



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

I want to bring a teacher's perspective to the State Superintendent position.

Together with families, educators, and students I want education to be a model of ground floor up instead of top down. My number one issue is teaching not testing. For too long we have seen the effects of high stakes standardized tests and what they do to our children and the outcome of our schools. We have seen how being forced to teach to the test has diminished the art of teaching, teachers individualized voice in the classroom, and has limited the offerings our children are given in the schools. There is so much more to student achievement than a standardized test score. If we increase hands on learning, increase time devoted to teaching, we will see a positive effect on student achievement.

Closing the achievement gap is one of the most important concepts that we can do in education. It's a long-term problem that demands long term solutions. It means that we need to make changes in ourselves and within our schools. Not just over one day or a week or even a year, but over a generation and carry on for multiple generations. It means that we set high standards for every child, in every school, and lift them up to reach their goals.

We need to start closing the achievement gap early in a child's life. Every student deserves an equitable education that promotes future promise. The initial years of a child's education are extremely important as they build the foundation of literacy, numbers, and motor skills.

This means that schools need to provide wrap around services to children and help with vocabulary, letters, speech, and counting. Not being prepared for kindergarten and starting school already behind, is a burden that no child should have to bear. I know that every parent wants to do the best for their children every day of their lives. As the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, I will do everything that I can to ensure that every parent, grandparent, guardian, and caregiver in the lives of our children have every possible opportunity to surround our kids with the materials, help, and time that they need.

We need to fully fund special education. Every child deserves quality education where they can excel. Each child's needs are unique, and our students in special education may require specialized supports and services for them to be successful. I am committed to push for 60% reimbursement for special education funding and would like to see the costs of special education be fully funded by the state.

We need better services that help with mental health issues in our schools. As the Chair of the Social Service Committee for the Fond du Lac County Board of Supervisors, I have advocated for increasing the services that Fond du Lac County provides for mental health. This means forming partnerships



between Fond du Lac County and the local school districts to better meet the needs of each and every child; these partnerships could be accomplished in every county.

We need an education budget that can guarantee high quality teachers in every school, resources, and personnel to meet the needs of our English language learners, and account for the growing poverty in our schools.

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?

First and foremost, the best learning happens in our classrooms. I want our children back in our schools, but it must be done safely for both our children and the educational staff. As an elected official I provided input on writing the guidelines for opening our schools in Fond du Lac County. The guidelines focused on safety for everyone while providing an opportunity for in person learning. Currently only 300 school districts have a full-time school nurse. During a pandemic we need a school nurse in every building in every school district. Our schools are also in need of upgrades; better air filtration systems that help filter viruses, access to weekly covid testing that is free and available to everyone, and smaller class sizes to help with social distancing. These changes will make a difference and help get our children back in our schools.

The Department of Public Instruction needs to be a leader here and set gating criteria based in science for when schools should be open or closed. They also need to be outspoken, demanding that teachers and support staff receive the vaccine in a timely manner.

The lack of affordable high-speed internet is a major barrier to the education process. When students leave the classroom, they should have continued access to affordable and reliable internet, in every household across Wisconsin. On the Fond du Lac County Board of Supervisors, I have voted to expand broadband internet to rural parts of the county. Currently over 30,000 families have increased access to the internet due to these votes. As State Superintendent I will advocate for statewide broadband that is affordable and available to everyone.

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?

Educational unions need to have a consistent voice at the local and state levels when it comes to the operations of the Department of Public Instruction. I want to implement at least quarterly meetings with union representatives to discuss what is happening at the local level. I also want to foster regular discussion with our educational unions and our legislators, specifically the education committee. We know that the legislative branch holds a lot of control on what happens in our state when it comes to education policy. I feel that for far too long, our legislators have kept our education unions at bay, and not worked with them to better our schools at the state and local levels. We need to have open doorways to communication with our legislators, that only a teacher's perspective can bring to the discussion.



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 33rd 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?

Yes, absolutely! We need to respect our teachers. Our teachers deserve fair and appropriate compensation for their work. I would work to address continuing education as a way to increase pay. When our teachers are lifelong learners, our students, our families, and our communities' benefit. We need to attract and retain teachers across the state, and that starts with competitive wages. I have first-hand experience of a pay scale that rewarded learning and loyalty, having lanes and steps allowing a teacher to plan professionally and financially, suddenly changed to a pay scale that is not that transparent. I witnessed how it took 12 years to reach the top of the pay scale with a masters evolve to 36 years and furthering your education does not matter.

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?

Education is the key to progress. We need to be open to changes, new ways of thinking, and approach the problem through multiple channels. Our schools need to have a collective voice where every student feels supported, safe and empowered. We also need to set high standards and lift every child up to meet the goals.

We need to be able to have crucial conversations about race, and how that impacts our schools, even when our schools may not be diverse. We need to incorporate a shared system of beliefs across the state that every student, and family needs to feel a sense of belonging not only in their school, but also their community. These conversations need to happen. They need to involve community leaders, education leaders, and community outreach groups. As an elected official I meet regularly with community outreach groups to address this issue.

We need to be proactive and intentional in our teaching and curriculum to include voices, past and present, to represent all peoples of our state. We need to have staff: administration, teachers, paraprofessionals, custodians, bussing, food service, wrap around services, that mirror our students and communities.