



MTI VOTERS

2021 Wisconsin State Superintendent Election Questionnaire

1. Why are you running for Superintendent of Public Instruction?

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

As an educator currently in the field, I see the day-to-day implementation of policies, and how they are working both for and against our children. I will use common sense reform to get back to the basics, work to cut bureaucracy, while building an administration around experience, innovation, and student centric programs and policies.

As a geology lecturer for the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Fond du Lac Campus, I see the importance of preparing our children for the future. Universities and technical colleges could provide great opportunities to children of all ages and I will work to create partnerships between them and our schools.

As a current elected official, I understand the importance of working with everyone involved and giving people a seat at the table. As the State Superintendent I will personally meet with the education committees from both the Senate and Assembly on a regular basis to discuss education policy and education reform. I will advocate at the federal level for our children and our schools. I will also visit classrooms on a weekly basis to talk with educators to see how policy is impacting our schools.

As a father I will make sure that policies are family friendly and that the stress of high stakes testing is taken off our children. We need more teaching and less testing.

Overall, I want the Department of Public Instruction to be innovative, transformative. and forward thinking.

2. Do you believe that public schools are sufficiently funded? If no, describe your plan to provide sufficient funds.

Our schools are not adequately funded and there are major differences in levels of funding across the state. We need more money in our schools. Every child deserves a quality education where they can excel. Every child needs to have the resources that will enhance their talents and promote success in their life.

We need to fully fund special education at the state and federal level. Each student's needs are unique, and our students in special education may require specialized supports and services for



them to reach their full potential. The costs for individualized supports and services should be provided by state and federal dollars. This will in turn provide more money for overall education needs.

I will work with the state assembly, state senate, and the governor to provide additional funding for our schools. As an elected official, I have experience working with both sides of the aisle to increase funding for social workers, nursing homes, and mental health.

3. Madison schools have experienced increasing attrition over the past five years and increasing difficulty in attracting highly qualified candidates in a growing number of certification areas. What factors do you identify as the causes for this shortage? What measures will you take to promote the attraction and retention of highly qualified teachers and other school employees?

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. Teachers also deserve a seat at the table when decisions are made. We also need to be mindful of work environments and cut the needless paperwork that takes time away from teaching our children. I would do away with a failed policy called "Educator Effectiveness" and give back local control to the school boards for teacher evaluations. We need to empower our educators, as they mold our most precious resource, our children.

We can do more at our universities to recruit students to become teachers. We need to incentivize education programs at the Universities through scholarships, grants, and loan forgiveness.

4. What strategies will you enact to support and value Wisconsin's large, urban school districts?

Our children and our teachers need a sense of belonging and a sense of safety in our schools. They need to be respected and have education built around the needs of our classrooms. My vision for our schools is a bottom-up approach. We need to energize our families and have them involved in our schools. Our teachers need a voice on day-to-day operations, as they are the experts in the field.

One thing that the pandemic has taught us is that our schools ARE the center of our communities. Our communities rely on our schools for more than just education. During this pandemic our schools have shifted ever more so to community schools where the needs of our children are met. Schools are finding ways to distribute breakfast, lunch and now dinner to our children making sure that no child will go hungry. Our schools are a place where a child's well-being is being evaluated every day, and help will be provided to those who are in need. I want



to expand on this idea that transforms our schools to be the center of the community. This means that I want our schools to have integrated support where partnerships are formed between our schools, universities, businesses, nonprofits, and counties. Our children's physical, mental, and emotional health will be supported through these partnerships.

We need to expand the before and after school programs, weekend programs, and summer programs. We also need to provide the resources that are necessary to make these programs thrive. Resources like equipment for hands on activities, safe transportation to and from the schools, and technology to make these experiences meaningful opportunities. Here is where we can make sure that the talents and the skills that our students possess are enhanced, making them successful and excited to learn.

We also need to promote our public schools and share the positive activities that are happening in our classroom on a daily basis.

5. What strategies will you enact to support and value Wisconsin's rural school districts?

The community school approach will also benefit the well-being of children in our rural schools. Through this pandemic technology such as zoom and google meet has expanded the opportunities that distance learning has to offer. Rural schools can partner with other schools and be able to expand class offerings and services. I will advocate for partnerships so every child can have classes and services being offered that makes them successful.

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.

6. How do you feel about the current Educator Effectiveness (Teacher) evaluation system? What changes would you like to see to that system?

Educator Effectiveness is one of the worst policies to come out of the Department of Public Instruction in the past 20 years. It's extremely punitive and makes evaluating teachers a checklist where learning objectives on the white board are more important than the art of teaching. As State Superintendent I will work to improve the evaluation process. I will provide educators a seat at the table when we write new guidelines. We need to treat our teachers as professionals.



7. What is your plan to work with the Madison Metropolitan School District to assure that all students receive a quality public education?

I would like to set up meetings on a regular basis with Madison Teachers Inc. I will also visit the schools on a regular basis to gain first-hand experiences on how policy is affecting our classrooms.

8. Do you believe the position of State Superintendent of Public Instruction should continue to be an elected position as currently provided in the State Constitution?

I do believe that this position should be an elected office. Education is extremely important as it is the future of Wisconsin. If the State Superintendent becomes an appointed position, it becomes political and partisan. I feel that the State Superintendent should be a truly non-partisan position, free from the constraints of obligations of those who appoint. The people of Wisconsin should have the ability to vote for the State Superintendent based on the merits of the person, not an affiliation to a party or a person.

9. Describe your position on the voucher program.

When we have a system already in place, our public schools, and then we switch to a new system that takes money away from the old system, it means that we are giving up on the old system. I'm not giving up on our public schools, and neither should you.

The State Superintendent of Public Instruction is in charge of our public schools. As the State Superintendent I will be the biggest champion of our public schools and promote them without fail.

10. Describe your position on independent charter schools.

Independent charter schools lack accountability, lack transparency, and lack local control.



11. Wisconsin teacher licensing has the reputation as being one of the most rigorous and respected systems in the country. Recently, proposals were made that would allow any individual with a bachelor's degree or work experience in trades to obtain a teaching license. Do you support these proposals? Why or why not?

As a teacher I was proud when I earned my Wisconsin teaching license, and for this very reason, I knew that my license could take me anywhere in the country, and it would be highly respected and revered. Although I knew this, I also knew that Wisconsin is where I wanted to stay to teach. With that being said, we need highly trained educational staff in every building everywhere in Wisconsin. This means that we need licensed teachers in every classroom in every school.

I believe that teachers in the classroom need training that is above and beyond content knowledge. Teaching is an art and craft that is introduced through methods course work, expressed through practicums and student teaching, and refined and improved when engaging in your own classroom. Those educational experiences at the post-secondary level help prepare you to be an engaging educator.

I also like the idea of schools partnering with trades unions to provide support and enhance technical education.

12. Teachers report a significant increase in mandated meetings and “professional development” sessions that are often unrelated or not embedded to the reality of their daily work with children. What will you do as State Superintendent to provide teachers with the time needed to prepare lessons, collaborate with colleagues, evaluate student work, and reflect on their practice?

As a fellow teacher I value our scarcest commodity, time. I believe that professional development should be driven by teacher needs, interests, and input. As State Superintendent I will work with school districts to make sure that there is adequate uninterrupted time built into the school day for teachers to prepare their lessons, evaluate student work, and time to reflect. I will work with education associations across the state to provide recommended prep time. This prep time would be uninterrupted and driven solely by the teacher.

13. Do you support restoring the rights of public sector workers to collectively bargain over wages, hours and conditions of employment?

Yes! Public sector employees deserve a seat at the table. Living through Act 10, I can attest first-hand to the detriment that limiting bargaining to base wages up to CPI has done to educators. I am sure my story echoes many of your own personal stories.



14. Are you interested in receiving MTI Voters endorsement? If so, why?

Yes, as a fellow teacher who is currently in the classroom, I believe that I will best represent the active educator workforce. MTI is often a leader in the education field. I have great respect and value MTI opinion.

15. Are you interested in receiving financial support for your campaign from MTI-Voters?

As a public school teacher my personal resources to run for statewide office are limited. Every donation of any size is greatly appreciated.

16. Is there anything else you would like MTI members to know about your candidacy and why you are seeking election to the State Superintendent of Public Instruction?

I'm a very active union member in our local teachers' association. For 8 years I worked with community members in Fond du Lac and the surrounding area as I was the Public Relations Director for the Fond du Lac Education Association. I have also been the communication director for the Fond du Lac Education Association. During this time, I pushed for workers safety, fair pay, and quality education.

I am a very active WEAC member attending the presidents meeting on zoom, RA Delegation, and events held around the state.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to public education.

In solidarity,

Joe Fenrick

1-7-2020