

Dear SPPS Community:

Last night (February 17), members of the Saint Paul Federation of Educators (SPFE) union voted to authorize a strike. This union includes our licensed staff such as teachers, educational assistants, and school and community professionals.

Many of these staff members have been on the front lines serving our students since the COVID-19 pandemic began almost two years ago. **Like all school staff across the country, their jobs have never been harder.** Our students' needs have grown, and our capacity to meet those needs has been severely impacted by the staffing shortages, mental health crises and racial injustices impacting Saint Paul, Minneapolis, and cities like ours across the nation.

With this vote, union leadership can call for a strike sometime in the near future. If and when SPFE files their official intent to strike, a 10-day period would begin for the district and the union to continue negotiations in an effort to avoid a strike.

As the leader of Saint Paul Public Schools, it is my responsibility to meet the needs of our students and families and to support all of our staff in their ability to do their jobs. I have directed my team to continue bargaining in good faith and strongly urge SPFE and SPPS leadership to do whatever it takes to avoid a strike, especially now after almost two years of disrupted learning.

**This vote does not mean that there will be a strike, nor do I believe that a strike is in the best interest of our students, families or staff.** Now more than ever, our community needs to come together and support each other. I promise to remain open, honest, and committed to finding solutions that meet the needs of our students while being true to our financial realities.

All of the latest information is available on our website at [spps.org/negotiations](https://spps.org/negotiations). I will continue to keep you informed throughout this process. Thank you for your commitment and dedication to Saint Paul Public Schools.

In Partnership,

Joe Gothard, Superintendent