

San Diego superintendent appointed to deputy education secretary post



LOUIS FREEDBERG

JANUARY 19, 2021

On the campaign trail, Joe Biden promised [to select a teacher](#) to be his secretary of education. Just before Christmas, in a surprise choice, he named Connecticut Commissioner of Education [Miguel Cardona](#) to the post. Cardona has been a teacher — albeit for only about five years before becoming a principal and district administrator.

Biden has now doubled down on his pro-teacher stance by nominating San Diego Unified Superintendent Cindy Marten to be deputy secretary of education, the number two position in the U.S. Department of Education.

With Cardona, Marten will play a pivotal role in advocating for and implementing President-elect Biden's expansive education agenda, including getting funds to states, so they can open the majority of their elementary schools within 100 days of his taking office.

With the Senate soon to be controlled by Democrats, principal elements of Biden's agenda now have far more of a chance of actually being implemented.

She will also have major responsibilities in managing the entire department, and to fill in for Cardona as acting secretary when needed.

Marten has been superintendent of San Diego Unified since 2013. But before that she had been a teacher for 17 years, as well as principal of San Diego's Central Elementary School, a school in the diverse City Heights neighborhood where 96% of students qualify for free and reduced-priced meals.

It was after several years at Central Elementary that she made the virtually unheard of jump from an elementary school principal to being superintendent

of her district — not just any district, but the second-largest district in California and the 20th-largest in the nation.

“What you get with Cindy is a teacher first,” said Thomas Courtney, a fifth-grade teacher at Chollas-Mead Elementary School in San Diego. Courtney observed Marten in workshops and meetings during her years as a teacher. As superintendent, he said, “she has clearly kept teaching to more than a test at the forefront of her agenda.”

In a tweet on Monday she wrote, “I am honored to serve alongside @teachcardona to restore our education system — putting teachers, students and parents first. Work Hard. Be Kind. Dream Big. Let’s do this!”

Marten [tweeted](#) on Monday morning.

While Cardona spent almost all his professional career in the Meriden Public Schools, a district with about 9,000 students, Marten will bring the experience of teaching in, and heading, a large urban school district.