

Over my 35 years in education, I have seen first-hand how valuable an experienced mentor could be, especially when I was facing challenges with a struggling school or school district. I believe it is important that schools in our great state be led by someone who understands and has experienced the challenges of teaching, leading a school as a principal, and leading a district as a superintendent. My years in education include teaching at a small parochial school in Minnesota, serving as an elementary and middle school principal in Cambridge, Wisconsin, as well as serving and being honored as a National Distinguished principal in Peshtigo, Wisconsin. As a District Administrator I have served in the Palmyra-Eagle School District, the Beloit School District, and most recently with the Whitnall School District (suburban Milwaukee).

While serving those schools and districts I have:

- Raised test scores in all districts and schools served by collaborating with teachers, administrators and parents.
- Collaborated with business, industry, and community to create a regional, multi-district career and technical education academy
- Launched annual business/education summits
- Led successful urban school reform which drastically reduced violence, returned discipline and control of the classroom to teachers, closed achievement gaps and increased graduation rates
- Led successful rural school reform by collaborating with teachers to significantly increase academic achievement
- Consistently raised teacher satisfaction, pre- and post- Act 10

All of us have studied Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. The most basic needs include physiological needs and SAFETY. In School districts large and small, from Milwaukee to Madison to Dodgeville, we hear students complaining about fights in their schools and we see teachers fleeing to safer environments. I believe the failure of the current educational system is directly related to our failure to provide a safe and nurturing environment. Teachers and administrators have to be supported and empowered to provide the most basic needs for our children. When those basic needs are not met, we are then faced with huge achievement and graduation gaps which have become the worst in the nation, plummeting proficiency scores and dramatic dropout rates. According to DPI, we average more than 7,000 dropouts per year. Dropouts lower incomes, add to high unemployment rates, an increased need for medical care, and a higher propensity for incarceration. A recent study of the economic impact revealed that taxpayers spend more than \$503 million dollars each and every year on dropouts in Wisconsin.

Having spent much of my childhood in Milwaukee's Sherman Park neighborhood, and having served as a Superintendent in urban, suburban, and rural communities, I have seen firsthand and very much appreciate the varying challenges which face our communities across the state – especially those created by economic and sociological variances that exist beyond our schoolyards. Fortunately, no child is too poor to learn. It is imperative that the State of Wisconsin provides access to a safe and engaging PreK-12 education to ALL of our children, enabling them to become model citizens and lead successful, well-educated lives.

So what do we do about failing schools? We have all heard ideas which include converting failing schools into charter schools, private voucher schools or simply closing them down all together. I am adamantly opposed to starting with any of those actions. None of us want to accept failing schools. As state superintendent I will support safety and discipline for every school in Wisconsin, empowering superintendents and principals with the support they need, which will include traveling teams who will participate in the collaborative efforts.

Schools are currently forced to spend so much of their budget on non-educational services that they have little left to focus on innovative education, as well as basic remedial services. As your next state superintendent,

DPI will be supportive of local district leadership with less of a focus on regulatory issues and more of a focus on collaborative support.

My parents believed in teaching accountability. Whenever there was a problem, we were expected to be brave enough to name the problem or issue, own it and then fix it. As the next Wisconsin Superintendent of Public Instruction, that is what I intend to do. When we have failing schools we will not be afraid to name the problem, and we will not be afraid to own the problem because we are going to work together to fix the problem. We have no choice. They are our children and the future of Wisconsin. I am looking forward to working with each and every one of you to once again make Wisconsin the best in the nation.

Dr. Lowell Holtz is a candidate for Superintendent of Public Instruction in Wisconsin. In addition to being a teacher and a Wisconsin Principal of the Year, he has led district improvement efforts as Superintendent in both rural and urban districts. He spent much of his childhood in Milwaukee's Sherman Park neighborhood, and is the son of a retired Milwaukee Police Officer. Lowell is married to Dr. Susan Holtz, his high school sweetheart and wife of 36 years, and together they have raised five grown children. In addition to his roles in education, Dr. Holtz has over two decades of experience in law enforcement.