





## Speaker List - Special Education Funding Press Conference

 <p><b>Cathy Nathan</b>, Minnesota PTA, Advocacy and Rochester Public Schools ISD #535, School Board Director</p>	<p>Ms. Nathan is a mom of two sons who have graduated from our local schools and moved on to college and beyond. She initially joined PTA because she wanted to learn more about how to navigate the public school system and to make it a better place for her boys and their classmates. She joined the Minnesota PTA board as the Advocacy Commissioner because she felt schools can't do their work without adequate funding and effective policies from state and Federal legislators and agencies. She has also developed resources and training on STEM + Families programming offered by the Minnesota PTA.</p> <p>Nathan's PTA experiences motivated her to run for and win a seat on the Rochester School Board and to represent parent perspectives on the Rochester Cradle 2 Career Leadership Table. She supports the 23 Rochester PTA local units as President of the Rochester Area Council PTSA; she also presents "Families Power Student Success" workshops to Rochester families.</p>
 <p><b>Tyrel Clark</b>, parent</p>	<p>Mr. Clark is a husband to an educator and father to 4 children. He is a former three term mayor for the City of Eyota in rural SE Minnesota and he currently sits on the Eyota City Council. Mr. Clark is active in his community and school district serving on many boards in his community.</p>
 <p><b>Superintendent Mike Funk</b>, Superintendent Albert Lea Area Schools</p>	<p>Minnesota Superintendent of the Year for 2022, Superintendent Funk leads a school district of 3500 students. He oversees a \$50,000,000 budget. In addition, he is responsible for ensuring the district is meeting the needs of all students. Under his leadership, two of the district's four elementary buildings have been named Reward Schools by the Minnesota Department of Education for two years in a row. Albert Lea's graduation rate has increased by 13% since 2012 and the district was named to the Advanced Placement Honor Roll in 2018. Under his leadership, the district successfully passed an operating levy renewal with 64% support in 2013, led passage of a facilities referendum in 2018. The district was named Best Place to Work in 2017 by SE Minnesota Workforce Development, and Large Business of the Year in 2019 by Albert Lea-Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce.</p>

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 <p><b>Superintendent Joe Gothard,</b> Superintendent Saint Paul Public Schools</p>	<p>Dr. Joe Gothard has been superintendent of Saint Paul Public Schools (SPPS) since 2017. He is the educational leader of the school district, which serves approximately 32,000 Pre-K-12 students and employs over 5,500 staff. SPPS is the second-largest and most diverse school district in Minnesota, with students who speak more than 125 languages and 70% who are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.</p> <p>Gothard launched the SPPS Achieves strategic plan in December 2018 to set aspirational and attainable goals for student achievement, guide decision-making, and focus the district's efforts on long-term student outcomes. In 2020-21, he led the district's response to the COVID-19 pandemic while ensuring decisions met the needs of students and families, prioritized community well-being, championed equity, and were fiscally sustainable.</p>
	<p>Leah VanDassor has been a middle school English teacher in SPPS since 1996. She is currently on leave to serve as the President of the St. Paul Federation of Educators.</p>