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DPI-NR 2024-55

Wednesday, June 5, 2024

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## State superintendent appoints critical leadership positions

*Dr. Barb Novak, Superintendent Josh Robinson bring decades of public education experience to the DPI*

MADISON – State Superintendent Dr. Jill Underly today announced she has made appointments to critical leadership positions within the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

Following a formal interview process, Dr. Underly appointed Dr. Barb Novak as the director of the DPI's Office of Literacy (also known as the Wisconsin Reading Center), and current Frederic School District Superintendent Josh Robinson as the assistant state superintendent for the Division for Academic Excellence.

“Both Dr. Novak and Superintendent Robinson bring decades of experience in education and will help the department achieve our goal of meeting the needs of all Wisconsin students and educators,” Dr. Underly said. “I am excited to welcome them to the DPI, and I know their expertise and unique perspectives will help guide them as leaders in each of their respective roles.”

Dr. Novak has more than 20 years of experience supporting reading and literacy development in Wisconsin, including as a reading teacher, a literacy coach, and more than a decade working at the DPI focused on literacy. She is a believer in building systems to support student learning, maintaining asset-based approaches to each student, and developing educator expertise. Dr. Novak will lead the DPI's work on implementing the requirements of [2023 Wisconsin Act 20](#), which reimagines the way Wisconsin students are taught to read. She was appointed to the role after a rigorous application and interview process, and in consultation with the Early Literacy Curriculum Council. Dr. Novak will start in the role on June 17, 2024.

“I am honored and humbled by the opportunity to lead the Office of Literacy and to help our school districts improve reading instruction across the state,” Dr. Novak said. “Ensuring every child can read by the end of third grade is, undoubtedly, one of a school's most critical responsibilities. But this cannot happen at the expense of other important aspects of early childhood development, including social development,

(more)

mental health, or other learning. Opportunities to improve, as Act 20 provides, must happen as part of an education that addresses the unique needs of Wisconsin's youngest learners."

Robinson comes to the DPI with 25 years of experience in public education – first as a teacher, then as a principal, and finally as the superintendent of the Frederic School District, where he has served his community for the past 12 years. He is an advocate for advancing educational practices, is dedicated to student success, and has a track record of fostering collaborative engagement and meaningful relationships within educational communities. In addition to having experiences with strategic planning, stakeholder engagement, and policy implementation, Robinson has been an instructor for the University of Wisconsin-River Falls' principal licensure program and sits on the Northwood Technical College Board. He will begin in the role on July 1, 2024.

"I am eager to join the DPI as an assistant state superintendent, and I look forward to bringing my passion for public education to the state level," Robinson said. "I am a firm believer in helping individuals maximize their potential - that is accomplished by truly understanding the unique needs of each learner and working together to support their success."

In addition to these appointments, Dr. John Johnson, who has served as the DPI's deputy state superintendent for the past three years and has long worked in several leadership roles at the agency, will move to a senior policy advisor role in Dr. Underly's cabinet. Associate Deputy State Superintendent Thomas McCarthy will officially move into the role of deputy state superintendent on July 1, 2024.

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