



**Chief Executive Officer
Democrats for Education Reform**

THE SEARCH

Democrats for Education Reform (DFER), a national political organization, seeks a dynamic, passionate, politically savvy, and strategic leader to serve as the next Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of DFER and its partner/affiliate entities. This is a rare, exciting, and significant opportunity to lead an established, nationally impactful organization committed to advocating for policies that will ensure equitable access to education and student success during a time of tremendous opportunity for education reform.

DFER's mission is to cultivate and support progressive leaders who champion America's public school children and are committed to its vision for a public education system that empowers all students—particularly students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and other historically underserved students—to reach their limitless potential. To advance its mission of promoting educational equity, DFER works in tandem with Education Reform Now, a nonpartisan 501(c)(3) entity and national think tank organization, and Education Reform Now Advocacy, a 501(c)(4) advocacy and influencing organization.

The successful CEO will tirelessly and effectively champion DFER's education reform policies, including its core values of school choice and accountability, and represent DFER's unique role in pushing for bold ideas within the Democratic party. To this end, the CEO will develop a strategic and ambitious road map for success that galvanizes DFER's board, state and national staff, and partners. Additionally, the CEO will grow DFER's visibility by increasing the number of progressive education reform champions at the federal, state, and local level and through increasing media engagement. The CEO will bring together and leverage DFER's many mission-critical components, including state chapters, the Leaders of Color program, the nonprofit policy think tank, and the political advocacy arm, to achieve DFER's collective goals. The CEO will set and meet ambitious fundraising goals, including nonprofit and political fundraising from a variety of regional and national donors. In line with DFER's values, the CEO will model and create an organizational culture that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion, both within the organization and in their work, and foster an internal culture focused on best-in-class execution of the organization's most important priorities.

The successful candidate will have a deep understanding of and commitment to education reform policies and politics; an unwavering passion for the work and the stamina, drive, and political savvy to engage in the politics of education reform; a diplomatic and decisive leadership style; a track record of cultivating relationships with and raising funds from a variety of foundations and donors; the emotional intelligence

to lead in a supportive manner that builds trust with and motivates team members; demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion; exceptional communication and advocacy skills; experience managing and developing staff; and pre-existing relationships and partnerships in the education reform space.

DFER has retained Isaacson, Miller, a national executive search firm, to assist in the recruitment of the CEO. All inquiries, nominations, and applications should be directed in confidence, as noted at the end of this document.

THE ORGANIZATION

Democrats for Education Reform was founded in 2007 by a group of activists and social entrepreneurs to address the persistent and growing opportunity gap in America's public schools, as well as the social, cultural, and economic crises that education inequality perpetuates. In addition to its national office, DFER has a Leaders of Color program and eight state chapters: Colorado, Connecticut, Louisiana, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Texas, and Washington, DC. DFER's Leader of Color program recruits, trains, and elevates a new generation of leaders to support educational equity and transformation in DFER's chapter states.

The organization's mission is to elect and support Democratic leaders committed to a vision for a public education system that empowers all students—particularly students of color, students from low-income backgrounds, and other historically underserved students—to reach their limitless potential. Additionally, DFER advocates for public school choice, school accountability, and innovation in the pursuit of strong education policy that leads to positive results for students. To do this, DFER builds a network of progressive champions, allies, and supporters across the policy, political, and advocacy arenas to expand what works and change what is broken in the public education system, with the interests of students and families at the center.

Believing that optimizing educational outcomes requires an approach that integrates nonpartisan research and advocacy with political and electoral advocacy, DFER partners with a nonpartisan (c)(3) entity, Education Reform Now, and a (c)(4) political advocacy organization, Education Reform Now Advocacy, to advance its educational equity goals. More specifically:

Democrats for Education Reform (DFER) is a political action committee that endorses candidates who support education reform policies and provides financial contributions to candidates within defined limits.

Education Reform Now (ERN) is a 501(c)(3), is a non-profit, national action tank dedicated to developing policies and education reform at the state and federal levels. ERN's chapter states drive the work "on the ground," executing tailored strategies and channeling resources nimbly and effectively to build durable machines, achieving influence within the highest levels of state government. In each state, directors and staff design and implement successful fundraising efforts; craft and execute issue campaigns to support aligned initiatives; shape and sustain a diverse network of local allies and partners; connect broadly and

build effective advocacy coalitions; manage staff and consultants; and execute comprehensive communications plans. At the national level, ERN likewise uses communications, policy, media, and coalition strategies to build support for education reform at the federal level and to shape the national advocacy educational-equity landscape. ERN's Leaders of Color program recruits, trains, and elevates a new generation of civic leaders to advocate for educational equity.

Education Reform Now Advocacy (ERNA), a 501(c)(4), distributes information to voters and endorses candidates. ERNA lobbies national and state political leaders to support and champion policies, bills, or measures related to education reform and builds and sustains national and state-level progressive education reform coalitions to advocate for policy solutions. ERNA also runs independent expenditures that are not in coordination with candidates. Like ERN, ERNA performs its work primarily in several state chapters. The national organization seeks to shape the national political environment on education reform and support and amplify state-level activity. ERNA's Leaders of Color Program recruits, trains, and elevates a new generation of political leaders and policymakers to advance education reform.

Policy Focus

DFER is guided by the values of equalizing opportunity and empowering local communities, anchored in the needs and voices of the communities they serve. The policy work is centered around five key areas, with public school choice, accountability, and teacher quality as core priorities:

- **Public School Choice** – DFER believes every parent deserves the right to select from an array of free public school options—including traditional public schools, magnet schools, career academies, and public charter schools—to ensure equity in opportunity and transparency around results. DFER's focus is on ensuring all parents—particularly Black and Latino parents and low-income parents—can access a high-quality public school that meets their child's needs.
- **Data, Transparency, & Accountability** – DFER advances policies that will equip families, educators, and public officials with clear, objective, and comparable data to identify struggling schools; guardrails to hold schools accountable for closing opportunity gaps; and supports for continuous school improvement to provide students from historically disadvantaged groups with a high-quality public education. DFER also seeks to ensure that policymakers at all levels of government are held accountable for aligning policies with the best available evidence so that public funds truly serve their intended beneficiaries.
- **Teacher Quality & Preparation** – DFER supports policies that promote innovation and improvements in teacher preparation, reward excellent teachers who teach in high-needs schools and subjects, and diversify the teaching pipeline, so that no student is denied the opportunities unlocked by excellent educators.
- **Resource Equity** – DFER supports student-centric funding policies that grow resources for outcomes-oriented, effective initiatives, level it up for those currently disadvantaged, and

increase access to effective teachers and quality resources for those students historically denied, so that all students are finally given the tools for success.

- **Higher Ed Quality & Affordability** – DFER supports policies that: challenge state and college leaders to eliminate structurally racist and systemically inequitable admission policies, such as legacy preference and binding early decision; drive down the cost of earning a postsecondary credential and that reduce or eliminate student loan burdens; leverage data and student services to ensure that all students are getting the holistic support they need to graduate on-time and hold institutions of higher education accountable for a failure to increase success in college; and expand pathways between K-12 public education and career/workforce development programs to ensure students have access to high-quality dual enrollment coursework and that credits earned in high school transfer to all public institutions.

KEY OBJECTIVES FOR THE INCOMING CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

The next CEO of DFER will step into the role at a time of high potential and ever-increasing impact for the organization. Central to DFER's mission achievement is moving towards a broader approach in which the organization's strategic plans are not only to win individual elections but to shift the underlying political ecosystem to better align with the policy agenda. DFER is currently working to strengthen its reach at the local, state, and federal levels. The CEO will champion this agenda and promote the work being done in states and on the national level to create policies that support all students.

With an operating budget of over \$15 million and a staff of 45, the CEO will lead a strong organization and build upon its internal and external success. The CEO will be a strategic, visionary, and inspiring leader; enthusiastic fundraiser; proven and inclusive manager; relationship builder; politically astute; and an unabashed champion of education reform policies to enable all students to reach their limitless potential.

More specifically, the next CEO will address the following objectives:

- Tirelessly and effectively champion DFER's education reform policies, including public school choice and accountability. In collaboration with board, staff, and other key partners, the CEO will develop an ambitious strategic plan for the organization's future that galvanizes the entire team and the education reform community and utilizes state-based and national strategies to deliver policy success and political wins.
- Grow DFER's visibility by increasing the number of education reform champions within the Democratic party, increasing engagement with state and federal (Capitol Hill and Administration) policymakers, and increasing national media hits.

- Lead a large and complex organization, a diverse set of state chapters, and the Leaders of Color program, and build a unifying, integrative strategy and culture wherein all parts of the organization are working in support of each other while meeting individual goals.
- Articulate clearly and persuasively DFER's work and value proposition, and set and meet ambitious annual C3 and C4 national and state-based fundraising goals. Fundraising should come from a variety of sources, reflecting the diversity of DFER's work, including foundation grants and political hard money, and from state, regional, and national donors.
- Enable and support an organizational culture that promotes diversity, equity, and inclusion internally and externally. While the organization's DEI efforts are ongoing and owned by staff, the CEO should model and commit to the organization's DEI principles and support a culture that embraces these principles at every level and practice.
- Foster an internal culture rooted in best-in-class execution of the organization's most critical priorities.

QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE

While no candidate will possess all the desired experiences, the ideal candidate for CEO will bring many of the following professional experiences and personal characteristics:

- A deep understanding of and commitment to policy reforms, including, but not limited to, public school choice and accountability, that will improve educational opportunities for all students, particularly students of color and low-income students
- A tough-minded, strong will to engage in the politics of education reform at the local, state, and federal level, and the political savvy needed to advocate for DFER's policies while also building and maintaining positive relationships within the Democratic party
- Results and impact-oriented mindset to deliver on outcomes for students
- A diplomatic, decisive, and engaged leadership style and the ability to build and delegate to a high-performance team
- A track record of cultivating relationships and raising funds from foundations and individual donors, ideally in a nonprofit or political advocacy setting
- Possess emotional intelligence and lead in a supportive style that inspires trust and motivates staff to work hard and well together with a clear sense of direction
- Demonstrated commitment to diversity using a personal approach that values all individuals and respects differences with regard to race, ethnicity, age, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and socio-economic circumstance
- Exceptional communication and advocacy skills, both orally and in writing

- Experience managing and developing staff, holding team members accountable, and providing feedback to support continued growth and improvement
- Pre-existing connections and partnerships in the education reform space

The salary for this role starts at \$400,000, dependent upon the candidate's experience and background.

TO APPLY

Screening of complete applications will begin immediately and continue until the completion of the search process. Inquiries, nominations, referrals, and CVs with cover letters should be sent electronically, in confidence, to:

Katie Rockman, Partner
Janette Martinez, Senior Associate
Isaacson, Miller
<http://www.imsearch.com/8817>

Democrats for Education Reform seeks individuals from all backgrounds to apply for this position. DFER continuously ensures that an equity lens and a specific focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion are present in each aspect of its work and embedded into its organizational fabric.