



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **Wisconsin Reading Advocates Endorse Dr. Deborah Kerr for Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**CALEDONIA, WI – February 9, 2021** – Three reading advocacy organizations announced their endorsement of Dr. Deborah Kerr for State Superintendent of Public Instruction. In separate statements, the Wisconsin Reading Coalition, Decoding Dyslexia-Wisconsin and the International Dyslexia Association--Wisconsin Branch, explained their rationale for endorsing Kerr.

The Wisconsin Reading Coalition said that after a lengthy in-depth interview with their leadership they were impressed with Kerr's commitment to bringing reading front and center in DPI priorities: supporting Wisconsin teachers and improving outcomes for beginning and struggling readers.



**Dr. Deborah Kerr**

According to Mary Newton, co-founder of the coalition, "Deb Kerr grasps the research, understands the disturbing reading performance data in Wisconsin, and is able to reimagine the roles of DPI, teacher preparation programs, the CESAs, and the RtI Center. She is willing to call out the ineffective practices that are still far too prevalent in our state and is surrounding herself with experienced reading experts who can lead the way to more equitable outcomes."

Newton added, "Deb Kerr has a concrete, thoughtful plan to improve reading in Wisconsin."

Decoding Dyslexia Wisconsin's Katie Kasubaski stated, "Wisconsin needs leadership change in education and that starts at the top. I'm endorsing Deb Kerr who has a team ready to go with a plan to help bridge the literacy achievement gap in WI. It includes parent involvement at every level and professional development for teachers."

According to Kelly Steinke, President of the International Dyslexia Wisconsin Branch, Kerr was invited to speak to the WI IDA Board and was asked pointed questions about how to raise the reading scores in Wisconsin, which have fallen from 4th to 34th in the last 20 years.

Steinke said, “The International Dyslexia Association Wisconsin Branch is satisfied that Deb Kerr has a deep knowledge of what it takes to produce proficient readers and the variety of tools teachers need in their tool kits to teach all aspects of proficient and advanced reading: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension, including critical thinking. Dr. Kerr’s campaign focus is on ensuring success for all students through providing equitable and rigorous learning experiences, innovative and personalized learning for all students, engaging families and communities as partners, and leading with strength and respect.”

“A change of direction is needed and Dr. Kerr will provide the vision, leadership, and communication needed among all stakeholders to be instrumental in that change. Wisconsin’s families and children deserve no less.”

Reading experts have been working with Kerr on the development of a Reading Roadmap, a plan to raise student achievement in literacy and close the achievement gaps. Kerr and her experts presented on this topic in a recent forum which can be watched here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLAO38GCb7M&feature=youtu.be>

The Wisconsin Reading Coalition is a grassroots movement of parents, educators, advocacy organizations, health professionals, and business leaders committed to bringing scientifically-based reading instruction and intervention to all Wisconsin students.

Decoding Dyslexia Wisconsin is a parent-led grassroots movement concerned with the limited access to educational interventions for dyslexia within the public education system. Their aim is to raise dyslexia awareness, empower families to support their children and inform policy-makers on best practices to identify, remediate and support students with dyslexia.

**Other notable reading advocates endorsing Kerr include:**

- Donna Hejtmanek, founder of the group “The Science of Reading—What I Should Have Learned in College,” a national group of 65,000 reading specialists and educators. [www.facebook.com/groups/70449899666615/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/70449899666615/)
- Sally Grimes, an expert in improving classroom reading instruction and founder of The Grimes Reading Institute, based in Rockport, Massachusetts. [www.grimesreadinginstitute.org](http://www.grimesreadinginstitute.org)

According to Grimes, “Dr. Kerr was one of the first superintendents in the nation who understood the Science of Reading and moved her district in that direction, providing the professional development, infrastructure and curricula needed to ensure state-of-the-art reading instruction for students -- many of whom had been “left behind”.

“It is rare to find a superintendent so eager to get into the weeds and be so committed to this labor-intensive movement. It’s about the kids with Dr. Kerr.”

More endorsements for Kerr can be found at: <https://kerr4kids.com/endorsements/>

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