

When to
vote?

ELECTION DAY
Nov 2, 2021



EARLY VOTING
OPTIONS

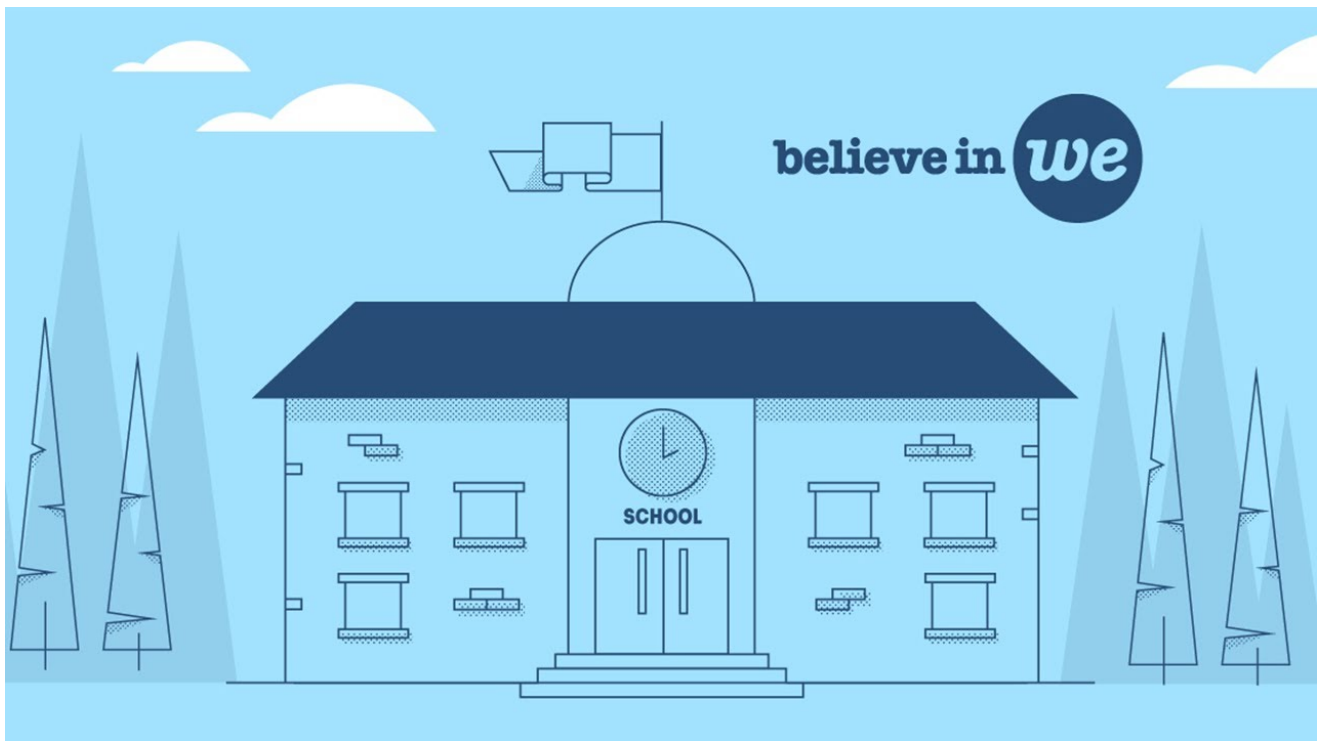


ABSENTEE VOTING



POLLING LOCATIONS

ELECTION NEWS



Education Minnesota supports fully funded public schools

Members are encouraged to be informed on local elections, including what's on the ballot, who is running for school board, and any bond or levy information. Please see www.edmnvotes.org for more information.

Levy Information for ISD 197

If approved, the operating levy funds will enable the school district to: 1.) Sustain current programs and services 2.) Maintain current class sizes across all grade levels. Please see the [website](#) for specific information on the levy. WSPFT supports the levy in 2021.

Candidate Screening Questions

Candidates for ISD 197 School Board were asked three questions regarding their experience and interactions with unions. Candidates were emailed and given one week to respond. The candidates' full, unedited responses are listed below.

1. *How do you feel about working with the teacher's union on district initiatives, issues, and planning?*
2. *How will you support teachers' working conditions and school culture?*
3. *How do you plan to collaborate with teachers to address school district priorities?*

Tim Aune

1. One would hope that as a School Board member I would have as a core priority making sure our students are successful. To think that goal is achievable without engaging, in a positive manner, the largest single factor in classroom learning would be folly. A lot has been invested improving our classrooms. Those improvements are for naught if the room does not have talented professional working inside it.
2. Working conditions has taken on a new meaning the past two years. As they relates to COVID-19, I fully support having district implementing the science-driven policy developed by State and County Public Health officials. I am not fully sure what is meant by "supporting school culture". If it means supporting a life science teacher citing Darwin or a history teacher discussing the role of race and bias within the framework of an approved curriculum, the answer is an unequivocal yes.
3. I am hoping I will do a lot of listening. Data might show poor progress improving in a particular area, but before I can make a "more dollars vs. new direction" decision I will need the direct input from the person trying to make that outcome happen in their classroom. For general planning there certainly will be opportunities. I recently attended a Board Meeting where there was a review of the upcoming curriculum updates/changes. It was very helpful to see how the process unfolds over a 6-7 year window. Very easy to see how inefficient and inappropriate it would be for a Board member wanting to be in the kitchen the whole time. But, also very easy

to see certain decision points where board engagement would be helpful to both the process and the product.

Stephanie Auran

1. I have a lot to learn about the teacher's union. I have minimal knowledge of the process and look forward to getting to know union members, understanding their concerns, issues and how we can work together to make sure the education of our kids is the priority. I would encourage an open, honest and respectful dialog. I would love to see a collaborative exchange of information, ideas, suggestions and strategy. The teachers are immersed in the day-to-day education of our kids and they are at the center of the educational system. Their input is key.
2. Our teachers are the rock of our education system. It is important that teachers have the tools and resources they need to do their job. I will be able to better answer this question when I speak with the teachers and understand what their concerns and issues are and learn how the district can best support them. Making sure our children have a sound education is the mission of the school. Learning from teachers how we can support them so they can ensure our kids are getting the education they are entitled to and deserve is a priority.
3. I will have to learn how the school board is currently working with the teachers to address district priorities. It is imperative to determine what is working well and what needs improvement from the teacher's perspective as well as the school administration, parents and kids. I would encourage an open dialog via email, phone and/or in person meetings in addition to informal conversations. Again, input from teachers is crucial.

John Chandler

1. How do you feel about working with the teacher's union on district initiatives, issues, and planning?

I served as school board liaison to our school district's Meet and Confer Committee during the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years. During this service I enjoyed learning about the teacher's union and how the union and school district can work together. I witnessed great synergy then and was inspired by the engagement I saw from the teachers and their energy around helping all students achieve academic success.

For a district to be successful all around, everyone must have their voices heard, especially teachers.

2. How will you support teachers' working conditions and school culture?

Teachers are working in hard times. Not only do you have the pandemic to worry about, but my sense is that you are also experiencing stress about student test scores, student engagement, and curriculum or policy changes that don't always work for the students in your classrooms. School cultures have changed dramatically over the years and you have not always received the training you need to adjust to those changes. As a school board member, I will listen to your concerns and advocate for the additional training and support you need to help your students learn, grow, and thrive.

I want what is best for our students and teachers. I supported the recent school board vote for universal masking in all of our buildings. During my entire school board tenure (8 years), and especially since spring 2020, I have demonstrated that I am willing to ask tough questions to ensure working conditions are optimal and safe. My decisions will always favor what I believe to be safest for all involved – especially our teachers.

3. How do you plan to collaborate with teachers to address school district priorities?

I believe district leaders, including board members, should have an open-door policy so that teachers and parents can contact their local official on matters of importance to them as well as the students they teach. It is also important that teacher perspectives are a part the process when leadership sets the district's priorities so those priorities reflect the voices on the front lines in our schools. That can, and should, happen through both formal and informal channels. As a school board member, I have demonstrated that I am always willing to have conversations with members of the community who are concerned or have feedback about our schools. Formal surveys are another vehicle leaders can use to gain insight into what is and isn't working at individual schools with an eye toward sharing best practices across the district. Teachers should always have the opportunity to learn from one another, and district leaders should enable those opportunities.

Mark Grondahl

1. I look forward to working with all the members of the ISD 197 community as the school board makes decisions. My platform is "Students First," and to achieve that, we must cast a wide net to get the most and best answers. This will include community voices such as: the teachers, their union, parents, students, former teachers, and the other board members. I believe teachers are essential to the success of our students as they are our daily "boots on the ground," ensuring our students come first. With the input of the Teacher's Union, the board will be able to keep more easily that in view when making decisions.
2. I will directly support the teachers. They are my direct avenue to making and keeping the students first; as well as ensuring that ALL students have what they need to succeed in their chosen path upon graduation. In turn, we as a community and board need to make sure our teachers are safe, healthy, feel supported and can consistently connect and thrive with our students daily following the district's Strategic Framework and vision. There are many ways to achieve that, and I am willing to listen to all ideas, ask questions, adjust if need be and make decisions that support the best ideas because our teachers are key to the education of our future community builders.
3. I welcome and want to make the connections with our district's teachers. I will be available via phone, meetings, emails, text. I will happily meet with individual representatives or groups to learn and understand the teachers' priorities. Of course, the budget doesn't allow for everyone to get everything they want; but there may be some easy wins that benefit the teachers and students. There must be a seat for the teachers and students at the table to set the vision and focus of the school district.

Marcus Hill-

1. During these challenging times, I believe it is essential for the teacher's union, staff, administration, and school board to work collaboratively to focus our efforts on tackling COVID-19, boosting student achievement, and addressing the achievement gap, to name a few. I plan to accomplish this by keeping an open mind, being willing to listen and understand the impact of issues on our teachers, and being ready to have a dialogue. Working together is the best way we can all serve our students and community.
2. As a current school board member, I sit on the Association of Metropolitan School Districts committee. In this role, I partner with the Superintendent and staff to make sure we're aware of and take advantage of legislation and critical resources to support our teachers and staff. Examples of this can include legislation that aligns with the district's strategic framework and funding to keep building the future workforce. If re-elected, I plan to continue to serve on this committee. I will continue to forward the best ideas and thinking from other districts and legislative bodies to our district administration to benefit our teachers and students. Also, we will work to ensure the safety of our students, teachers, and staff as we continue to work through the challenges of COVID-19 and current social media trends.
3. As I mentioned above, open dialogue is vital, listening and sharing what I learn with the Superintendent and other Board members. Again, I believe it is paramount that we all continue to function as a team to resolve issues and implement plans supporting student achievement.

Sarah Larsen-

1. How do you feel about working with the teacher's union on district initiatives, issues, and planning?

I feel excited about working with the teacher's union on all of the above! As a member of a union myself for over 18 years (formerly MAPE and now MMA), I understand the critical role of a strong relationship between the union and the employer. I'm told that the relationship in ISD 197 with the district and the unions is good, but I'd do all I can as a school board member to keep those lines of communication open and continue to work together to make this district not only a great place to send a student, but a great place to work. District initiatives can't be successful without teachers behind the initiative. Issues aren't dealt with constructively without the teachers onboard. The best laid plans for the district will include the teachers and the union at the table for the best possible outcome for all.

2. How will you support teachers' working conditions and school culture?

I've been concerned for our teachers for years, and want them to be cared for well by our communities. I've been involved in both the Mendota PTA and the Friendly Hills PTA, and I've done all I can over the years to support the teachers and staff so they can be at their best to do their jobs each day. I was often frustrated that the best the PTAs could often do was to offer meals, pop, snacks and moral support and it never felt like enough! My mom was a 3rd grade teacher for 41 years. I remember how immersed she was in her class each year, how much work she had each night and weekend, and the long hours spent at school before and after the bell rang. I'm under no illusion that

teaching is easy. I have the deepest respect for my childrens' teachers and I'd hope that all of us as parents make sure the teachers feel that respect every day. I know this is not always the case. As a school board member, I'd hope to have an opportunity to affect change and optimize teachers' working conditions and work on school culture.

3. How do you plan to collaborate with teachers to address school district priorities?

I love teachers and I'm ready to listen to them, collaborate with them and hear them. The district is only as good as the teachers in the buildings, and we can best serve teachers by listening and adapting to keep/make this district an employer of choice. As the daughter of a teacher, I know how much teachers have on their plates. Teachers are insanely busy. I'd be as flexible as I can to have an open door (email, phone, text, taking a walk together, etc.) to hearing feedback, ideas or strategies from teachers to address priorities.

Robert Reese

1) As a former dues paying member of Laborers Local 563 in Minneapolis I know how important unions are for members and their families. Local 563 helped me tremendously during my college years with funding my own education.

Despite getting beat up on a daily basis I knew that my hard work finally paid off when the Bricklayers I served provided me with nicknames at work. They addressed me as either, "Ripple Dink", or, "Pecker Head".

Finally! I knew that my hard work earned a place on their team, and I earned their respect. And, in turn, I had tremendous respect for those professionals.

So, you see, my story is one of dedication, perseverance, and hard work that ultimately led to achievement. My story was no, "pleasure cruise". My story held no, "privilege".

And I am concerned that a true work ethic has been largely lost in today's society. I consider a lack of a work ethic as being detrimental to our society, because nothing truly of value comes for "free".

I only care about one thing.....results. And it is a results driven curriculum that I will support.

That is what I taught my medical students and residents as a Clinical Assistant Professor of Surgery, and that is how I served my patients.

It is because of the long term academic underachievement in ISD-197 that motivated me to run for a position on the School Board. According to the ISD-197 Annual Report only, "29% of Class of 2020 seniors met college readiness". That statistic is devastating and wholly unacceptable on every level.

Since my son attends a Community College, I have no horse in this race. I only hope to continue to serve my community.

If elected to serve, I will pursue whatever course is necessary to restore student academic proficiency to a level where the District can truly be proud. We owe that much to the kids and their future hopes and dreams.

My feelings on working with the teachers union will be wholly supportive from the standpoint of teacher salaries, benefits, and workplace experience. I strongly believe that our teaching professionals deserve to be favorably compensated and supported for their expertise and hard work.

However, I will not support any initiative that has contributed to the disastrous lack of academic achievement in ISD-197 schools.

I will not support any aspect of any curriculum that does not primarily emphasize a mastery of the building blocks of all learning; Reading, English, Math, and Science.

I will not support any political agenda that occurs in any classroom or over Zoom meetings. And, yes, that specifically includes Critical Race Theory, and its derivatives, including, but not limited to, "diversity, equity, and inclusion", agendas that, I believe, lead to weak minds, and mandates conformity over true exploratory learning.

As I used to teach my students; "There is no equity in the operating room. There is only pre-operative preparation and intra-operative excellence that gives the patient their best chance for a positive outcome". I believe that public education should be the same. Any kid that's cool enough to be "smart" will be, "included", irrespective of skin color, or gender.

Imagine the confidence in the students who, many for the first time, will feel the empowerment of learning, and believing that they, too, are competent, and worthy. That, and that alone, opens the door for them to developing a love of lifelong learning. And their futures will then be without limitation.

I do hope that the teacher's union supports me in this initiative, for it is the only true mission for why public education should exist.

2) I will support any teacher, in every manner possible, who presents a curriculum in their field of study that measurably leads to improvement in student academic achievement.

I will support any teacher who encourages their students to learn via the method that is most effective for them, be it an iPad, or a textbook pencil, and handout.

I will fully support any teacher who makes all curriculums, lesson plans, and reading lists, available to parents/legal guardians prior to initiating any course of study for their minor children, and, if necessary, have contingency learning plans available if parental concerns exist.

I will fully support any teacher who feels disrespected, or unsafe, in his/her classroom.

I will not support any teacher, in any fashion, who pursues any political agenda in any classroom, or any Zoom meeting, without prior established and documented parental/legal guardian informed consent.

3) I do not claim to have answers for every issue that may exist in the District, but I will commit to listen to any idea or concern that any teacher has at any time.

However, and please let me be absolutely clear about, "school district priorities". There is only one true school district priority, and that is measurable improvement in student academic achievement, which has been woefully lacking for over a decade in ISD-197 according to statistics maintained on the MN Department of Education website dating back to 2011.

Everything, and I mean everything else is of secondary importance until academic achievement has been completely restored in District 197 schools. I will hold absolutely firm on that point.

Morgan Steele-

1. How do you feel about working with the teacher's union on district initiatives, issues, and planning? I think that working with the teacher's union is extremely important. I am lucky to work in a district where our District Office, school board and teacher's union work extremely well together. Decisions are made based on student and teacher needs and teachers' voices are incredibly important. Teachers are the people in our school system who know our students best- they are the first face representing 197 for families and where relationships are forged. We are incredibly fortunate to have amazing educators in 197 and we should be leaning on their expertise as much as we are able to.
2. How will you support teachers' working conditions and school culture? I would be remiss not to talk about the challenges that educators are facing this year. I can say with 100% certainty that I never imagined that a year could be more difficult than last year for me as a teacher and then this year knocked me flat. Our teachers, paras, custodians, administrators, admin assistants- they are all struggling. Where teachers normally have so much on their plate, it seems that every teacher has a plate that is overflowing. This year, and every year, it is imperative that we really look at what we need our teachers to do that directly impacts our students and their ability to grow and start to lessen their loads by removing other tasks. Like many educators, I was filled with hope when Covid hit that this was a chance for us to re-think what our students need and how we get students the individual learning and support they need

and deserve. It is my hope that I can help facilitate that change- I'll listen to teachers, families, administrators and push back where it is needed for our kids. Relationships are the foundation for everything we want to accomplish with our goals and our teachers need time, space and trust to forge those relationships with students and families. We have incredible teacher leaders on each campus and we should be listening to them and collaborating with them to achieve the results we want to see for each kid.

3. How do you plan to collaborate with teachers to address school district priorities? I'd like to listen and dialogue as much as possible. I think teacher surveys give a lot of great information and, if elected, I'd like to see teacher voice and priorities being accessed/analyzed as frequently as possible.

Jon Vaupel

1. I am proud of our teachers, students, and schools. A strong, collaborative, respectful, and productive working relationship with the teacher's union – built on communication and trust – is extremely important to me.

Currently, I work at the Minnesota Department of Education and am currently a (proud) union member in the Minnesota Association of Professional Employees (MAPE) Union. Earlier this year, I participated in a rally at the Capital to advocate for contract terms that better reflected our work and the value we provide to the state. When I taught kindergarten in Baltimore City Public Schools, I was a member of the teacher's union. I respect and understand the role and value that a union plays in supporting its members around a variety of issues.

Given the important role that teachers and your union play in ISD 197, I reached out to Local 1148's leadership a couple of weeks ago to inquire about the opportunity to (a) listen to the union's priorities and thoughts and (b) provide the union with the opportunity to ask and learn more about my experiences, beliefs, and priorities. I fully acknowledge that the timing of my email was difficult - the school year was just starting and the challenges of COVID-19 continue. Though there was not an opportunity to talk and listen, I appreciated the response and also appreciate being provided with this opportunity to introduce myself to you.

2. Number one, I want to acknowledge the important role you have and the work you do. Though I think my experience and background in education is important, I don't know what it is like to teach during COVID-19 (though I do understand from a family perspective). You've navigated unprecedented shifts in teaching and instruction – and I have heard the gratitude and appreciation of the community for all that you've done.

Second, I want to hear your thoughts on your working conditions and school culture. What are your (teachers') thoughts on school culture? What are students' and families' thoughts? Is there data available that shines a light on working conditions and school culture? Engaging in conversations and bringing data along to those conversations would be a good starting point to understand the current landscape and think about opportunities.

Third, I am concerned. These are difficult times, and I'm concerned about the health and well being of our teachers. More than ever, there is a need to collaborate and partner together to create safe and supportive environments.

3. I think my response to the first question outlined some of my beliefs and values. I think that building a meaningful, collaborative, and productive relationship with the union is critical. This means listening to learn and understand rather than listening to respond. I think that sitting on the School Board brings with it the responsibility to be curious and a willingness to engage with all stakeholders - including teachers and your union. At the same time, it is just as important to be willing to ask difficult questions and engage in difficult (and respectful) conversations to discuss and resolve challenging issues and topics.

I am running for School Board because I believe in the importance and value of supporting the success of ALL students. I think that my 20+ years of experience in education will help me be a thoughtful and effective School Board member. Should I be elected to the School Board, I would welcome the opportunity to partner and collaborate with you. I believe that supporting and valuing our teachers is one of the most important things we can do to support the success of ALL students.

For those of you who are residents, I hope to earn your support and vote. To learn more about me, visit <https://vaupelforschoolboard.com/>. If you have questions or want to share your thoughts with me, email vaupelforschoolboard197@gmail.com.

Thank you for all that you do.

Local news on Election

[The West St. Paul Reader](#) has informative articles on candidates, election issues, and accessible voting information. Follow the latest articles about our community.

This newsletter is for WSPFT members. No school board candidate is endorsed by the local union. Please reach out to your building representative or Kristy Otte (political organizer) with any questions.