

Underly campaign: Announces candidacy for State Superintendent of Public Instruction

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HOLLANDALE, Wis. — Dr. Jill Underly, a rural schools superintendent, former public school teacher, and mother of two, today announced her campaign for the statewide nonpartisan position of Wisconsin State Superintendent of Public Instruction. Dr. Underly currently serves as superintendent of the Pecatonica Area School District, headquartered in the Village of Blanchardville. She has more than 20 years of experience as an educator and administrator in both rural and urban school districts.

“My focus is always on every child, every day in my classrooms and schools,” said Superintendent Underly. “As a first-generation college graduate from a working-class union household, I know firsthand the value of strong public schools and the inspiring power of great educators, and I’m ready to take on the responsibility of being Wisconsin’s education leader. And as a mom of school-aged kids, I pledge as state superintendent to bring this focus to every school across Wisconsin, so every child has every opportunity.”

“Superintendent Jill Underly is a champion for our kids, their families, our educators, and an outstanding rural school leader,” said Nancy Hendrickson, Highland Community Schools Superintendent, former CESA 3 Administrator and 2007 Wisconsin Superintendent of the Year. “I am honored to join hundreds of others across Wisconsin in supporting Jill Underly for State Superintendent. More than ever, we need a champion for public schools, and their students, parents, and educators.”

Jill Underly has served Pecatonica since 2015. Prior to this chief leadership position, Dr. Underly was a federal programs consultant and assistant director at the WI

Department of Public Instruction, as well as an academic advisor at UW-Madison. In the classroom, her teaching background is primarily in high school social studies, and she taught American and World History, Geography, Political Science, and Sociology.

“Jill is a strong voice and advocate for the education of all students,” said Dr. Natalia Taft, who serves as a Racine City Council Alder and is an associate professor of biology at UW-Parkside. “She has a great understanding of the needs of both students and the staff that work for them. Her compassionate leadership of a school district in this crisis demonstrates we should elect Jill Underly State Superintendent. Wisconsin will get a proven leader who will bring people together to advance and strengthen our public schools across the state.”

Under Dr. Underly’s leadership, the Pecatonica Area School District has led in innovative practices in rural public schooling that tackle enrollment decline head-on. During her tenure, the Pecatonica School District has focused on early childhood education, including implementation of a wrap-around day care program at the elementary school. Additionally, Dr. Underly implemented “Camp Pecatonica,” a summer program for elementary children that is play-based and rich in field experience. Camp Pecatonica won a 2016 award for “Standing Up for Rural Schools, Libraries, and Communities” from the WI Department of Public Instruction. These programs counteracted a lack of other childcare options for parents and kept families enrolled in the school district.

“My favorite part of being a superintendent is that every day, I am working to help every child be the best version of themselves,” said Dr. Underly. “Providing strong learning opportunities for every child, every day, has long been the focus of my leadership. Every child deserves a high quality public education regardless of their zip code and regardless of whatever economic opportunities they have at home. That has been and always will be my mission.”

Underly lives on a small farm in Hollandale, Wisconsin, with her husband John and two children who attend Pecatonica Middle School. She received her doctorate from UW-Madison, and completed her undergraduate education at Indiana University.

“We continue to see the vital role schools play in rebuilding our state’s economic strength and people’s lives,” said Underly. “I have a great love for public schools and public service, starting when I was nine and first knew I wanted to be a teacher. I love working with children and adults to solve problems and improve lives. I am

excited to announce my candidacy for the position of State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and I look forward to the work ahead and to moving public education, and equity for every child in Wisconsin, forward.”

The non-partisan statewide election for Superintendent of Public Instruction is on April 6, 2021, with a primary election if necessary on February 16, 2021.

Underly for Wisconsin launched its website at www.underlyforwi.com and one can join and follow Jill at **@underlyforwi** on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.