



Dr. John B. King

CEO of the of The Education Trust,
Former Secretary of Education under
President Barack Obama

Dr. John B. King, Jr. was the Secretary of Education under President Barack Obama starting in January 2016. In tapping him to lead the U.S. Department of Education, President Obama called Dr. King “an exceptionally talented educator,” citing his commitment to “preparing every child for success” and his lifelong dedication to education as a teacher, principal, and leader of schools and school systems. As secretary, Dr. King brought a continued commitment to advancing excellence and equity for every student, supported educators and elevating the teaching profession, and improved college affordability and completion rates.

Before becoming secretary, Dr. King served since January 2015 at the Department as principal senior advisor. In that role, he carried out the duties of the deputy secretary, overseeing all preschool-through-12th-grade education policies, programs, and strategic initiatives, as well as the operations of the Department. Dr. King carried out this work with a focus on increasing equity, improving educational outcomes for all students, and closing achievement gaps through implementation of key administration priorities in areas including early learning, elementary and secondary education, special education, English language acquisition, and innovation.

In performing the duties of the deputy secretary, Dr. King also oversaw the Department’s work leading cross-agency collaboration for President Obama’s My Brother’s Keeper task force, which seeks to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color, and to ensure that all young people are able to reach their full potential.

Prior to his arrival at the Department, Dr. King served since 2011 as the commissioner of education for the state of New York. In that role, he served as chief executive officer of the State Education Department and as president of the University of the State of New York, overseeing the state’s elementary and secondary schools (serving 3.1 million students), public, independent and proprietary colleges and universities, libraries, museums, and numerous other educational institutions. Dr. King was one of the nation’s youngest state education leaders at the time of his appointment and the first African-American and Puerto Rican to serve as New York State education commissioner.

As commissioner of education, Dr. King worked with the Board of Regents to pursue an ambitious education improvement agenda. During his tenure, New York State was a national leader in many facets of education: investing in high-quality early learning; raising standards for teaching and learning; supporting teachers and school leaders through strong professional development, access to rich instructional resources, and innovative educator career ladder models; expanding career and technical education in high-demand fields; and increasing educational opportunity for students in the highest-need communities. Under Dr. King’s leadership, New York deepened collaboration between the state’s preschool-through-12th-grade (P-12) schools and its institutions of higher education, including strengthening teacher and principal preparation, and raising the bar for teacher and principal certification.