Session Description:

This panel will feature social justice-oriented superintendents in the state of Texas who have led major initiatives focused on the procurement of equitable outcomes in their districts. Join us as we learn from district leaders who are uniquely situated to shape policies and practices in a way that better facilitates the procurement of equitable outcomes for the children, families, and communities they are called to serve.

Superintendent: Dr. Kelly Crook  
School District: Del Valle Independent School District

With a myriad of extensive experience in the public school environment and a product of public schools herself, Dr. Kelly Crook was named the first Female Superintendent of Del Valle ISD when she took office in December 2011. Her financial acumen and long-range planning expertise stems from her experience serving for six years as the Assistant Superintendent of Finance and Operations and Director of Accountability for Del Valle ISD. Dr. Crook’s background includes ESL classroom engagement in the Dallas ISD and Frisco ISD, service as middle school assistant principal in Leander ISD and program specialist at the Texas Education Agency. A native Austinite, she received her Ph.D. in Educational Administration from the Cooperative Superintendency Program at the University of Texas at Austin. A fearless champion for her staff and students, Dr. Crook presides over a diverse and achievement-oriented district that serves over 11,000 students on 16 campuses in southeast Travis County.
HD Chambers has devoted the past 30 years to public education in Texas. Prior to taking on the leadership role as Superintendent of Schools for Alief in the spring of 2011, Mr. Chambers served as Superintendent for Stafford Municipal School District. He has also taught in the Aldine Independent School District and served in various administrative roles in the Cypress-Fairbanks Independent School District.

HD has a genuine desire to create meaningful and useful opportunities for educators to prepare students for higher education, the workforce, or the armed services. He truly believes in the power and potential of public education and through relationship building and collaboration, he strives to contribute to the continuous improvement of education for all students and staff.

HD serves on many Boards as a member and an officer. He is the only superintendent to receive the Friends of Public Schools Ambassador of the Year in 2013-2014, 2014 Superintendent of the Year for Region 4, 2014 and the Region 4 Special Honoree Award for 2015. Region 4 serves a seven-county area composed of 50 school districts and 50 charter schools, representing more than 1.1 million students, 84,000 educators, and 1,600 campuses. He has also received the Children at Risk Voice for Children Award as well as the Rhosine Fleming Outstanding Counselor Advocate Award from the Texas School Counselor Association.

HD proudly obtained his bachelor’s degree from Lamar University, a master’s degree from Sam Houston State University, and his superintendent certification from Stephen F. Austin State University.
Superintendent: Dr. Esperanza Zendejas
School District: Brownsville Independent School District

Dr. Esperanza Zendejas officially began her second term as the Superintendent of the Rio Grande Valley’s largest school district, Brownsville ISD, on June 25, 2015 with unanimous approval from the Board of Trustees. Prior to her permanent appointment, she had served as the BISD Interim Superintendent for five months beginning on February 16, 2015.

Since arriving back in Brownsville, Dr. Zendejas has initiated open enrollment at all 38 BISD elementary schools and implemented an Extended Day Enrichment Program at several of those schools. She installed cost-saving measures, including the reduction of expenditures and positions through attrition, that enabled the School Board to award 3% raises for the 2015-16 school year to all teachers and classified employees. Dr. Zendejas was instrumental in passing a Tax Ratification Election with 84% voter approval which generates $5 to $6 million net per year for one time expenditures to improve, repair, and expand district facilities without increasing the current tax rate.

Most importantly, Zendejas has taken significant steps to improve the district’s image by making herself readily available and visible in the community. She has worked vigorously to establish and formalize partnerships with local, state and national organizations and businesses to support students. She has actively realigned employee responsibilities to improve campus services and district operations.

Previously, Esperanza Zendejas served as the Brownsville ISD Superintendent of Schools from 1992-1995. She left to assume leadership of the Indianapolis Public Schools in Indiana. She has over 35 years of experience at all levels of education having held positions as a teacher, counselor, principal, central office administrator, and superintendent in districts across the United States.

Dr. Zendejas holds a doctorate from Stanford University in Administration and Policy Analysis and a Master’s degree from the University of San Diego. She is the author of several books. She and her husband of 20 years, also an experienced educator, have three children, two daughters and a son, and six grandchildren. One daughter is a BISD elementary teacher and four of her grandchildren currently attend Brownsville ISD schools.