



**Board of Directors Election
Voting Guide
May 2018**

The purpose of this Voting Guide is to introduce you to the St. Croix Preparatory Academy Board of Director candidates. This guide will list the candidates with their qualifications and views.

Who can vote in this election?

SCPA defines a “Voter” as:

- All Employees. All employees (e.g. administration, faculty members, educational assistants, food service, etc.) excluding employees contracted via external organizations;
- Parents/Legal Guardians. All parents/legal guardians, with a limit of two votes per family.

Election Day/Absentee Ballot

The election will be held on Tuesday, May 22, 2018, from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. in the SCPA Atrium.

If you are unable to vote on this date, contact Susan Peterson, 651-395-5994 or susanpeterson@stcroixprep.org for absentee voting information.

This election is legal and binding. By choosing qualified candidates, you will help St. Croix Preparatory Academy meet the challenges that face the school in the coming years.

SCPA Community Board Candidates

Voters will choose:

2 parent candidates

1 faculty candidate

Jake Gottschalk – Faculty

Why are you interested in serving on the Board of Directors?

I teach primarily juniors and seniors in the Upper School. I have felt privileged to see the final stages of what our incredible school, in partnership with our devoted families, are capable of together. Students are prepared to take on life's challenges with vigor and resolve. Before they leave, I hear our students reminisce warmly about their time spent at SCPA. For many there are fond memories from Lower School to Middle School, all the way to the end in the Upper School. What an honor to be apart of such a dynamic and intricate process. I want to serve on the Board of Directors to immerse myself more in the strategic vision of this school. I have been working at St. Croix Prep for 8 years and I feel it is time for me to try and take my involvement to the next level.



What areas of expertise would you bring to St. Croix Preparatory Academy?

My expertise is in the classroom, but this has spanned a variety of settings here at St. Croix Prep. I am currently teaching my sixth year and have taught a variety of courses 9 -12. I have created the curriculum for two Advanced Placement courses. I also had an additional 2 years of subbing and working as an Educational Assistant in both the Middle and Upper School prior to landing my full-time position in the Upper School. I have also coached varsity track both full-time and part time for 3 seasons. Having developed and taught curriculum that explores both the creation and purpose of government, I have always had a passion for the process of governance and would be eager to bring what I know about the process to better serve our Prep community.

What aspects of St. Croix Preparatory Academy do you think are most important to maintain?

I feel it is most important to maintain the work environment I have come to know and love here at SCPA. It is one built on trust and accountability, hard work, but also flexibility. Teachers are able to design and create curriculum that not only meets or exceeds standards set by the state, but they do so with supportive administrators, colleagues, parents, and even students. In my time here each division has continued to raise the bar for themselves in maintaining a college prep environment and by doing so they have positioned the school as a whole on an enduring path of success.

What issues do you think need to be addressed by the Board of Directors in the next few years?

I have witnessed so many positive transformations since first stepping into this school 8 years ago. I would contend that for the time being we as a school; need to learn to maximize all of our existing potential. The school has made strong investments to enhance our academic, artistic and athletic offerings. Now we must secure the people in place that bring those investments to life. So the issue now is more about finesse and our ability to fine-tune our skills as a K-12 school while not losing sight of where we came from and the history of our development. To this end, I feel adding an Upper School member to the board would only help ensure that the progression of the school is fully representative of all three divisions.

Deb Keyes – Faculty



Why are you interested in serving on the Board of Directors?

I am passionate about the mission and vision of our school. As a teacher and parent of two alumni, I am fully vested in the success of the students and the faculty. I wish to be part of the leadership team that steers St. Croix Prep successfully into a sustainable future. I am very enthusiastic about serving another term on the board.

What areas of expertise would you bring to St. Croix Preparatory Academy?

As a ninth year teacher at SCPA, one who has teamed cross-curricular and with faculty across all grade levels, and as a former parent, I would be able to share not only the perspective of the lower school team, but an application of the broader vision of the mission from K through 12.

Having served on the board for two terms, I have gained a broad understanding of things like budgeting, fiscal responsibility, and strategic planning. Working on the Compensation Committee has opened my eyes to the challenges of creating an equitable and sustainable compensation plan. I would love to continue our efforts in that regard. Having been part the ground level discussions of both the board governance and succession planning has provided me with a vision of where the Board is and where the Board needs to be in the future. This background knowledge will help inform how we get there.

What aspects of St. Croix Prep do you believe are the most important to maintain?

I am interested in maintaining the cornerstones of our mission: academics, character, and leadership. I wish to continue to value and retain our high-quality educators.

What issues do you believe need to be addressed by the Board of Directors in the next few years?

St. Croix Prep is an exceptional school; however, there is still work to be done. First, we must ensure it stays an outstanding school by remaining true to its mission. Next we must attract, compensate, and retain high-quality teachers, and investigate innovative ways to increase our revenue. Finally, we must work on setting the direction for the future. How will St. Croix Prep serve students in five years, ten years, or even 25 years? I am excited to be part of this exceptional school and its mission and I am eager to work toward its promising future.

Kristen Denzer – Parent



Why are you interested in serving on the Board of Directors?

I was first drawn to St. Croix Preparatory Academy (SCPA) when researching schools for my youngest. Similar to most parents at SCPA, I wanted my children (Kindergarten & 2nd grade) to have the best education possible and I was determined to find that for them. I came across SCPA in a list of top schools in Minnesota, and immediately applied – and my youngest was accepted just a few days before Kindergarten started. Since then, I have continued to be impressed with the engaged, generous SCPA community that makes SCPA's success possible. Having volunteered both in the classrooms – and at SPCA wide events the past couple years, I'd like to get more involved with ensuring SCPA remains the amazing place it is for my children.

What areas of expertise would you bring to St. Croix Preparatory Academy?

I feel that I have a unique blend of experiences that will make me an asset to the board. Beyond the obvious, vested interest I have in my children's educational experience, I also have a unique background that translates directly to the School Board. I have extensive board experience and have served on several nonprofit board of directors. I also served on the Oakdale Planning Commission and was an elected Oakdale City Council Member prior to my moving to Bayport. My previous board experience has provided valuable insight and knowledge in governance, strategic planning, and ensuring an organization's mission is translated into its daily work.

I also own a chain of Spanish Immersion Daycare and Preschool Centers (Tierra Encantada) that employ over 60 full-time employees, providing hands-on experience managing difficult budgets and overseeing educational institutions. This experience also has included expansion planning as I have added multiple locations. Lastly, my doctoral work (ABD) was in educational policy with a focus on evaluation. I feel the combination of these experiences will make me an asset to the SCPA School Board.

What aspects of St. Croix Prep do you believe are the most important to maintain?

We are very fortunate in that SCPA has a strong foundation in place. This includes a strong focus on education, solid financial management, and an involved community of parents, teachers, administrators, and supporters. SPCA's strong academic focus is what has enabled the school to emerge as one of the top schools in the state – attracting students beyond the Stillwater School District and helping our children prepare for their academic future. Solid financial management is critical as SCPA continues to evaluate capital projects and works to retain and attract talented teachers by offering competitive compensation. SPCA's community feel is what reassures all of us parents that this is the perfect place for our children to learn and grow. These three things are critical to maintain in ensuring SPCA's continued success.

What issues do you believe need to be addressed by the Board of Directors in the next few years?

Ultimately, the teachers and staff at SCPA are what makes the school special, so staff retention will always be at the forefront of priorities. I also feel we should be evaluating the feasibility of adding important resources to SCPA, such as a school counselor, library, and second language education at a younger age. If I am elected to the Board, I am a representative of the SCPA community – not just representing myself and my opinions. Serving in that role, I feel it would be important to conduct a survey of SCPA parents and staff to learn more about what issues they feel should be addressed. That information can be shared to the SCPA community and used as the Board plans strategically for SCPA's future.

Shane Mueller – Parent

Why are you interested in serving on the Board of Directors?

Over the last three years I have sat on SCPA's Board. We have done some amazing work, as a board, as a school, and as a community. We've begun work on the field project and auxiliary building, we've continued to outperform our neighboring schools when it comes to test scores, we've placed an emphasis on school security and inclusion, and we continue to work, with the Finance Committee and our COO to make sure SCPA continues to be, fiscally, one of the healthiest charter school in the state. But there is still much work to do! I am running for a second term because I would like to continue that work on issues like succession planning, governance, and making SCPA a safe and inclusive school community.



What areas of expertise would you bring to St. Croix Preparatory Academy?

As current SCPA Board Chair, as well as an educator, a former project manager, and a parent of two SCPA students, I think I've proven that I have the skills that make me an asset to the board. I am familiar with the physical, mental, and emotional demands and responsibilities of board service. I understand the issues surrounding school finance and governance, as well as the more nuanced elements of Minnesota's public charter law. And over the last several years I have successfully managed the workload and time commitment necessary to serve effectively. I employ skills in long-range planning, which are crucial as we look to the future of the school. Additionally, I consider myself a pragmatic person, one willing to listen to all perspectives and, ultimately, make decisions in the best interest of the *institution*. And, as a licensed educator, I have a unique perspective on student achievement and interpreting MDE data.

Board service is never easy, nor is it "popular." And invariably we make decisions that not everyone agrees with, but it is crucial that we understand that the goal of the board is to ensure that the school continues to thrive and succeed long after our service has concluded and our children have graduated. I think I bring that quality to the board.

What aspects of St. Croix Preparatory Academy do you think are most important to maintain?

I continue to advocate that our board maintain a strategic vision for the school. Which means allowing our administrators, teachers, and those who support them to continue to do their jobs on the operational side, which is what makes SCPA such a wonderful environment for our children and our families on a day-to-day basis. It's also important to make long-term succession planning a priority. When our school founders and founding board member(s) conclude their service to the school, it is important that we have a plan to replace them with someone familiar with the founding mission and vision and who shares a long-term vision that is compatible with that of the school's.

What issues do you think need to be addressed by the Board of Directors in the next few years?

I've said to many people over the years: St. Croix Prep's mission is clear: "to develop each student's academic potential, personal character, and leadership qualities through an academically rigorous and content rich educational program grounded in a classical tradition." I come back to this again and again, because the issues that the board addresses and the decisions it makes should reflect that mission. It is about making decisions that will make this school a place to foster learning long after my own children have graduated. As such, I continue to try and make succession planning, as I've said, a priority. We have done a lot of work on this front, but, as it is a complicated issue that involves many 'moving pieces,' we have a lot of work still to do.

Other issues that we need to continue to examine are: inclusion and diversity; making sure we do our part in developing strong compensation plans; finding ways to continue to retain effective teachers and staff, but also understand the reality that 100% retention is not a viable option for *any* school/organization.

Finally, I believe the board should continue to evaluate our "brand" and determine how to maintain a positive and strong image in the court of public opinion. We, as members of the SCPA community, know the tremendous things we are doing as a school, but as a charter school it feels like we are often the target of public and media criticism. Work on reinforcing our brand has been underway for the last several months, it is important to continue this effort and to strengthen our alumni relations and development efforts as we strive to maintain our academic and artistic excellence, while we develop other aspects, such as athletics and improved facilities and technology. To maintain our standing as the preferred school of choice in the area, we need to continue to make families comfortable choosing SCPA!



St. Croix Preparatory Academy Mission Statement

St. Croix Preparatory Academy will develop each student's academic potential, personal character, and leadership qualities through an academically rigorous and content rich educational program grounded in a classical tradition.

Write-In Candidate Request for St. Croix Preparatory Academy Board of Directors

This request must be signed by the candidate.

I, _____, request that all write-in votes cast for me for the St. Croix Preparatory Academy Board of Directors during the election on May 22, 2018, be counted in accordance with Minnesota Statutes 204B.09, subd. 3.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**This form must be received by noon on Friday, May 18, 2018,
for write-in votes to be counted separately.**

Submit this form to: Susan Peterson at SCPA or fax to 651-395-5901.