



From: **Office of the Mayor**

**Daniel Williams**, Director of Media  
Relations Office of the Mayor  
(216) 664-4011

**Latoya Hunter**, Assistant Director of  
Media Relations, Social Media and Digital  
Integration  
Office of the Mayor  
(216) 664-4303

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
**October 7, 2019**

## **Mayor Jackson Swears-In Cleveland Municipal School District Board of Education Members**

**CLEVELAND** – On Monday, October 7, 2019, Mayor Frank G. Jackson reappointed four board members and one new member to the Cleveland Municipal School District (CMSD) Board of Education and administered the oath of office to Louise Dempsey, Sara Elaquad, Jasmine Fryer, Denise Link and Kathleen C. Valdez. The Board members will serve full terms ending June 30, 2023.

### **Louise Dempsey**

She has served on the Cleveland Board of Education since 1998, as one of the original members of the Mayoral appointed Board. Ms. Dempsey served as Vice Chair of the Cleveland Board from 2009 to 2017.

Louise Dempsey is the Senior Fellow for Education Policy and a retired Assistant Dean of Cleveland State University's Cleveland-Marshall College of Law. An attorney, Dempsey serves on the Board of Directors of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Foundation, and is a member of the American Bar Association's Standing Committee on Public Education. She is also an Emerita Trustee of Laurel School, her alma mater. She earned a Bachelor's Degree from McGill University and her Juris Doctorate from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law. Dempsey also holds a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Bioethics from CSU.

Louise lives in Bratenahl and is the proud mother of a Collinwood High School graduate.

### **Sara Elaquad**

Ms. Elaquad has served on the Board of Education since April 2019.

Sara Elaquad is Executive Director of Minds Matter Cleveland, a nonprofit working to close the higher education opportunity gap faced by low-income high school students through mentoring, test prep, and summer college programs. Ms. Elaquad has served on the board of the Cleveland Orchestra's Circle, and founded the Associate Board of the Refugee Response. She is a recipient of the YWCA Greater Cleveland Distinguished Young Woman Award, which recognizes those making a difference in Northeast Ohio through career accomplishments, community involvement, and commitment to YWCA's mission of eliminating racism and empowering women, and was named to the 2019 Crain's Cleveland Business 40 Under 40 Class. Ms. Elaquad is a graduate of Case Western Reserve University School of Law and received Bachelor's Degrees in International Relations and French from The Ohio State University. She lives in the Gordon Square neighborhood of Cleveland.

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### **Jasmine Fryer**

Ms. Fryer has served on the Board of Education since 2017.

Jasmine is the Senior Director of Strategic Growth at Building Excellent Schools (BES) where she helps drive the organization's growth, contributes to its strategic planning process, and builds partnerships with a focus on positioning BES for impact. Prior to joining BES, Ms. Fryer worked at Chiefs for Change as the Director of Membership and Future Chiefs. There, she led the organization's efforts to increase the number of state and district education leaders in its network and oversaw its aspiring system-level leader program. Previously, Ms. Fryer was an Education Specialist at the New York State Department of Education in the Office of Teacher and Leader Effectiveness. In addition, she served as a Policy Analyst at the Nellie Mae Education Foundation. She was a Fulbright Scholar and has worked, lived, and volunteered in Thailand, China, Morocco, Jordan, and Israel. Ms. Fryer began her career as a middle school teacher and Teach For America Corps Member in New York. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and Urban Practice and Policy from the University of Richmond, a Master's of Arts in Secondary Social Studies Education from Lehman College, and a Master's in Public Policy from the University of Chicago.

Ms. Fryer lives in the Buckeye-Shaker neighborhood of Cleveland.

### **Denise Link**

Ms. Link has served on the Board of Education since 2007 and served as Board Chair from 2009 until 2017.

Denise Link has worked at PNC Bank for over 30 years and serves as Vice President in Network Planning. Link holds a Bachelor's degree in Economics and Psychology from the University of Michigan and an M.B.A. from Case Western Reserve University's Weatherhead School of Management. Before joining the Board of Education, she served on the District's Bond Accountability Commission. In addition to her service as a CMSD board member, she volunteers at District preschools as part of PNC's Grow Up Great program, designed to help prepare underserved young children for success in school and life. She also serves as a mentor with True2U and College Now. Because of Link's commitment to urban education, she won the 2013 Richard R. Greene Award. Each year at its fall conference, the Council of the Great City Schools bestows the Green Award upon a superintendent or board of education member in recognition of exceptional contributions to urban schools and students.

Link lives in Ohio City with her husband and family.

### **Kathleen C. Valdez**

Kathleen is Managing Partner of K Legal LLC, a law firm she recently started. At K Legal, Valdez advocates for the needs of the parents and students with regards to school law and special education services. Valdez also helps the legal needs of small businesses in the community. A James F. Rhodes High School Alumna, Valdez holds a Bachelor's Degree in Spanish, Political Science and International Studies from Case Western Reserve University. Valdez obtained a Post-Baccalaureate teacher certification from the University of North Georgia. Valdez is a graduate of Cleveland-Marshall College of Law.

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Valdez began her career as a middle school Spanish teacher and Teach For America Corps Member in Atlanta, Georgia. She has continued her work in education through her role in the Esperanza Alumni Association, Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association's 3R's program (Rights Responsibilities and Realities) and Legal Aid pro bono work.

Ms. Valdez lives in the Clark-Fulton neighborhood with her husband and daughter who is a CMSD student.

You can view the board member's biographies [here](#), the link to ceremony photos [here](#) and the video of today's ceremony [here](#).

For a full list of the CMSD School Board members go to this [link](#).

### **About the City of Cleveland**

The City of Cleveland is committed to improving the quality of life for its residents by strengthening neighborhoods, delivering superior services, embracing diversity and making Cleveland a desirable, safe city in which to live, work, play, and do business. For more information on the City of Cleveland, visit online at [www.city.cleveland.oh.us](http://www.city.cleveland.oh.us), Twitter at [@cityofcleveland](https://twitter.com/cityofcleveland) or Facebook at [www.facebook.com/cityofcleveland](https://www.facebook.com/cityofcleveland).