

MTI VOTERS

2021 Wisconsin State Superintendent Election Questionnaire

Who is MTI-Voters?

MTI-Voters is the political action committee of MTI that seeks to identify those candidates most likely to advance policies supported by the members of MTI, policies that support MMSD staff and students, and advance the quality of public education in the District.

The MTI-Voters Committee is a representative body of MTI members, comprised of the Presidents of each MTI bargaining unit, the MTI Treasurer and nine (9) others elected by MTI's Faculty Representative Council. This member-comprised committee, guides MTI's political endorsement process and advances recommended endorsements to the thousands of MTI members who contribute to MTI Voters and vote on endorsement recommendations.

Please respond to the following questions. If you wish to add to/clarify your response, please do so by attaching the additional information, and designate your response by the corresponding number which appears in the questionnaire. Please deliver your responses to MTI (via Vicky Bernards at bernardsv@madisonteachers.org by January 8.

MTI-Voters will be interviewing candidates on the evening of January 13 and 14, between 4:00 pm and 8:00 pm.

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

I believe great schools are among the most important institutions for a vibrant democracy and healthy economy. Great schools give children opportunity and a chance for a better life. Unfortunately, I see our education system crumbling around us. We have a teacher shortage in the thousands. Kids have vastly different experiences depending on which school they attend (class sizes of around 15 versus class sizes about 45, building conditions, technology, etc.). We have a student loan debt crisis and our school funding system is broken. I am running because I believe we need to address these structural issues and I have a proven track record of changing and/or refining systems for the better.

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

In my view, we have a broken school financial system in Wisconsin. We have revenue limits that give some districts roughly twice as much base funding per child than other districts. We rely heavily on property taxes and too many districts have to go to referendum every several

years just to keep their schools afloat. The fact that we have gone to referendum over 1,000 times in the past ten years is proof to me that the way we finance schools is a failure. I also dislike the idea that referendums force homeowners on fixed incomes to choose between the children of Wisconsin and perhaps the medicine they need to stay healthy. On a positive note, the vast majority of referendums passed. To me this means there is wide support for funding our schools.

I think we must move away from our heavy reliance on property taxes to a state funded system. We can establish a basic standard of student care and provide equal funding to all districts. Then use Title I, Title III, and such to address equity. By moving the funding responsibility to the state, we can ensure that each district and school has the resources they need to be successful.

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?

The teacher shortage is a serious issue in Wisconsin. We have more people leaving and fewer people wanting to join teaching. I am hearing many top teachers tell their own children not to enter the field of education. To me, the shortage is predictable. A teacher can earn about 20% more in a different job with the same experience & education. Also, workloads continue to rise. I would estimate that my workload increased about 40% from when I entered teaching compared to when I moved into administration. There are also a number of people in the media who “teacher bash”.

I believe we need to start treating teachers right. We need to level up teacher pay. We need to develop meaningful workloads and start valuing teachers. We need to start asking people who are good at their job “what will it take to get you into teaching?” Because we want the top talent from many fields to become teachers and share their experiences and expertise with the next generation.

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

I believe in local control. So we will work to protect districts from politics & lobbyists while also working to ensure districts have the support and resources needed to be successful. We would also include representatives from urban, suburban, and rural areas in our cabinet.

Specifically for large, urban school districts. Near all of my K-12 experience is in a large, urban district. So I understand the challenges and scrutiny these districts receive. To mitigate and prevent issues, we will work with stakeholders and organizations close to large, urban districts. Because I believe that strong connections will allow us to maintain a pulse on the prevalent issues. This will allow us to provide individualized support as necessary.

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

We will work closely with CESA's, rural districts, and other organizations. Just like we need to provide individualized learning to every child, we need to provide individualized support for districts. Some rural districts have transportation concerns, lose students to open enrollment, technology/broadband issues, have trouble recruiting teachers, etc. Though we can leverage services through the CESA's, it is important to acknowledge the individual needs of each rural district and work to ensure they have what they need to be successful.

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

EE had good intentions, but I see it as just another failed reform. It is great to look at practices within the confines of a rubric. Rubrics help us be objective in how we report and improve. However, EE has too many components being evaluated to be objective. Also, EE has become skewed. I am hearing reports where teachers are being put on a bell curve instead of using the objective measures. I've also heard of administrators who are not being objective and still play favorites. This creates a system where the moral of those evaluated suffer and can result in lower productivity from staff overall.

I also see a serious issue with evaluating teachers on the performance of children. It's based on the false assumption that all kids care about what they could see as a "stupid" or "overwhelming" test. Also, there could be situations where children might intentionally do poorly on the test because they don't like the teacher.

We should move away from the EE model. We should stop tying test scores to teacher evaluations. Instead, we should begin to use teacher teams to collaborate and provide peer evaluations/feedback. We should also be proactive by reimagining what teacher preparation programs look like. I believe student teaching should be extended to a year with a state stipend. I believe we should also look to refine practices and collaboration instead of giving up on teachers. What we are doing right now for teacher evaluations is not working. So let's change it together.

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

Though this questionnaire is related to MMSD, my goal is to build great schools across the state of Wisconsin. MMSD would benefit greatly from our proposals. We would work to end the teacher shortage. We would work to ensure you have the resources needed to provide top services for our children. Besides class sizes, we want to expand after school programming, summer enrichment camps, updated buildings, etc. The way I see it is these structural issues must be addressed before we can truly ensure all our students receive a quality public education.

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?

Yes, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction should remain an elected position. First, schools should not be political entities. Having a nonpartisan state superintendent who has the sole authority over DPI helps keep politics outside of schools. An elected nonpartisan state superintendent also ensures the people select how DPI operates instead of a political appointee. On a fundamental level, I believe we should be finding ways to expand democracy instead of shrinking self-rule.

9. Describe your position on the voucher program.

If parents want a private education, they should pay for it. I am opposed to private schools receiving government funds. It should not be the job of the government to prop up businesses/private organizations who cannot be successful or viable on their own.

10. Describe your position on independent charter schools.

Independent charter schools tend to go around the accountability of democracy. Meaning they have no true elected oversight. These organizations also spend a lot of money on administrative costs. I believe the money should go to the children of Wisconsin, not some made up six-figure administrative position. Further, I've read too many articles about how some Independent charters close their doors mid-year. They abandon our children while keeping the money. It's criminal.

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?

We must better prepare our teacher candidates. There are reports that between 40%-50% of new teachers leave the profession within five years. One of the reasons, in my view, is that they

are not prepared for the challenges of the classroom. I believe we should increase student teaching to a year. Because student teachers "work for free," our campaign proposes providing a stipend to student teachers. We need the best teachers, so we must entice and prepare teacher candidates for success.

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?

From when I started teaching until I left the classroom, I would estimate my workload increased 40%. Professional development (PD) for PD's sake wastes time and destroys morale. At the building I run, teacher teams identify needs and provide meaningful PD to each other. They teachers work in collaboration in teams to refine their craft. This teacher led approach ensures that PD is meaningful and not a waste of time.

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

Yes. Collective bargaining benefits both teachers and students.

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

I am asking for an endorsement from MTI voters. I believe many of our priorities align and we could be great collaborative partners.

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

Running a campaign costs a lot of money. To forward our mutual priorities, we would be greatly appreciative of financial support.

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 believe we need school finance reform to truly see any meaningful change in our schools. We should move away from the overreliance on property taxes to a state funded system. We can

do this by establishing a basic standard of student care across the state. Then provide additional funding to address equity concerns. Changing our financial system will lay the groundwork to ensure that every school in Wisconsin is a great school.

Great schools save money. Great schools tend to reduce crime, so we won't need as many jails, prisons, or district attorneys. Great schools tend to reduce drug use, alcoholism, and teenage pregnancy, so we will reduce medical and other social costs. Great schools also tend to increase achievement and lead to better jobs with more pay. Resulting in less reliance on social services and a great tax base. Creating great schools with school finance reform is a win for Wisconsin and will help us become national leaders in education.

Name of Candidate: Steve Krull, PhD

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