The goal of the proposal is to ignite a paradigm shift from our current systems, which tend to be reactive, to a system of proactive, coordinated and structured systems of skill development, trauma-informed strategies, and the repair of harm. This will require an investment in the beginning, with payoffs later as our climate and culture improve and safety is increased.

The Superintendent explained that his goal is to create new systems for how resources are allocated and that he would like the committee to be part of that discussion. This puts the focus on remodeling the house and unfortunately ignores the fact that our house is on fire. Our proposal is designed to help with the remodel and to put the fire out. Our students needs are immediate and they cannot wait.

SPFE member Kris Christensen and bargaining team member Tom Stinson, explained that when writing our proposal we specifically sought out the expertise of social workers, counselors, psychologists, nurses, behavior intervention specialists and other teachers and staff to identify what they felt could help meet the needs of our students. They know exactly what is needed and their voices deserve to be honored by seriously considering the proposed solutions and taking more immediate action.

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The SPFE team urged the District to reexamine our proposal and share a counter that is more reflective of the needs our educators have already identified.

State releases additional aid to SPPS

Educators throughout the district have made increasing the number of mental health staff in the district their top priority. This past week, the State of Minnesota released an additional $1.2 million in safe schools aid for SPPS. This aid can be used to pay costs for licensed school counselors, licensed school nurses, licensed school social workers, licensed school psychologists, and licensed alcohol and chemical dependency counselors to help provide early responses to problems. The funds give SPPS an opportunity to share that priority and take real action on the issue of mental health. When mentioned at bargaining, SPPS said the current plan was to use these funds on building improvements such as security cameras and key card access systems.
Increasing the number of licensed staff who are people of color has been a long standing goal for SPFE members. One of the ways we have worked toward this goal is negotiating support for our members in non-licensed bargaining units to get financial support while seeking a license. Deciding to go back to school to seek a teaching or other licensure is a big commitment of time and money. Our Educational Assistant contract currently has a stipend available to members who make this decision and the ability to take a paid leave while student teaching. This proposal would open up those same benefits to our School and Community Service Professional members. This proposal is cost neutral to the district. This program already exists, our request is to simply expand who has access to the funds.

“SCSP members, like our EAs, are committed to working with the students and families of St Paul Public Schools. These employees are much more reflective of our students and families than our licensed staff. It makes relational and financial sense to invest in these employees and help them achieve licensure.”

Rene Meyers
SCSP
Hazel Park

Elementary Specialists Supply Budget

The cost for supplies for elementary specialists who teach multiple grade levels can add up quickly. Unfortunately, buildings rarely provide funds or budget for those supplies. In our contract, we currently have an agreement of intent encouraging principals to budget $100 for specialist supplies. This amount doesn’t cover much and the language is not mandatory, meaning some folks pay for all of their supplies out of their own pockets. The SPFE bargaining team presented a proposal that would make this funding mandatory and increase the amount from $100 to $500 per each specialist so we can ensure that students have the supplies they need to learn.

Election Day Holiday

To promote and celebrate democracy, your bargaining team proposed that Election Day be a holiday on our school calendar. Having election day as a holiday would promote voting participation among members and the families we serve. It would also make our buildings more available and accessible to be polling places.

SPFE Counters to District Proposals

The district made a proposal that outlines the current state licensure laws regarding Tier 1 and Tier 2 teachers rights, in regard to continuing contracts and achievement of tenure, in contractual language (proposal #6). They also proposed that we outline the new state law requirements for observations of non-tenured teachers (proposal #9). We countered both of these proposals with language that accomplishes the same goal with a simple reference to the state law.

District ECFE, ABE, and Community Education Proposal

The Community Education Department presented a proposal requesting more flexibility with staff scheduling so that they could schedule more Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) and Adult Basic Education (ABE) courses in the evenings, weekends, and summers. The bargaining team will be setting up meetings with these membership groups to discuss this further.