

DESE Commissioner Candidate Finalists



Jack Elsey

Jack Elsey has been a results-oriented educator for nearly twenty years and has led school districts and non-profits for well-over a decade. In 2022, Jack founded the Michigan Educator Workforce Initiative (MEWI), an organization committed to addressing the teacher shortage crisis and building a more robust educator pipeline for Michigan. MEWI's first project, Talent Together, an innovative set of teacher pathway programs led by 56 Michigan Intermediate School Districts, is the largest collaboration of its kind between school districts in Michigan history and has over 1,100 candidates in registered apprenticeship pathways to teacher certification.

Before establishing MEWI, Jack led the Detroit Children's Fund, a non-profit dedicated to improving public schools in Detroit. Elsey has served in multiple district leader capacities, including Chief of Innovation and Incubation at Chicago Public Schools and Assistant Superintendent at Detroit Public Schools. He began his career as a middle school teacher with Teach For America in New York City and is a graduate of Wake Forest University, Pace University, and the Broad Center at Yale University. Elsey is a Broad Residency alum, Future Chief with Chiefs For Change, and has served as an executive coach to dozens of school district and non-profit leaders. He serves on several local non-profit boards including chairing the Diploma Equity Project and supporting Black Leaders Detroit's Ally Council.



Lili Laux

Dr. Lily Laux is an accomplished education leader with extensive experience strengthening educational systems to improve student outcomes. Most recently as Deputy Commissioner of School Programs at the Texas Education Agency, she led initiatives serving 5.5 million students across 1,200 school districts. During her seven-year tenure, she transformed the agency's approach from compliance-focused to outcomes-driven, overseeing teaching, learning, and academics. She led key initiatives including implementing historic school finance reform, redesigning literacy education, and expanding pathways to college and career success.

A proud product of rural public schools in Western Massachusetts, Dr. Laux's education career includes experience as a middle school teacher, instructional coach, and teacher educator. She holds a PhD in American Studies from the University of Texas at Austin, specializing in history, political theory, sociology, and education, an MAT in Curriculum and Instructional Leadership from the University of Memphis, and a BA from Columbia University.



Pedro Martinez

Chicago Public Schools (CPS) CEO Pedro Martinez is a nationally recognized superintendent with a track record of creating comprehensive, multi-year solutions that advance equity and economic mobility. He has spent more than two decades in K-12 education leadership, including 13 years as a superintendent. Under his leadership, CPS has expanded full-day early childhood classrooms, posted some of the nation's top elementary-level post-pandemic reading and math gains, achieved record-high graduation rates, scholarships earned, and college credits obtained in high school.

Prior to joining CPS, CEO Martinez served as the Superintendent of the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD), where he received statewide recognition from the Governor and Commissioner of Education as the fastest improving large district in Texas in 2018, 2019, and 2021. Before joining SAISD, Mr. Martinez served as Superintendent in Residence for the Nevada Department of Education and Superintendent for the Washoe County School District in Reno, Nevada.