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Dept. of Public Instruction: Five Wisconsin Educators named 2023 Wisconsin Teachers of the Year

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MADISON — The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction recently announced that five exemplary educators have been named 2023 Wisconsin Teachers of the Year. These five educators were surprised by State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly in separate announcements over the past two weeks at their respective schools.
"It was an incredible experience letting them know they are 2023 Wisconsin Teachers of the Year, and I congratulate them on this achievement," State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly said. "These past two weeks have been so fulfilling because I heard stories firsthand from students about how each of these educators has positively impacted their lives. I know they will continue to have a significant impact in their new role as Wisconsin Teachers of the Year."
The 2023 Wisconsin Teachers of the Year are:

- **Kaelee Heideman**, school counselor at Carl Traeger Elementary School, Oshkosh Area School District
- **Sarah Kopplin**, geography teacher at Shorewood Intermediate School, Shorewood School District
- **Lori Danz**, biology teacher and school forest coordinator at Superior High School, School District of Superior
- **Peggy Billing**, library media specialist at Lakeland Union High School, Lakeland Union High School District
- **Dustin Anderson**, art teacher at Grant Elementary School, Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools

The Teachers of the Year will interview with a committee that will select one of the five to represent Wisconsin in the National Teacher of the Year program. That individual will receive an additional $6,000 from the Herb Kohl Educational

Foundation. More information on the Wisconsin Teacher of the Year Program can be found on the DPI's website. Downloadable photos from each of the surprise visits can be found in this Google Drive folder. Please attribute the photos to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.
Additional background information on each educator is below.

Kaelee Heideman, school counselor at Carl Traeger Elementary School, Oshkosh Area School District

As the school counselor at Carl Traeger, Heideman supports students, teachers, and community members through various methods, meeting students where they are socially, emotionally, and academically and helping facilitate success. Heideman is a leader at the school and within the district, co-facilitating the social emotional learning team and providing professional development around equity, trauma-informed care, and positive behavioral interventions and support. When the COVID-19 pandemic started, Heideman continued supporting students and families through check-ins and individual counseling lessons and wrote each child at the school a personalized letter.

Sarah Kopplin, geography teacher at Shorewood Intermediate School, Shorewood School District

Kopplin has a passion for social studies education and finds innovative, resourceful ways to provide opportunities for all students. In addition to serving on the school's instructional leadership, Kopplin also serves on many district-level planning workgroups and has a sincere commitment to improving outcomes for students. Through her ability of creating authentic learning opportunities, students in her class leverage their leadership, voice, and choice to guide their individual learning experiences.

Lori Danz, biology teacher and school forest coordinator at Superior High School, School District of Superior

Danz is a coordinator of the school forest and is praised by her peers for not only inspiring a love of learning among students and motivating those around her, but also for always having a positive attitude about student leaning in the Superior community. Danz is credited for taking the initiative to make improvements to the school forest so it can be a place for students and teachers to enjoy outdoor education. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Danz worked to set up a camera system

for classrooms across the district to observe the forest and created video lessons for classes.

Peggy Billing, library media specialist at Lakeland Union High School, Lakeland Union High School District

Billing has been an educator for nearly 20 years and has spent many of those years building relationships, collaborating with colleagues, and incorporating relevant and cultural activities into a variety of classes. Lakeland Union Principal Chad Gaurke describes Billing as an “outside the box thinker” who successfully utilizes STEAM activities to enhance her classes. Billing is credited with helping design and launch a statewide low-cost collection of audio, eBooks, and digital magazines through the Wisconsin Schools Digital Library Consortium, which she has served on since the group’s inception in 2018.

Dustin Anderson, art teacher at Grant Elementary School, Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools

Anderson has a passion for art and uses it to help students and the community learn and grow. Grant Elementary Principal Nicole Calteux credited Anderson for being a leader in the district, working tirelessly to provide the best education for every student. In 2020, Anderson was selected as Wisconsin Elementary Art Educator of the Year by the Wisconsin Art Education Association and represented fellow educators on the organization’s board. In the role, he coordinated and assisted with professional development opportunities for teachers across the state and provided valuable insight and suggestions.