

# Elections 2022: State Superintendent Races

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## **Arizona**

**Rating:** Toss Up

**Candidates:** Tom Horne (R), Incumbent Kathy Hoffman (D)

- **Tom Horne** (R), the former Attorney General and former state superintendent, [has centered](#) his campaign platform around opposing critical race theory, ending cancel culture, and promoting “patriotism, quality education, and real learning.”
  - Horne promises to keep students in school and motivated, and to persuade the legislature to reinstate passing a standardized test as a high school graduation requirement.
  - He advocates for ending “ethnic studies” and bilingual education, and opposes identity politics.
  - Additionally, Horne pledges to reinstate state takeover of failing schools and restore state university scholarships for high-achieving students.
  
- Incumbent **Kathy Hoffman** (D) [names](#) recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers as one of Arizona schooling’s most significant issues.
  - Hoffman’s proposals for educators and staff include recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers, adding extra supports for teachers and staff, and providing paid parental leave for educators.
  - For K-12 students, Hoffman supports creating “welcoming, diverse, and inclusive schools,” reducing classroom sizes, preparing children for success by providing schools with reliable financial resources, bridging the digital divide, and expanding career and technical education. She also advocates for universal pre-K and full day kindergarten.

## California

**Rating:** Likely Democrat (Note: Candidate's personal partisanship is noted, but the CA state superintendent election is non-partisan)

**Candidates:** Incumbent Tony Thurmond (D), Lance Christensen (R)

- **Tony Thurmond** (D), the incumbent state superintendent, [lists](#) student mental health as a top priority, proposing measures such as identifying and training 10,000 new mental health professionals to support student mental health.
  - To combat learning loss and gaps, Thurmond pledges to expand after-school tutoring and enrichment programs and lead professional development for educators focused on closing the opportunity gap and addressing implicit bias in schools.
  - Thurmond's goal of ensuring all students learn to read by third grade by 2026 involves increased funding for reading coaches and specialists and literacy intervention strategies, as well as establishing family-based literacy programs and providing books to students and families in need.
  - Additionally, Thurmond proposes providing students with the opportunity to learn a second language, helping students in career preparation pathways to secure paid internships, and expanding opportunities for students to learn computer science, STEAM education, civics, and environmental literacy.
  - Thurmond also advocates for free universal pre-k for four-year-olds, universal meals, and additional billions in wraparound supports for students.
  
- **Lance Christensen** (R), who is currently the Vice President of Education Policy and Government Relations at the California Policy Center, [states](#) that his priorities are to empower parents, increase educational opportunities, and fund students, not systems.
  - Christensen [promises](#) to suspend any curriculum frameworks currently being reviewed and re-open them to the public and to parents for review and comment, and reclassify an existing executive advisor within the superintendent's office as a "Chief Parent Advocate" to act as principal liaison with parents.
  - He also proposes directing staff to audit the California Department of Education and reallocating or eliminating any positions or programs not explicitly authorized in statute or the 2022-23 budget; holding a town hall with school board trustees and district superintendents to explore areas in which the state superintendent could appropriately shift authority to local education officials under state law; and assembling a task force to recommend an overhaul of the state Education Code through a publicly-accessible, open platform.

## Georgia

**Rating:** Likely Republican

**Candidates:** Incumbent Richard Woods (R), Alisha Thomas Searcy (D)

- The platform of incumbent **Richard Woods (R)** [includes](#) addressing school safety by expanding mental health supports and student resource officer funding, providing line-item school safety funding, and securing facilities and coordinating best practices.
  - For teachers, Woods promises to expand salary step increases across careers for teachers, protect their retirement and healthcare benefits, and change teacher evaluation tools.
  - He supports establishing a new testing minimum and eliminating excessive local testing; developing multiple diploma pathways; and expanding opportunities for students, including access to the arts, STEM/STEAM, and Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education.
  - Additionally, Woods has pledged to redo school accountability ratings, providing detailed public dashboards in their stead, and to modernize the K-12 funding formula.
- **Alisha Thomas Searcy (D)**, a former state legislator and superintendent of schools at Ivy Preparatory Academies, drew national attention after her support of school choice led the Georgia Association of Educators to endorse her Republican opponent over her. Her educational [priorities](#), however, are much broader than that topic.
  - Searcy promises to address school safety and mental health issues by holding School Safety Roundtables, providing support and guidance from the Department of Education, and evaluating and analyzing the effectiveness of solutions.
  - To address teacher retention issues, Searcy pledges to create an “Office of the Teacher Advocate” to focus on addressing teacher burnout; raise the starting salary for teachers; ensure districts are not over-testing; work with the legislature to enshrine into law uninterrupted planning time for teachers during the day, time off for teachers with children to attend school-related activities for their own children, and offer mental health days for teachers; campaign to restore respect and admiration for educators; create statewide celebrations and an award system for teachers; serve as a champion for teachers in the legislative process and rule-making process at the state board level; and institute a training program to teach principals best practices for leading and managing schools.
  - Searcy also advocates for reimagining public education, including helping student access high-quality teachers and courses using technology; providing apprentice and pre-apprenticeship programs; adopting relevant curriculum that reflects Georgia’s diversity; embracing smaller and different types of schools such as magnet, dual immersion, Montessori, public charter, performing arts, and single gender; and offering Innovation Grants for schools and districts to foster new ideas for school and program redesign.
  - Searcy’s additional priorities include supporting student mental health, addressing challenges in special education, improving rural access to broadband, revamping the school funding formula, implementing research-based practices in reading instruction, creating an Office of Equity, expanding access to Georgia pre-K, and partnering with the faith and business communities to help in fostering relationships across the state with individual districts and schools.

## Idaho

**Rating:** Likely Republican

**Candidates:** Debbie Critchfield (R), Terry Gilbert (D)

- **Debbie Critchfield** (R), a former president of the Idaho State Board of Education, [is campaigning](#) on empowering parents, strengthening local control, and preparing students for the state's workforce needs.
  - Critchfield's vision for K-12 students includes creating pathways for college and career opportunities, creating work-based experiences for high school juniors and seniors, requiring a personal management class for high school graduation, opposing Critical Race Theory in public schools, focusing on foundational literacy and math skills, and supporting learning and parental resources for behavioral health needs.
  - She proposes engaging parents in decisions about their children's education, advancing state funding and policies for school choice, and strengthening decision-making at the most local level.
  - Critchfield also promises to effectively use school funding and to support professional educators with mentoring, professional learning communities, professional development, and opportunities for professional growth.
  
- Former teacher **Terry Gilbert's** (D) [priorities](#) are to increase and protect public education funding and oppose vouchers, support professional vocation paths for high school students, and incubate new technologies through higher education by investing in research and development.
  - Gilbert also pledges to treat teachers and staff as expert professionals, invest in safe school infrastructure, increase graduation rates, and invest in quality early childhood education.

## Oklahoma

**Rating:** Lean Democrat

**Candidates:** Jena Nelson (D), Ryan Walters (R)

- **Jena Nelson** (D) is the 2020 Oklahoma Teacher of the Year and a middle school teacher in Oklahoma City Public Schools. Nelson's [platform](#) is focused on teacher retention, supporting rural schools, and student mental health.
  - Nelson pledges to keep public dollars in public schools and to ensure every rural school and community has access to broadband internet.
  - She proposes combatting teacher flight by increasing teacher pay and reducing mandates to educators.
  - When it comes to student mental health, Nelson promises to ensure all schools have a counselor with mental health training.
  
- **Ryan Walters** (R), the Oklahoma Secretary of Public Education and executive director of Every Kid Counts Oklahoma, [has pledged](#) to advocate for the removal of Critical Race Theory from any curriculum that comes from the State Board of Education; utilize all resources to keep students in the classroom; and boost teacher pay and enable quality teachers to stay in the classroom and train other teachers.
  - Walters' platform also includes broader issues: he states he is pro-life and opposes taxpayer funds going to organizations like Planned Parenthood; says he is a staunch supporter of the 2nd amendment; supports legal immigration and building a border wall, and opposes sanctuary cities; and calls for lowering taxes, cutting regulations on businesses, and encouraging businesses to produce on American soil.

## **South Carolina**

**Rating:** Likely R

**Candidates:** Ellen Weaver (R), Lisa Ellis (D)

- **Ellen Weaver** (R), founding president and CEO of the Palmetto Promise Institute, [cites](#) flexibility, responsibility, and fairness as the principles at the core of her education platform.
  - When it comes to students, Weaver promises to focus on literacy – including phonics and knowledge-building – and math skills; increase education options for students through measures including school choice scholarships, public charter schools, expanding public school open enrollment, and high-quality online course programs; and advocate for children with special needs.
  - For parents, Weaver pledges to defend their right to direct their child’s education; eliminate ideologies like Critical Race Theory from classrooms and professional development; provide transparency for all materials and resources used with students; and reject Covid mask and vaccine mandates in schools.
  - Weaver’s platform for educators involves raising pay and reforming the pay scale for teachers; developing and supporting high quality school leaders; and providing useful, high-caliber professional development.
  - Her workforce plan includes expanding existing apprenticeship programs, Career and Technical Education, and other real-world learning experiences; forging partnerships between schools and local faith communities and non-profits to create mentors and tutors; and insisting on total academic and financial transparency.
  
- **Lisa Ellis** (D), a career educator and founder of SC for ED, is [campaigning](#) on teacher recruitment and retention, student mental health and meeting the needs of all students.
  - Ellis promises to improve educational outcomes by updating the school funding formula, eliminating state tests not required by federal law, and hiring more mental health professionals, school nurses, and other staff members. She also advocates for raising salaries for teachers and other essential staff, reducing the paperwork that teachers must do, and encouraging teacher contract reform.
  - Notably, Ellis has proposed strengthening the partnership between parents and guardians and schools by directing districts to make existing procedures and policies easily accessible, encouraging districts to adopt board meeting procedures and practices that invite constructive dialogue, and supporting revisions to the School Report Card that emphasize measures of student and school success other than test scores.
  - Ellis opposes Education Savings Accounts and vouchers and any redistribution of public school and educational funds to private schools or violation of the state constitution’s prohibition against state funding of private schools. Additionally, she opposes politically-motivated punishment or censorship in schools and supports providing students access to texts that reflect their diverse life experiences.
  - Ellis has also pledged to support school health and safety, prioritize student mental health, and provide extra support for special education teachers to help address burnout,

## Wyoming

**Rating:** Likely Republican

**Candidates:** Megan Degenfelder (R), Sergio Maldonado (D)

- **Megan Degenfelder** (R), the Chief Policy Officer at the Wyoming Department of Education under Superintendent Jillian Balow, [pledges](#) to empower parents as the primary decision maker in their children’s education; work with with local industries to ensure graduates are prepared for the Wyoming workplace; and fight back against “anti-American” curriculum & policies.
  - Degenfelder also advocates for school funding to be prioritized in the classroom, not central administration; promises to prioritize literacy rates for K-3 students; and says she will use her private sector experience to effectively run the state agency, and “do more with less.”
  
- **Sergio Maldonado** (D), a local school board member, [is campaigning](#) on depoliticizing the Wyoming Department of Education.
  - Maldonado’s [priorities](#) range from school safety – including securing school buildings, providing more police officers on site, and implementing and funding statewide standards for drills – to equitable funding to supporting educators.
  - Maldonado promises to support educators, advocate for public funds to remain at public schools, provide greater access to high-quality early childhood education, and honor local control and input, including involving parents and families in their children’s education.