

PA-PAC Questionnaire for NC Superintendent of Public Instruction

When answering this questionnaire, please work from this document or repeat the questions in your response document with their numbers as they are organized here. Type your responses a different font to distinguish your responses from the questions. Thank you for your participation!

Please return completed form along with your resume describing education, work history, community service and prior political experience AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, but by **December 27, 2019 at the latest. Please respect the word limits for each question.**

Email responses to page.mc@frontier.com and tom-miller1@nc.rr.com

Please note that following above deadline, the Durham People's Alliance PAC may publish your responses to this questionnaire and your resume.

Thank you for completing this questionnaire and your willingness to serve the people of North Carolina.

Candidate Name: Catherine Truitt

Address: PO Box 99024 Raleigh, NC 27624

E-mail address: catherine@catherinetrutt.com

Phone: 919-345-4199

State Superintendent:

1. What experience do you bring to this office that make you the best candidate for the job? (250 word limit)

I have experienced our public schools from every possible perspective: teacher, parent, policy maker, volunteer, higher education liaison, and workforce development expert. These experiences have provided me with unique insights into what is working for our students and educators and **what is not**. My work experience has taught me that honest conversations with education advocates centered around data rather than partisan politics is key to facilitating change; that a highly qualified teacher in every classroom and highly competent leaders who support teachers in every building are the most important reforms we can accomplish for students; and that third grade is too late to begin remediating students who are not proficient readers. My relationships within the ECE

community, the State Board of Education, NC DPI, the legislature, district superintendents, community college presidents, and college of education deans will help me foster a collaborative education community that will always ask, "**is this what's best what students?**"

2. List your top three priorities and, beside each, the first two steps you would take to get your priorities enacted. 200 word limit
 1. Work with the legislature to enact the best policy recommendations made by the West Ed and the Leandro findings, including changing our funding formulas to allow for equity of resources.
 - Create a task force of individuals who understand our current funding formula with the goal of making recommendations that will compensate for inequities to present to the legislature.
 - Mobilize the State Board of Education, School Boards Association, and Superintendents Association to advocate for these changes at the legislature.
 2. Retool and revamp efforts to ensure our students are proficient readers PRIOR to 3rd grade, including supporting efforts to ensure colleges of education are using research-backed methods of early literacy instruction with pre-service teachers.
 - Support and advocate for the work of the newly established Guiding Collaborative Framework for Action on Early Reading (a bipartisan effort from DPI, the State Board of Education, and outside literacy experts), which is modeled after Mississippi's successful endeavor to increase fourth grade reading scores.
 - Support and advocate for SB 438, which modifies Read to Achieve legislation with evidence-backed research and mandates professional development for teachers provided by the NC Center for the Advancement of Teaching, the expansion of Wolfpack Works literacy coaches, and the creation of a bipartisan task force to ensure colleges of education are using evidence-backed research with pre-service teachers.
 3. Grant local teachers, principals, and superintendents the flexibility they need to overcome the unique challenges their students face and to make the decisions they need to ensure their students succeed.

- Push the restart button on the relationship between district superintendents and the State Superintendent's Office by instituting an open-door policy and conducting a listening tour through NCASA's leadership.
- Publicly support the Restart Model of school improvement as a viable alternative to the Innovative School District model.

3. Will you fight for a moratorium on charters, for greater accountability and for avenues for charters to come under school board control? Why or why not? (200 word limit)

The growth of charter schools was a key part of President Obama's overall school reform program and the rapid growth of charter schools in North Carolina owes much to our participation in his Race to the Top initiative. Positive reforms since this growth include the establishment of the Charter School Advisory Board, which reports to the State Board of Education; increased accountability of charter schools; lottery admissions that prevent cherry-picking high-performing students; and requirements that all charter schools must account for how they will provide meals and transportation to low income students. NC-specific data shows that charter school students from all subgroups except one (academically gifted students) outperform their traditional public school peers. Also, charter schools are often the only recourse low income parents have if their children attend local schools that aren't meeting their needs. I would advocate for increased accountability of charter schools and for more opportunity for charters to collaborate with traditional public schools to share best practices. However, where traditional public schools are succeeding, there is no need for new charter school to open.

4. Describe an experience as an elected official or a volunteer on a board where you took initiative to change a policy or service or initiate a new policy or service. Were you successful or not, and why. (200 word limit)

It came to light at a board meeting last year that turnover of nursing staff at our organization was costing us double in salary due to the high cost of contract nurses. Working with staff at TLC during a strategic planning session, we took steps to create a recruiting and retention strategy designed to eliminate turnover and save money. The first step was to meet with Wake Tech to discuss the creation of a pipeline of nurses. Our plan is in its early stages of execution and all signs point to a positive outcome.

5. Describe your experience as a supervisor: how many people were you supervising? How would you describe your "style" of supervision? (100 Word limit)

I prefer the term "leader" to supervisor because those who have the privilege to be "in charge" must do so from a place of gratitude and humility. A great leader prioritizes her team's professional growth and is not afraid to ask for help when needed. I have lead teams as small as six and as large as 200. Regardless of size, one thing is true: culture trumps strategy every time, and a positive workplace culture must begin with offering respect and building trust. **Only then can the work of consensus building begin.**

6. What is your plan for bolstering DPI services to low wealth, rural districts? (200 word limit)

The regional model of the District and School Support Division at DPI must continue to be built out with bipartisan support. Low wealth and rural districts need more support staffing--SROs, counselors, social workers, school nurses, and psychologists--in order to meet the needs of these areas' populations and allow teachers to get back to teaching. It is estimated that an investment of around \$650M is needed in order to bring public schools to the recommended ratio of support staff to students.

7. How can DPI assist districts that are attempting to reduce discriminatory outcomes in suspensions of children of color? (200 word limit)

The school-to-prison pipeline is all too real for many schools in our state. DPI should work with districts to collect in- and out-of-school suspension rates and this data should be shared with the public. Zero-tolerance policies should be replaced with inclusive social-emotional learning programs and we should continue to encourage all districts to utilize the multitiered system of support (MTSS). Finally, because there is a correlation between high levels of suspension rates and novice teachers, pre-service teachers or new teacher support programs should include restorative justice training.

8. What is your plan for bolstering the recruitment and retention of teachers of color? (200 word limit)

Data show that students of color benefit from having teachers of color both academically and non-academically. Data also show that teachers of color who do decide to become educators suffer from inadequate preparation, less mentoring, and high exit rates. In my current role, I am privy to research that proves more teachers of color enter the classroom via non-traditional routes

(such as for-profit online universities) due to a higher need for flexibility. This results in lower completion rates and higher student debt. Solutions include:

- a. "Grow your own" programs starting in early college high schools (I helped launch the Future Teachers NC initiative while at UNC GA)
- b. Partnerships with minority-serving institutions and HBCU's to bolster recruiting efforts
- c. Encourage schools to include teachers of color in the hiring process
- d. Support strong building leaders who value diverse voices
- e. Legislate loan forgiveness programs for people of color who teach in high needs areas

9. What is your current involvement in and personal work regarding using a race equity lens in making decisions? If you are or have been a school board member, please offer an example from board decision-making. If not, please offer an example from a personal or professional experience. (200 word limit)

Too often, racial equity is a stand-alone initiative in education, particularly when it comes to resources. A racial equity lens must be applied to all decisions made regarding education. This idea was not something I understood until I started consulting in high-poverty schools. When teachers see pockets of poverty in their classroom, they may not understand its impact on their students and their families. But working in a school that is 100% free and reduced lunch taught me why racial equity is necessary and the consequences of its absence. As North Carolina examines our school funding formula and other policies, education leaders must make changes that reflect an understanding of the power of inclusivity and equity.

10. Lightning round: For each item, answer yes or no and include one sentence explaining your answer.

Do you support:

a. Opportunity Scholarships (vouchers)? **Yes** No

Yes, but the appropriation should be capped and vouchers should go to low income families only.

b. The Innovative School District? Yes **No**

I do not support the ISD in its current form but do support SB 522 which had bipartisan support in conference committee and which has been allowed to become law by the Governor and is supported by the State Board of Education.

c. The two NC Virtual Charters? Yes No

I do not know enough about this issue to have an informed opinion but I do know the pilot for these schools has been extended and that there is grave concern about their financial accountability.

Personal Information

1. Please describe your educational background, noting any degrees and honors you have earned. (skip if included on resume)
2. Do you have children? If so, where do they, or did they, attend school?

I have three children—Susie is a senior at Panther Creek HS; Chorley is a freshman at Green Level HS; Charles is a 5th grader at Mills Park Elementary. I'm proud to say that my children attend Wake County Public Schools.

3. Please describe your adult employment history (skip if included on resume)
4. Please list civic engagement activities, including service on boards, volunteer activities, elected positions, etc. (Skip if included on resume)

I serve on two nonprofit boards:

- **TLC | Tammy Lynn Center.** Our mission is to “empower all individuals, regardless of ability, to live their fullest life.” We do this by offering: a) residential care for people of all ages with profound disabilities and complex medical care needs; b) respite care for families and caregivers of individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities; c) multiple education-related services such as early intervention assistance for children and NC PreK.
- **North Carolina Nurse-Family Partnership.** Our mission is to provide a support system for first-time, low income mothers. We do this by pairing pregnant mothers with registered nurses who empower these women to be the moms they want to be. Our nurses stay with their moms until baby turns two, thereby putting young families on a path to success. We currently serve families in 16 counties and endeavor to expand to serve more families throughout North Carolina.

These two boards represent help and advocacy **for the most vulnerable** of our citizens and it is a privilege to work with their leaders and volunteers.

