



North Carolina Department of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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Hearing: Generational Learning Loss: How Pandemic School Closures Hurt Students

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Good morning, Chairman Bean, Ranking Member Bonamici, and members of the Subcommittee on Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education. I'd also like to extend a special hello and thank you to Chairwoman Foxx, who has faithfully represented the 5thth district in our great home state of North Carolina.

My name is Catherine Truitt, and I have the distinct honor of serving as North Carolina's State Superintendent, where I lead the Department of Public Instruction which serves nearly 1.6 million students.

I appreciate the opportunity to join you today, as the topic of lost instructional time is one that defined my vision for leading North Carolina out of the pandemic and helped to establish our road to recovery.

Even before I took office in January 2021, state chiefs around the country, who were already managing an unprecedented influx of federal funding from the CRSSA, heard about the massive spending proposals coming to states, the American Rescue Plan—what would be known as ESSER III from the then-incoming President's Administration. Knowing of this influx of federal funds about to flow into our state, and recognizing, as a parent of three children, how detrimental school closures were for our students, I immediately launched the Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration in February 2021. This Office remains one of the first, if not the only, of its kind. When the massive influx of federal funding did come pouring into North Carolina, we were as prepared as we could be. My Agency was able to provide local education leaders with an office dedicated to recovery and rooted in research and data. This was vital because many of our 115 school districts and more than 200 charter schools did not have the central office support or bandwidth to take on the massive exercise in planning and compliance that would be required with ESSER III.

This Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration began their work right away, producing a [comprehensive report](#) detailing the impact of learning loss on every student with a score on a tested subject in the state of North Carolina. As this analysis was based on student-level data instead of aggregate samples of students, it was one of the most comprehensive reports in the nation.

The findings in this report allowed our agency to better target resources and prioritize funding for those students most affected and for areas of the state most in need. Importantly, it allowed us to continue developing and supporting district-run interventions to accelerate student learning. Following the release of the 2022 Lost Instructional Time Report, our agency recognized a need to convene school districts to help them explore how to effectively leverage their ESSER funding. We organized a four-day summer convening in July of 2022 where leaders could gather and examine their funding alongside experts using new and relevant data to help create evidence-based



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interventions to better serve students. During this convening, staff ensured that each district and charter school walked away with a plan for the next year outlining how their ESSER funding could support data-driven strategies for transforming teaching and learning in their districts and schools. I'm proud to say that 2022 summer convening went so well that we just held our second annual convening two weeks ago with 102 traditional districts and charter schools participating.

With the 2022 Lost Instructional Time Report used as a benchmark to monitor progress and ensure North Carolina's students continued to accelerate, our agency produced [a second report](#) in April of this year. This 2023 report detailed the significant strides students made in the 2021-22 school year, and it specifically highlighted that the strongest gains were made in middle school math, which is where we encouraged districts to invest heavily based on data from the first report.

While our state has more to do, North Carolina was unique and intentional in its approach to - recovery and acceleration. During my time in office, we have been transparent, data-driven, and research-based every step of the way. We remain committed to working alongside our school districts – providing them with access to tools, data, and one-on-one sessions so they can make informed decisions about how to best serve their students. Our schools and districts have made incredible strides in helping so many of our students get back on track to their pre-pandemic performance, and while there is more to be done, we are on the path to recovery.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here, and I look forward to answering your questions.