

Keith Hardy Announces Continued School Board Campaign



SAINT PAUL, MN, June 26, 2015

Keith Hardy announced today that he plans to continue his run for re-election for the St. Paul School Board. Hardy, who is completing his second term as a board member, had earlier said he would not run without the DFL endorsement. However, upon further reflection, he had a change of heart when SPPS teachers and employees, parents and community members urged him to stay on the board.

“My work on the school board is not finished,” he said. “To me, the issues facing our students, especially students who are immigrants, who are poorer or from communities of color, are too important for me to stay out of the campaign.” He added, “I also want to continue being a strong voice for the under-represented communities and for getting more members of those communities involved in our schools as teachers, administrators, tutors, and in other ways.”

“Because of the policy changes and district initiatives during my service on the board, SPPS graduation rates are increasing across all student groups while academic achievement is increasing for more students in the past four years,” Hardy noted. “However, too many of our black and brown male students continue to feel pushed out of school or feel that school is irrelevant in their lives. As an African American man, I feel responsible for changing that. Currently, I am the only board member or candidate who is like them,” Hardy said.

Rep. Carlos Mariani praised Hardy’s work on the board. “Every year as a state representative and a champion for education race equity, I work to bring new needed resources for our St. Paul schools,” he said. “It’s tough work, but I do it fully because I believe in leaders like Keith Hardy and his vision for schools that are places of opportunities for *all* students.”

Hardy wants to continue the progressive work of the landmark SPPS 2013 racial equity policy to eliminate institutionalized racism in the district. Fewer than 10 school districts in the United States had such a policy at that time. He said, “I have to respond to the current narrative by some that paints a negative picture of what’s happening in our schools with what is truly going well for our students and what needs to be improved.”

“The work that the SPPS teachers, employees, and board members have done to break down the effects of institutional racism and other long-standing barriers to academic and life success for many students is working and needs to continue. Racism has existed for centuries; it’s going to take a long, focused, and collaborative effort to eliminate it. I thank our teachers, staff, and administrators who have embraced this work.”

Hardy acknowledged that the first steps to implement these policies caused difficulties in some schools for students, families and teachers. Some were resolved, and the district, staff and community continue to address the others. Hardy is actively evaluating the actions of the administration and employees as they carry out the policies. While acknowledging the difficulties, he asserts that the changes resulted in positive learning outcomes for many students, especially students who were previously segregated in separate areas in their schools. “This is not a time to turn back from this bold change,” he said.

Hardy is also proud to have helped finalize and approve the notable 2015 gender inclusion policy, which protects the rights for equitable education and treatment for students of all gender identities and gender expressions. “It’s highly important to me that all students feel safe, valued and empowered in our school district, including respecting and acknowledging their gender identity.”

Another reason Hardy wants to continue his campaign is that he wants to see the five-year strategic plan be successful for students, with a renewed focus on having all students ready for success in college and careers. “As a longtime advocate for every student reading at grade level, I believe our students must be able to take standard courses rather than remedial courses when they get to college,” he said.

“I want more students to be empowered for success in high academic tracks such as International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP). Currently, only 15% of students of color take IB or AP classes.” Hardy, who is labor endorsed, wants more opportunities for students to learn about and participate in various careers such as the trades and health care.

Hardy leads the team that is gathering ideas and feedback about increasing student representation with the school board. “This is highly important to each of us board members—to hear directly from our students in an authentic way. We are exploring the best options for this new effort, and I’m excited to be part of that partnership that will begin this fall.”

Hardy added that as an experienced school board member, he understands the district’s complex budget and policy matters. He respects the competing priorities from the variety of stakeholders. He listens closely to teachers and district employees, community leaders, parents and families, students, and especially to people whose voices are often missing from public policy conversations. He advocates with administration for employees, students, and families. “This is one of my core values and one that I want to continue for the next four years,” Hardy explained.

Coming up for the school board are major questions about raising student achievement, budget priorities and funding, school start times, and recruiting more teachers and administrators from underrepresented communities. “This is not a good time for our students to have four new school

board members. Our students will be best served by a balance of new and experienced leadership,” said Hardy.

For more information about Hardy, go to www.hardy4education.org or call 651-497-8924