# POSITION DESCRIPTION

# Assistant Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, Department of education

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| **OVERVIEW** | |
| Senate Committee | Health, Education, Labor and Pensions[[1]](#endnote-1) |
| Agency Mission | The Department of Education’s mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.[[2]](#endnote-2)  The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education works to ensure that every student graduates from high school ready for college and a career. |
| Position Overview | The assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education serves as a principal advisor to the secretary of education on all matters related to pre-K, elementary and secondary education.[[3]](#endnote-3) The assistant secretary is responsible for leading a team to promote academic excellence; enhance educational opportunities and equity for all American children and families; and improve the quality of teaching and learning by providing leadership, technical assistance and financial support. |
| Compensation | Level IV $155,500 (5 U.S.C. § 5315)[[4]](#endnote-4) |
| Position Reports to | Secretary of Education |
| **RESPONSIBILITIES** | |
| Management Scope | The assistant secretary for elementary and secondary education directly oversees the deputy assistant secretaries and chief of staff in the Office of the Assistant Secretary. In fiscal 2016, the office was appropriated a budget of $16 billion, which covered 85 unique grants and programs, representing a grant portfolio of approximately $22.5 billion.[[5]](#endnote-5) |
| Primary Responsibilities | * Serves as the principal advisor to the secretary of education on all matters related to pre-K, elementary and secondary education * Directs, coordinates and recommends policy for programs designed to help state and local education agencies close opportunity gaps and improve elementary and secondary school student achievement[[6]](#endnote-6) * Serves as the department’s primary liaison to coordinate with key pre-K, elementary and secondary education stakeholders * Serves as the chief executive and leader of a team, comprised of dedicated career and politically appointed bureaucrats, that supports and accomplishes the department’s strategic plans and goals, policy aims, operational priorities and legislative and regulatory mandates on behalf of the nation’s students |
| Strategic Goals and Priorities | [Depends on the policy priorities of the administration] |
| **REQUIREMENTS AND COMPETENCIES** | |
| Requirements | * Experience working in pre-K, elementary or secondary education at the local, state or federal level (preferred) * Experience developing and implementing policy with high-stakes consequences, and ability to analyze the positive and negative effects of current policy, or absence of policy, in order to recommend alternative resolutions (preferred) * Experience working and interacting with state-level departments of education (a plus) * Knowledge and understanding of grant management (a plus) * Supervisory experience required, but management or executive leadership experience preferred * Experience developing stakeholders, delivering technical assistance or enhancing the customer experience (a plus) * Experience setting strategic direction and developing meaningful ways to measure outcomes using goals, targets, metrics and other leading indicators of progress or success |
| Competencies | * Effective executive leader with proven results and the ability to oversee multiple programs, set priorities, meet deadlines, monitor budgets, assess organizational infrastructure needs and capacity, create or develop operational plans and lead and develop employees * Strong communication skills used to collaborate, share information, delegate and ensure accountability * Ability to integrate key organizational and program goals, priorities and values into team projects and initiatives * Ability to assess and adapt to changing situations and implement innovative solutions that drive organizational improvements, ranging from incremental changes to major shifts in direction or approach * Ability to create a work environment that encourages creative thinking, collaboration, transparency and accountability, while maintaining program focus even under adversity * Ability to create a diverse and inclusive workplace that bolsters productivity; fosters the development of employees to their full potential; allows for full participation by all employees; facilitates collaboration, cooperation and teamwork; and supports constructive resolution of conflicts * Ability to cultivate strong relationships with diverse stakeholders, develop win-win strategies when possible and negotiate acceptable alternatives to reduce negative outcomes * Ability to understand, embrace and use data to inform and improve decision-making, while making timely, decisive and appropriate policy or operational adjustments as needed |
| **PAST APPOINTEES** | |
| Ann Whalen (2015 to 2017) (delegated to perform duties and functions of position) - Director of Policy, Education Post; Director of the Implementation and Support Unit, Department of Education; Special Assistant to Secretary of Education, Department of Education[[7]](#endnote-7) | |
| Deborah S. Delisle (2012 to 2015) - Senior Fellow, International Center for Leadership in Education; State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Ohio[[8]](#endnote-8); Superintendent,  Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District[[9]](#endnote-9) | |
| Thelma Melendez (2009 to 2011) – Superintendent, Pomona Unified School District; Director, Los Angeles Annenberg Metropolitan Project[[10]](#endnote-10) | |

1. Plum book [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Partnership for Public Service position description [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oese/index.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2017 (Public Law 115-31, May 5, 2017), contains a provision that continues the freeze on the payable pay rates for certain senior political officials at 2013 levels during calendar year 2017. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/budget16/16action.pdf> (pg. 1)

   OESE FY 2016 Performance Plan [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. <https://www2.ed.gov/news/staff/bios/delisle.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. <http://educationpost.org/network/ann-whalen/> [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. <http://www2.ed.gov/news/staff/bios/delisle.html> [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/deborah-delisle-21307589> [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. <https://www.linkedin.com/in/thelma-melendez-5b762515> [↑](#endnote-ref-10)