

Marshall Peter

Introduction of Assistant Secretary Alexa Posny, Featured Speaker

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MARSHALL PETER: Dr. Alexa Posny was confirmed as the Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services at the Department of Education by the U.S. Senate on October 5th, 2009. In this position, she plays a pivotal role in policy and management issues affecting special education and rehabilitative services. She directs, coordinates, and recommends policy for programs designed to assist state and local education agencies with improving the achievements of students with disabilities ages birth through 21, as well as adults transitioning from secondary school to higher education, employment, or both. Dr. Posny grew up in Two Rivers, Wisconsin, where her interest in education was sparked at an early age. As a child, she had a playmate who was diagnosed with Down's syndrome. When she found out that he didn't attend school, she discovered a flaw in special education. "I could never understand why he was never with us," she said. "He was more like us than unlike us." Later on at Washington High School in Two Rivers, where her father happened to be the principal, Dr. Posny experienced firsthand the benefits of having a teacher advocate for her needs as a student. In her blog, Dr. Posny recalls her 10th grade geometry teacher, Mr. Warren Otto, who realized within two weeks of the term that she needed a more challenging course, as demonstrated by her less than perfect behavior in class. She credits being placed in a more demanding geometry class with challenging her to achieve things she didn't know she could do. Dr. Posny earned her PhD in educational administration from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, where she also minored in special education. She earned a master's degree in behavioral disabilities from the University of Wisconsin at Madison, and her bachelor's degree in sociology and psychology from the University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point. Throughout her career, she has taught at the elementary, middle, and high school levels, and has served as an adjunct faculty member at the University of Kansas. Dr. Posny has held a variety of government posts related to education, including Kansas Deputy Education Commissioner, Kansas State Director of Special Education, and Director of Special Education for the Shawnee Mission School

District. From 2006 to 2007, Posny was Director of the Education Department's Office of Special Education Programs. She has said that her heart and soul are in Kansas, where her home is nestled behind a school, and that she thought about turning down the OSERS appointment. But her son, Alec, a civil engineer, told her she should take the leap and head back to Washington D.C. Fortunately, she took that advice. Alexa is smart, extremely hardworking, accomplished, and at her core passionately committed to the wellbeing of students with disabilities. Please join me in welcoming her.