



PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF NORTH CAROLINA

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION | Catherine Truitt, *Superintendent of Public Instruction*

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Members of the General Assembly,

I hope you had a wonderful Christmas holiday with your families and friends this past weekend. I was able to take some time off last week to spend with my loved ones. However, during the week, I read a story that many of you have now read about an individual claiming he was fired from Governors School because he pushed back on Critical Race Theory. Like all of you, this story gave me great pause and concern. This was the first time I had ever heard about this situation because a) I very rarely get involved with HR matters as state superintendent, particularly for employees hired for limited periods of time; and b) the teacher in question had never reached out to me with a complaint.

I've taken a few days to gather some information and get all the facts straight. I first want to address the claims about wokeism at Governor's School and then I'll address the HR issue. Many, if not all, of the CRT claims made by this former temporary employee refer to the years 2013 through 2021. Over its 60 years of existence, Governors School is typically planned throughout the year starting as soon as the previous summer program ends. With planning being made well before I officially took office, I had my attention focused on the immediate problems at hand related to COVID, namely opening schools. It wasn't until Governors School was about to launch that it was brought to my attention the major deficiencies and lack of oversight was given to this program for years.

I quickly placed new leadership into the Governors School for the 2021 summer, but the big changes did not take place until the 2022 session. We now have major safeguards in place that protect the students and faculty from any woke/inappropriate materials finding their way into the curriculum. We also now have a process for hiring that creates very clear job descriptions and clear playbooks for instructors about what can be taught. These expectations require instructors' lessons to be approved, which didn't necessarily take place before.

This brings me now to the lawsuit that has received some national attention. What I find most remarkable about this situation is that I have been vehemently against the teaching of topics characterized by CRT in our classrooms. Why a person claiming to have been terminated because he took on these topics would not reach out directly to the elected conservative state superintendent who has also taken on this fight (and whose agency oversees Governor's School) is confusing. But it is clear to me now, after reading this former temporary employee's file, that his own truth is different from reality. It is very clear from the HR files, previously dismissed EEO case, multiple affidavits, and other pertinent information that this individual was dismissed from their temporary, time-limited position for their conduct, not their content, inside the classroom.

Since cleaning up the processes and structure of Governors School over this last year, I have made it clear with staff that we should welcome all types of thoughts and perspectives inside the

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sessions. We have instructors who sit in various places along the political spectrum, as it should be. Nobody would be let go from their position if they were genuinely providing a learning environment that was engaging and open. That is not what this former temporary employee did. Instead, as the facts will show, this person made students very uncomfortable, belittled them, used racial slurs, and even brought some students to tears, all without allowing for any discussion or open dialogue as required by NC DPI. That is not what we should expect of any person in authority, particularly someone teaching inside a classroom. I would hope that if another situation like this arose, the leadership and HR of Governors School would act as decisively as they did.

The NC Department of Public Instruction will be drafting an answer to the complaint, which will be filed in court at the appropriate time and will rebut all the allegations in the lawsuit. In the meantime, I invite any of you who are interested to come to NCDPI to read the files for yourself. As Members of the General Assembly, you have the authority under the law to review HR files and other relevant documents. Please email Tim Hoegemeyer, the Deputy General Counsel for NCDPI, if this is of interest to you: tim.hoegemeyer@dpi.nc.gov.

In closing, I want to assure you that the accusations of curriculum decisions prior to my administration have been addressed. It's not possible for me to verify what did or did not happen under a previous State Superintendent's watch, but wokeness and inappropriate materials for our students should never enter the classroom. Secondly, I respect the rule of law and the ability for people to address grievances through our court system. However, not every suit that is filed initially includes all the facts. Both the left and the right have used our judicial system to make political statements. I feel that this is one of those situations.

I am proud of the work that we have done at the NC Department of Public Instruction to clean up multiple divisions that lacked oversight by previous leadership. Such is the case with Governors School, a 60-year old tradition in North Carolina whose foundation we have strengthened so it can serve students well for another 60-plus years.

All the best,

Catherine Truitt
N.C. State Superintendent of Public Instruction

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'C. Truitt', with a long, wavy horizontal line extending to the right.