

## **WEAC State Superintendent Questionnaire**

Dr. Shandowlyon (Shawn) Hendricks-Williams)

[www.drhendricksforeducation.com](http://www.drhendricksforeducation.com)

### **1. What are your top priorities for the Department of Public Instruction in the areas of student achievement and equity?**

My top priorities for student achievement and equity are communicated in my “Bill of Rights for Wisconsin Students”. Each Wisconsin student, no matter their zip code, socio-economic level, race/ethnicity, etc., is guaranteed inalienable rights to a premier, fully-funded education; experiences that result in achievement at the student’s maximum potential; liberty to form opinions and make decisions based on truth and fact, not fantasies and fallacies; and successful transition to post secondary experiences which may include day services or sheltered workshops for students with disabilities, military, trades, Peace Corp, career and/or college. College and careers are not an option for all students.

Each Wisconsin student shall:

1. Have access to a high quality early childhood education (K3 & K4), infused with developmentally appropriate practices centered around attainment of pre-reading, pre-writing and pre-mathematical skills through play and exploration and/or achievement of the student’s IEP goals.
2. Receive full day K5, in the areas of pre-reading, pre-writing and pre-mathematics skills, ensuring that students are ready as required for success during the student’s primary education (grades 1-3) and/or achievement of the student’s IEP goals.
3. Demonstrate 3rd grade reading, writing and mathematics proficiency and/or achievement of the student’s IEP goals by the end of the student’s primary school education (grades 1-3). Toward this goal, the student will attain proficiency in reading skills required to move from “learning to read” to “reading to learn” as required for success during the student’s intermediate education (grades 4-6) and/or achievement of the student’s IEP goals.
4. Demonstrate 6th grade proficiency in all content areas (reading, writing, mathematics, science and social studies) and/or achievement of the student’s IEP goals by the end of the student’s intermediate school education (grades 4-6). Toward this goal, the State will ensure that the student has mastered the

ability to read to learn as required for success during the student's secondary education (grades 7-12) and/or achievement of the student's IEP goals.

5. Demonstrate proficiency in all subject areas, including (reading, writing, mathematics, science, and social studies)) and/or achievement of the student's IEP goals by the end of the student's secondary education. Toward this goal, the State will ensure that the student has artifacts to demonstrate proficiency as required for success transition to post secondary experiences which may include day services or sheltered workshops for students with disabilities, military, trades, Peace Corp, career and/or college.
6. Receive instruction in the "essentials", art, music, physical education, library media and computer science, beginning in primary school and throughout secondary school.
7. Receive instruction in the "essentials", communications, financial literacy, economics, health, and civics, in intermediate and secondary school
8. Receive instruction in an additional world language in intermediate and secondary school.
9. Receive high quality instruction from licensed teachers who are compensated at or above the rate of other professionals holding similar degrees and credentials, demonstrate mastery of the Wisconsin Teacher Standards and hold a valid certification/permit/license issued by the State.
10. Receive guidance counselor services throughout the student's secondary school education
11. Receive nursing services, as needed, to ensure the student's academic success beginning in early childhood and throughout primary, intermediate and secondary school education
12. Receive social worker services, as needed, to ensure the student's academic success in early childhood and throughout primary, intermediate and secondary school education
13. Receive opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities (academic, sports, civic, social, clubs, etc.) throughout their educational experience
14. Receive quarterly feedback on their progress via one on one conferences with the student, parent and teacher throughout their educational experience.
15. Have the option of receiving instruction in different modalities (face to face, on-line, blended).
16. Receive tutoring or additional academic support to ensure the student's academic success in early childhood and throughout primary, intermediate and secondary school education in partnership with community based organizations.
17. Receive related services (speech, occupational therapy, physical therapy, transportation, nurse, social work, etc), as needed, to ensure the student's success on achieving IEP goals and objectives

18. Receive mentoring and/or coaching services beginning in intermediate school and throughout the student's secondary school education.
19. Identify an area of career interest and complete, minimally, a two semester internship for credit and/or complete, minimally, 6 dual enrollment credits at one of Wisconsin's public or private colleges and/or achievement of transition related activities per the student's IEP goals during the student's secondary school education.
20. Receive leadership development training during the student's secondary school experience, culminating with the student developing a personal leadership statement informing how the student will use knowledge, skills and dispositions attained during the experience at Wisconsin's schools to make a meaningful contribution to the student's community. The student shall define what community is in their statement.

**2. Taking the helm of the Department of Public Instruction during a pandemic, what are the top areas you will address to balance student/staff safety while keeping learning on track?**

The state is indebted to Wisconsin's great teachers, education's front line workers, who pivoted from face-to-face instruction to online teaching. Their constant goal was to provide the continuity of education to our students as well as addressing their social-emotional needs in times of uncertainty and increased stress. We vigorously honor their flexibility and commitment. Their hard work and commitment needs to be rewarded with increased compensation, opportunities for growth and increased reliance on the professionalism of our teachers in setting expectations and the channels by which we measure them. When I served as the principal of an elementary school, teachers developed interim assessments aligned to standards. This is an example of teachers leading by establishing channels to measure student achievement. It is also important to look at lessons learned from the virtual paradigm of education and its uses in meeting several of the challenges facing our schools across the state. We also strongly appreciate the difficult role our parents and caregivers have provided during this pandemic. Without notice or preparation, these people have risen to the challenge of juggling educational support with the other demands in their lives. To acknowledge their dedication, I will work with the legislature to develop a parent rebate. This will be similar to the way our educators have the ability to claim up to \$350 for expenses related to their classroom. Parents, who have once again served as Wisconsin's students' first teachers, deserve to claim up to \$350 for expenses related to instruction at home. As our students return to the brick-and-mortar classrooms across the state, we will follow our national and state medical experts. I will rely on science, safety, and student well-being as our guide. In my capacity as state superintendent, I will ensure the DPI focuses on improving a reopening school buildings risk assessment tool. I will follow

interim COVID-19 transportation guidance, provide interim COVID-19 cafeterias and food service guidance as well. Additionally, a COVID-19 Infection Control Checklist for K-12 Schools will be crucial as we return to in-person instruction.

**3. How do you see the role of education unions at the local and state levels when it comes to the operations of the Department of Public Instruction?**

We must restore the right for public sector workers—teachers included—to collectively bargain to secure dignified wages, hours and conditions of employment so that they focus on providing our students with high quality instruction. Teachers' unions represent the voices of our educators and as State Superintendent, I will hear and appreciate their input. Moreover, I recognize that education is a collaborative process. I will seek to include stakeholders and experts on the process of crafting, transforming, and implementing policy.

**4. An effective teacher is the most important school-based determinant of education outcomes, so it is therefore crucial that school districts recruit and retain high-quality teachers. Recognizing that Wisconsin average teacher pay has dropped to 33<sup>rd</sup> in America, what will you do to make sure a qualified and well-trained professional educator is in front of every student, every day? Do you support equitable, predictable and sustainable pay plans?**

As a former educator, assistant principal, and principal myself, I have the deepest admiration and respect for educators. A core component of my vision is to elevate the teaching profession. This, of course, includes raising teacher pay. We need to compensate educators and support services staff (nurses, counselors, social workers, psychologists, etc.) comparable to other professionals holding a college degree and additional certifications. Doing so is an investment in our future as a state and a direct investment in our children's futures. More importantly, we must provide additional opportunities for teachers and support services staff to grow and learn while serving our students through fellowships such as the ones I completed: Horace Mann-Abraham Lincoln, National Education Association, Teacher Network Leadership Institutions, etc. Opportunities for growth and advancement has been cited multiple times as reasons why teachers leave the field. Additionally, we must ensure coaching for principals in order for them to provide high quality leadership at the school level whereby teachers will feel supported and valued. It's been said time and time again: people don't leave jobs, they leave bosses. Not only do we want to recruit, develop and retain teachers and support staff, we want a diverse workforce which is fully reflective of the cultural and racial mosaic that is Wisconsin. A large body of research supports the fact that all students, not just students of color, benefit from having a teacher of color. When at DPI, I developed a statewide plan to diversify the teacher pipeline and address teacher shortages working with leaders in Wisconsin and nationally through CCSSO. This led

to the repeal and rewrite of PI34 while I was serving in the agency that eliminated racially biased gateway assessment, Praxis I and Praxis II, which prevented many teacher candidates of color from securing a teaching license. We will continue to identify barriers to certification, particularly if they lack empirical data or research to support implementation of it. We will fully fund and implement that plan that has been sitting dormant for 2 years. It includes strategies for recruiting high school students; students that chose to leave Wisconsin to attend Minority Serving Institutions, such as Historical Black Colleges and Universities, recruiting amongst people interested in teaching as a second career, recruiting content area experts and even bringing retirees back to the field of teaching. I will work with the Governor and legislators for an expanded loan forgiveness program beyond the one available for those teaching in high need areas.

**5. How will you lead efforts to ensure an anti-racist school culture in Wisconsin, where students and staff of color feel supported, safe, and empowered?**

I am the granddaughter of sharecroppers, a first-generation college student and a single mother. I knew that education would unlock a bountiful future for my family and myself, and I made my children's education my priority. I have seen firsthand—through my experience as a parent, as a paraprofessional, as an educator of special education, as an assistant principal, and as a principal—the ways that our education system can systematically fail students of color. I have seen the good, the bad and the ugly. And I unequivocally believe that all Wisconsin students, especially students of color, deserve better. Educators, administrators, and public officials have a duty to unequivocally denounce racism when it rears its ugly head in our sacred education system. We have to move beyond speaking about “buzz words” (equity, diversity and inclusion). Further our actions must be congruent with the language that we profess to believe about people who are different from us.

We must also act in material ways that will make meaningful steps towards better outcomes. Students feel supported when they feel a sense of belongingness. It is imperative that text books reflect the contributions of all people and celebrate diversity. Students feel safe when they experience more success than failure. My Bill of Rights for Wisconsin Students provides means for students to demonstrate how smart they are beyond reading, writing, math, science and social studies by allowing them to experience success in other subject areas - art, music, physical education, library media and computer science. Students feel empowered when they see teachers, administrators and superintendents that reflect their racial and ethnic background. We encourage students to “dream big” but that is difficult if they don't have the opportunity to see someone who looks like them in certain spaces, careers and leadership positions. Within my first 100 days in office, I plan to find the Statewide Plan for Diversifying the Teacher Pipeline that I developed and immediately begin implementing it. Choosing me as Wisconsin's first State Superintendent of Color will be the first step in making sure that students view this office as something that is attainable for them.