

2023 School Board Questionnaire

1. What is your website and/or another way for delegates to reach you?
 - a. <https://yusef4spps.org/>
 - b. Email: yusef@yusef4spps.org
2. What are your top priorities for the school district? My top priorities are:
 - a. To change the culture of the district so that SPPS becomes accountable, transparent, equitable and trustworthy.
 - b. To build unity and consensus in the Board to train ourselves and our administration leadership to lead with trust. That we can focus on creating change in our school communities by listening, engaging and co-governing with our educators, families and students.
 - c. To push to bring the Board to the people by holding meetings regularly in the community and making our governance accessible to all
 - d. To help develop strong leadership teams at school sites with administrators, educators, staff, families, and students.
 - e. To end management styles that prioritize deliverables over trust and results over people.
 - f. To make our district safe, welcoming to all and a haven for students to learn.
3. How would you help improve student achievement?
 - a. Students need to have environments that are safe and free of too many stressors to be successful in their learning. I aim to help foster healthy school leadership teams that can help us ideate and scale up approaches to reduce school violence and bullying, while keeping our schools from becoming like correctional facilities.
 - b. Students and families have chosen SPPS for its unique programming. I plan to continue to support that programming and develop it so that offerings can also be complimented with schooling experiences that are rewarding and engaging.
 - c. I plan to listen to our educators, students and families and their needs and help build a Board that prioritizes our most important assets when making plans and decisions.
4. What is your plan to close the achievement gap?
 - a. Healthy schools with robust leadership teams and strong district support have more capacity to handle taking bigger objectives rather than just survive the day to day whirlwind. I will encourage that we train and model healthy leadership team building for our school sites and cross train our administration to be the best coaches in the state of MN.
 - b. We need to listen to our students, relate to them, not rule over them. Our students of color have a right to experience access to programming and extra-curricular activities that are stimulating. We also need to help build programs that incubate novel ideas by our educators and give schools the flexibility to create sustainable cultures of learning, rather than impose plans from the top down.

5. What is the best way to keep our kids safe in school?
 - a. Safety is more than just violence. But in order for our kids to even begin to learn, we need to intervene and interrupt violence. That is why I believe we need to take action as a district on the short term and the long term, concurrently. We can begin by focusing on having fully staff mental health teams that intervene in student's behavior at schools. But I truly believe that we need to move away from policing our students and towards helping our students gain a voice and to tell their story. We are too busy interrupting or placating behavior, when we need to address the root, that students do not have a safe community where they will be heard.
 - b. Restorative Justice needs to be fixed. We are currently doing something that does not do justice to what real Restorative Circles can accomplish, if coupled with adequate staffing and accountability. And that accountability is not punitive, it needs to be able to build a community that seeks to redeem our students that feel disconnected and lost in this post-covid world.
 - c. We need to build a culture of respect and trust in our school sites but especially in our district, so that schools are free to bring feedback, and voice concerns about their safety, knowing that it will be received in trust and with the intent to build schools up.
6. Would you support distributing funds raised by parent-led groups across all schools to address the achievement gap and racial disparity?
 - a. I agree in concept that we should try to lift up our students experience with Parent-led funding. But to what degree? Is the Parent-led funding replacing something that the district used to provide? And maybe the question would ultimately be more justly answered by the whole community (aka, the city of St Paul in it's tax base) provide these funds in a progressive way. Ultimately I believe that this is the type of conversation that needs to be had with school communities (and not just the most affluent) where we can find out what these funds are and what they would realistically cover by being spread out to all schools, and find out how to raise the experience of all of our schools and fund them equitably.
7. What is your stance on charter schools, and how do you believe they impact the public school system in terms of funding and resources?
 - a. As a Board member, I would push for a moratorium of new charter schools in Saint Paul until the birth rate or student population increased substantially to support new schools. Charter schools started out as an experiment to provide avenues for novel methods of education that were not being provided elsewhere in public education spheres. Nowadays, however, they are siphoning off resources that public school districts desperately need and are actively becoming a new force for the segregation of our students. While I believe that good charter schools exist that have wonderful experiences for their students, I also believe that a new model of education where Public schools can be incubated and

pioneered within a district replace the need for what charters provided, especially since they circumvent the democratic power of the people by bypassing the locally elected School Board.

8. What are your thoughts on the Student Outcomes Focused Governance (SOFG) model? Do you support or oppose its adoption and implementation in our district?
 - a. No initiative should reduce or impair the ability of a democratically elected school board to administer and manage the business and initiatives of the school district. MN statutes are very clear on this. While I have had concerns about previous iterations of SOFG in it's current form it is more about providing a framework for helping the Board engage and focus it's work. I plan to go further in the concept of engagement and think that we can build an engagement process that is healthier and more robust by making meetings and community feedback more accessible. This means going to people rather than expecting them to come to us.
9. What are your thoughts on sustainability initiatives in schools, such as solar installations on school buildings?
 - a. I wholeheartedly support sustainability measures such as the installation of newer modes of heating and cooling, like good heat pumps, solar, geothermal solutions. This needs to address our overheating buildings considering the change in weather patterns due to global warming. More importantly, these sustainability measures should be a springboard for our students to access the science and the opportunity to participate in Green Energy initiatives. I would hate for any initiative to be just a way for an outside contractor to make money off of our taxpayers, without providing benefit to the community. I do believe we need to be judicious as the cost of these initiatives needs to be counterbalanced with the building modernization and with declining enrollment. Any implementation needs to be vetted to be serving our community for enough time to pay us back the difference in cost savings and in carbon emissions saved.