services are not getting their needs met, which in turn is not allowing teachers to teach. With weighted class sizes and caseloads, special education educators can better meet individual student needs. Our presenters also shared that over 75 SPED teachers left the district last year. Statistics like this highlight the crisis in SPPS Special Education, and this proposal was created by our educators who serve our kids every day, who know deeply what is needed to fix the situation.

English Learner Student Support

In our last round of negotiations we successfully negotiated contract language that powerfully impacted EL services for our students. At our last session, we proposed additions to that language by making weighted caseload limits a requirement instead of a goal.

These proposals also contained language around the common occurrence of EL teachers being pulled to sub for missing teachers during their own teaching time, thus not being allowed to provide services. The proposal also affirms that EL teachers can be in the regular rotation of the use of carts and portables when needed, but cannot be permanently relegated to a cart simply because they are an EL teacher. This proposal was presented by Bargaining Team Members and EL teachers Elysia Peitzman and Traci Buckle, as well as EL teacher and SPFE’s Vice President Erica Schatzlein.

“Our Special Education and English Learner students deserve to be treated like more than a number. Educators care about our students, but are often overloaded and cannot meet their individual needs. It’s time to invest in our students again.”

Joan Duncanson
Special Education Teacher
Bridgeview

All SPFE Proposals can be found on our website at spfe28.org/proposals.
Family Engagement
It is well established that family engagement with student learning is a core component of student success. Hannah Piersen presented our family engagement proposal which suggests language to align the process of starting Academic Parent Teacher Teams in more schools, increase the stipends for School APTT Champions and individual teachers who conduct APTT conferences, and add APTT language to the EA and SCSP contract. The APTT model replaces the two traditional parent-teacher conferences to three group conferences throughout the year and one individual conference.

Religious Observance Days
Our Jewish and Islamic educators have religious observance days that fall on school days, unlike Christian holidays, which are typically off in the SPPS calendar. SPFE presented this proposal to ensure all of our members’ rights are respected and valued. This proposal would increase the number religious observance days from two to three in the EA and Teacher contracts, in order to provide parity with our SCSP contract.

Commitment to School Integration
Integration promotes increased academic achievement and improved life outcomes for students. SPFE and the St. Paul chapter of the NAACP have a long-term partnership addressing school segregation in St. Paul. In 2017, a joint School Integration Task Force (formed out of a previous contract win) completed a report with recommendations on school integration. Since that time, St. Paul Public Schools has not implemented any of the recommendations. We are proposing the district adopt the definition of integration as recommended by the Task Force, and set a timeline for beginning to enact recommendations of the Task Force.

Fighting for Public School Funding
When adjusted for inflation, state funding for St. Paul Public Schools has declined by $1600 per pupil for since 2003! In the past two years, SPFE partnered with SPPS to pass a referendum and complete an enrollment campaign, Select SPPS, to tackle increase funding and counteract enrollment decline. Those efforts are not enough. We are proposing SPFE and SPPS partner to address the root causes of the funding issues we face, including a decline in corporate taxes and revenue statewide—revenue that could be put toward our public schools and other public services. We propose joint meetings with local corporations and legislators to lobby for additional school funding. Additionally, we proposed a SPFE and SPPS jointly seek a moratorium on new charter schools in St. Paul until a community impact study on charter schools can be completed and reviewed.

| On September 12, the District bargaining team presented the following proposals and counter proposal. |
| Federation Business Leave |
| The District proposed not paying SPFE members their salary or benefits on days that they take Union Business Leave (UBL), instead paying for the cost of the educator’s substitute. The District claimed they were seeking simplicity in this proposal. Currently, there is no loss of pay or benefits for the educator who uses leave, and Federation pays for the substitute to cover their time. Union Business Leave (UBL) comes out of a former partnership with the union and the District, recognizing that the work that occurs when leave is taken by union members benefits all parties. This proposal is simply a union busting tactic and another attempt to take away our leave. |
| SPFT Building Access |
| The District would like your union leadership and organizers to sign-in and notify building administrators before coming to any SPPS school or site. Currently, it is practice to sign-in but not notify administrators in advance or announce who we are meeting with at the site. The District said this out of concern for our safety, in case, for example, there was a fire and they needed to know who was in the building. In the experience of our leaders and organizers, most administrators who insist on knowing what we are doing are participating in surveillance of union activity, which is an unfair labor practice. |
| Educational Assistant Improvement Plan Process |
| SPPS proposed allowing EAs who are 12-month employees to be put on an Improvement Plan at any time. Currently, the Improvement plan process pauses near the end of the school year. |
| Grow Your Own Participation Counter Proposal |
| The district gave us a counter to our proposal regarding members’ rights to return to their former job classification if they participate in a licensure program, like SUTR, but do not finish, or do not remain in a licensed educator position. Your bargaining team will be reviewing this counter in more detail. |

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SPFE members and families at the Rally for Public School Funding in May