



Grosse Pointe Education Association: The GPEA

17848 Mack Avenue, Grosse Pointe, MI 48230

Office Phone: 313-432-3000

GPEAPresident@gmail.com ♦ www.myGPEA.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Name: Christopher Pratt, Screening and Recommendation Chairman

Phone: 313-432-3000

Email: GPEAPresident@gmail.com

Employee Unions Recommend Five Candidates for the Grosse Pointe Public School System Board of Education Election in November

In August, the four MEA-affiliated labor unions invited all of the candidates running for Grosse Pointe's Board of Education to sit down in a screening and recommendation (S & R) interview. Fourteen of the seventeen active candidates running for GPPSS's Board of Education race sat down with ten members of the employee unions.

After seven hours of interviews, additional review of the candidate's social media footprints and websites, the Grosse Pointe Education Association, Grosse Pointe Educational Paraprofessional Association, Grosse Pointe Plant Association, and Grosse Pointe Association of Educational Office Personnel will jointly be endorsing five candidates for the Board of Education this November.

The five candidates that are jointly endorsed share concerns and have expressed a sincere willingness to seek multiple perspectives in formulating a complete picture of the lay of the landscape to best lead our District during these challenging times. They have also publicly advocated for and defended the rights of our members when permitted and when it counts. They understand and are passionate that our students learning conditions are our members working conditions and must be a priority in delivering the highest quality instruction.

Endorsements:

David Brumbaugh (four-year term)

Shareef Simaika (four-year term)

Cynthia Douglas (four-year term)

Theresa Vogler (two-year term)

Cindy Pangborn (four-year term)

The Association continues to work on a variety of fronts on behalf of teachers/our members. The process of the Screening & Recommendation included:

1. In August, questionnaires were sent to each candidate based on their campaign filing email.
2. Once returned, the questionnaires were shared with the Joint Committee for Screening and Recommendations comprised of the four MEA-employee unions.
3. The committee received back a questionnaire from 14 of 18 candidates. (Steininger, Goosen, Kassab and Betcher did not respond or participate).
4. For each participant, a half hour interview was scheduled via Zoom on September 2 from 3:00 – 8:00 pm and September 3 from 3:00 – 8:00.
5. Additional research on social media and websites were conducted over the course of the last week.
6. After review of questionnaires, interviews, and the additional week of review of social media footprints that members of the committee committed to review and vet led to what we believe is the best endorsements for this election cycle.
7. Sunday, September 13th, 8:05 pm candidates were informed of the status of the S&R. 8:15 pm Members were emailed out the press release. 8:30 pm Press Release sent to local print media.

David Brumbaugh

David Brumbaugh is known from his regular attendance of Board of Education meetings as well as being active on the South end of the District. As a matter of fact, David was the first Board candidate to reach out to the Association to discuss the District's current path and to ask for the Association's thoughts on issues related to everything from reconfiguration to staff and student safety in any attempt to return to a face-to-face model.

Mr. Brumbaugh has expressed a sincere appreciation in hearing the concerns of teachers and support staff even before announcing his candidacy. In the course of his interview he presented himself as a consistent and positive influence in prioritizing our District's future health both financially and culturally. He is against privatization and willing to work on the culture of fear and the lack of teachers' abilities to raise concerns and issues without fear of reprisal, that are pervasive throughout the District. He seeks the teacher's voice and expertise to provide needed perspective on important issues.

He is quoted as saying, *“We need to fully engage our community, our teachers, and our staff to find creative and innovative solutions to get through these challenges. We're stronger when we work together.”*

Cynthia Douglas

Cynthia Douglas outlined her concerns and desire to improve equity among underserved populations in our District. Whether it's from ensuring a safe return to schools for all staff and student populations, to addressing the very real digital divide that our District continues to struggle with.

She is a strong supporter of collective bargaining and stands against laws to weaken unions abilities to advocate for the professionals who are charged with instruction of thousands of students. She has a background in structuring healthy budgets and public sector financing in the City of Detroit.

Ms. Douglas is passionate about Grosse Pointe's future as a destination for diverse families. In what will likely be a difficult budget year she told the committee that it should not be the teachers and staff who bear the brunt of budget difficulties. She is not in favor of the Formula in the contract and would support its removal.

Ms. Douglas is quoted as saying, *“As we continue with the COVID pandemic it has placed financial burdens on schools. With the current budget crisis the district needs to ensure teachers remain whole by maintaining or increasing salaries and benefits. As cuts are being made the burden should not be placed on teachers.”*

Cindy Pangborn

Of the current sitting board members, Cindy Pangborn has been the one voice to stand-up for teachers and other union employees, who jointly interviewed the fourteen candidates. She believes the Formula should be removed from the contract and does not support its implementation.

Recently, when each of the other candidates for the Board voted to furlough members of the para's and clerical staff in August, it was Ms. Pangborn, along with two other Board Members (not running) who voted against that action. This was a direct opportunity for Board members who, in part, were supported by past S&R committees to stand with the unions, and they chose not to, but Ms. Pangborn did. This was the most recent, but not the only reason that she has shown growth and that our Associations can work with her.

She is quoted as saying, *“Too often, I have seen our teachers' hard work dismissed. This is a major barrier to quality education. Currently, input from our teachers is not included in the execution of projects.”*

Shareef Simaika

Shareef Simaika works daily in finance and business structuring. He has young children in the community, and along with an impressive background he believes that the direction of the District needs to involve teachers and staff voice in a meaningful way for the future health of our school district.

He sought to meet with the Association early on in his candidacy and has expressed a desire to form a strong relationship with all employee Associations to better inform his own understanding to better influence the future of our schools.

Mr. Simaika also strongly disapproved of language in the contract (regarding the Formula) that would hold teachers and staff responsible for Board spending and would support its removal.

Mr. Simaika is quoted as a reason for his candidacy, *“I have been increasingly disappointed by the lack of leadership from the current Board and concerned by their decision-making process. I do not feel the current board is providing appropriate oversight over the Administration by asking good questions, challenging assumptions, and generally holding the Administration accountable.”*

Theresa Vogler

Theresa Vogler, running for the two year term, raised concern over a culture of fear that she has heard from multiple teachers across the district and support staff. Her sincere hope is to champion a culture of value and support among the staff.

This aligns with our union's values, as many teachers and staff members in general have spoken to me at length about these concerns. They are certainly real and work-related culture has been allowed to deteriorate over the past several years.

Ms. Vogler is not in favor of the Formula and supports its removal. She is running against Mr. Steininger, who did not participate in our process and Mr. Herd, an incumbent appointed by the BoE in January who supported furloughs of staff in August.

Ms. Vogler is quoted as saying, *“The Board of Education has had several opportunities to listen to teachers and staff on serious issues: curriculum and safety in returning to schools. These have been dismissed and ignored and trust in our District is in a worse position for it.”*

We are working on a variety of fronts on behalf of teachers/our members. I do believe the seven hours of interviews, and the additional week of review of social media footprints that the committee committed to review and vet led us to the best possible endorsements for this round in the election.