



Michael C. Essien, [M.Ed.](#)
Compact Commissioner
MIC3 Oregon

Michael Essien is an educational leader with more than three decades of experience expanding opportunity and transforming public education. His commitment to ensuring every child has access to the resources and support needed to thrive is rooted in his upbringing in Los Angeles, where community leaders—including his mother, Tennie Avington—organized to bring hospitals, youth programs, and neighborhood solutions that embody what we now call integrated supports and restorative practices. These early experiences shaped his belief in “paying it forward” and guided his career in education.

Michael began his career as a mathematics and special education teacher in Oakland, where he also taught in UC Berkeley’s Mathematics, Engineering, and Science Achievement (MESA) program to expand college access for African American and Latino students. He later served as principal of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Academic Middle School in San Francisco, where he used the Community Schools strategy to build more than 50 agency partnerships, improve student outcomes, and create welcoming learning environments recognized at the national level.

Most recently, Michael served as Executive Director of Community Schools and Partnerships at the Alameda County Office of Education, leading the \$4.2 billion California Community Schools Partnership Program and helping shape statewide systems of support. His leadership has included testimony before Congress and regular collaboration with the California State Board of Education.

Now serving as an Assistant Superintendent in the Oregon Department of Education, Michael continues his lifelong commitment to removing barriers to opportunity and ensuring every student benefits from an inclusive, culturally responsive education system.

Michael was married to his college sweetheart, Maya Dixon, for 35 years. Together they raised two accomplished children, Dakare Dixon-Essien and Makenna Dixon-Essien, both of whom earned bachelor's degrees. Makenna is currently pursuing her medical degree. His family remains a source of inspiration and purpose in his ongoing commitment to public service and educational opportunity.