



Hurricanes Florence & Matthew

Impact on Schools





Background

In January of 2019, The Innovation Project implemented research in order to learn about storm impact in TIP districts that were declared disaster areas. These counties include those impacted by Hurricane Florence (Craven, Onslow, Wayne, Lenoir, Cumberland), and one impacted by Hurricane Matthew (Edgecombe). Former state superintendent Mike Ward conducted the inquiry.



General Impact

Florence and Matthew were devastating for the hardest hit districts and schools.

1. Descriptors: catastrophic, significant, incredible, major, extreme, disruptive, immense, devastating
2. Flooding, water damage, wind damage, loss of electricity and connectivity
3. Extensive damage to facilities
4. Damage in the surrounding communities



General Impact

Florence and Matthew were devastating for the hardest hit districts and schools.

- *Catastrophic!*
- *The instructional impact has been as great as the facilities impact, but the facilities damage has gotten the attention. We were out for 55 calendar days.*
- *Florence changed normal into a new version of normal.*



General Impact

Florence and Matthew were devastating...so much so, that the name is being retired.

Florence, Michael Retired As Hurricane Names

We won't have Florence and Michael to kick us around anymore. The now infamous hurricane names have been retired.

By Paul Scicchitano, Patch Staff | Mar 21, 2019 2:16 pm ET

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General Impact

And, according to the majority of those interviewed, more severe storms are likely to continue.

 The News & Observer added this to POLITICS



#HURRICANE FLORENCE

More big hurricanes are coming, and North Carolina needs to prepare, a new report says

newsobserver.com - By Lynn Bonner



Impact on People

The trauma experienced by students was deep in many places.

1. Significant number of students displaced. A number of these students are still not able to return home.
2. Those with the least, residing in the lowest elevations, often the most heavily impacted
3. Psychological trauma manifested in anxiety, stress, depression, emotional outbursts, and acting out



Impact on People

The trauma and loss experienced by students was deep in many places.

4. Rapid return of students to school essential to restoring a sense of normalcy
5. The participants likewise spoke of providing counseling, mental health, and social worker supports to students...and the need secure more of these services and to sustain these services.



Impact on People

The trauma and loss experienced by students was deep in many places.

- *It's not just the storm, It's the lingering effects of the storm. The effects are far reaching.*
- *It's hard when a family's entire life is on the curb. And once the debris is gone, the struggle continues.*
- *We may have schools open but lots of kids are simply in survival mode... When it rains, when the wind blows, the children get anxious. They ask whether it's going to flood again.*



Impact on People

The trauma and loss for many staff members was also devastating.

1. A number of staff members were displaced. A number of others experienced significant damage to their homes.
2. Powerful emotional toll of the storm
3. Increased absenteeism among staff members.
4. The importance of contact and updates in the days following the storm



Impact on People

The trauma and loss for many staff members was also devastating.

- *Many staff members were out of their homes completely. Everyone landed somewhere...some doubled up with family or friends. Many are still in temporary situations.*
- *Staff members are struggling with balancing personal problems while meeting the needs of their students.*
- *Many teachers have experienced bonified grief over not having access to **their** room, **their** filing cabinets, **their** materials and resources.*



Impact on Teaching and Learning

The impact of the storm on teaching and learning was profound.

Of all the issues mentioned in interviews, lost instructional time was a concern that was raised by every single participant.



Impact on Teaching and Learning

The impact of the storm on teaching and learning was profound.

Lost time:

1. Impact expressed in terms of number of days missed
2. Expressed as a restart of the school year
3. Expressed in terms of the potential impact on student learning, achievement, and accountability
4. Loss of time compounded by teacher absenteeism



Impact on Teaching and Learning

The impact of the storm on teaching and learning was profound.

Other impacts

5. Impact of the storm on professional development
6. Sidelining of recently adopted strategic aims, key initiatives, innovation and reform
7. Reorganization of calendars, instructional plans, streamlining content, adjusting pacing
8. Likelihood of drops in student performance



Impact on Teaching and Learning

The impact of the storm on teaching and learning was profound.

- *It was like starting school over again. All the things that were set in place at beginning, we had to go back and re-do. This compounds the lost time.*
- *We lost weeks of instruction, but we also lost professional development time for teachers.*
- *We re-opened, but it took another two weeks to get back in full instructional status.*



Impact on Teaching and Learning

The impact of the storm on teaching and learning was profound.

- *Teachers did a phenomenal job of re-pacing to make sure kids were not short-changed. They really thought about what it looks like to deliver this in less time. They streamlined, took out some activities and projects. But they still figured out ways to keep engagement high.*



Flexibility Needed

Participants identified, both in the survey and during interviews, policies for which revision and/or flexibility is needed.



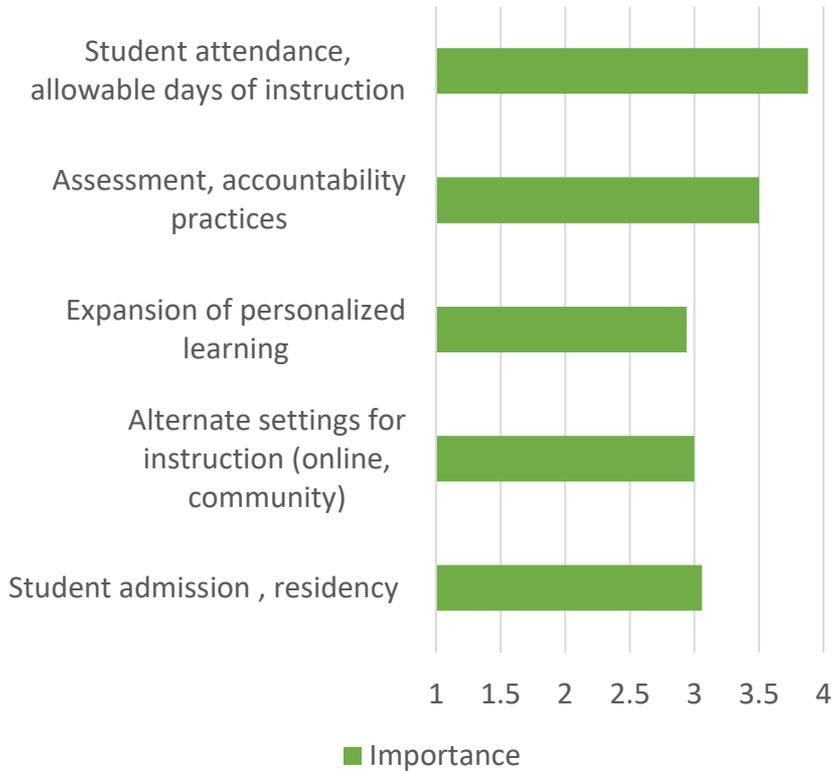
Flexibility Needed

1. Policies related to dimensions of teaching and learning, student enrollment/attendance were of significant concern:
 - a. Student attendance/allowable days of instruction. Rated highest among hardest hit LEAs
 - b. Calendar flexibility mentioned by 2/3 of interviewees
 - c. Student admission/residency policies were a concern
 - d. Consensus on going ahead with state testing...**and** on some type of relief relative to accountability
 - e. Alternative settings for instruction: community, online

TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY ISSUES

Importance

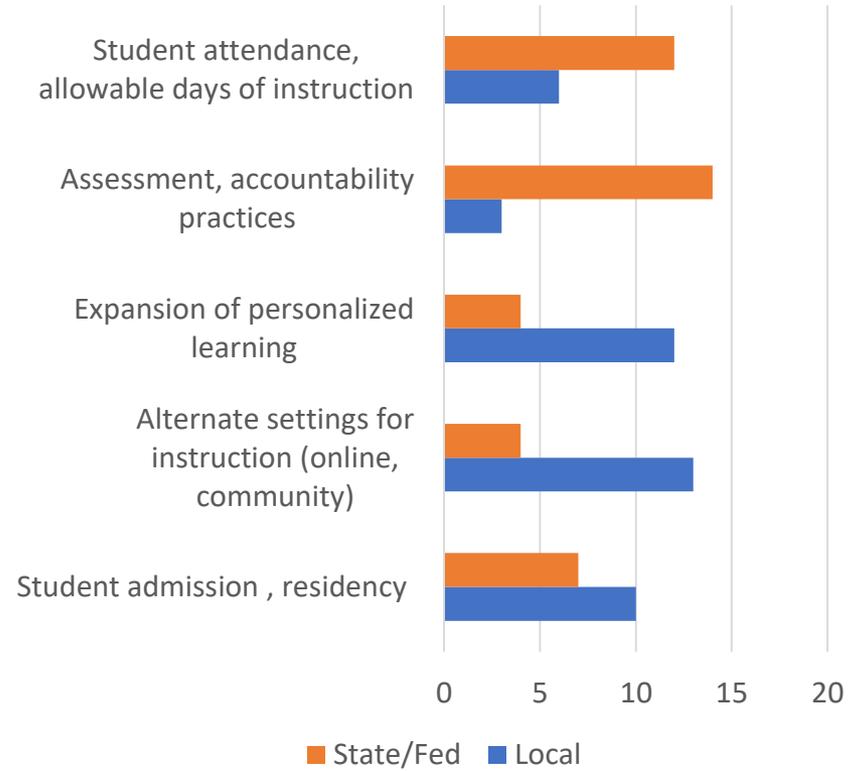
Mean Rating, Scale = 1-4



TEACHING AND LEARNING POLICY ISSUES

Jurisdiction

of Respondents





Flexibility Needed

- *It's unreasonable to hold a place accountable for a shortened school year. Especially when principal evaluations and jobs are on the line. Report scores and growth, but allow flexibility on the accountability side.*
- *We're trying not to worry about [accountability]. We decided that our kids need us in a different way. The scores will be what they'll be. Our students need support right now.*
- *Calendar flexibility is huge. Rigidity around testing windows and calendars is ludicrous.*

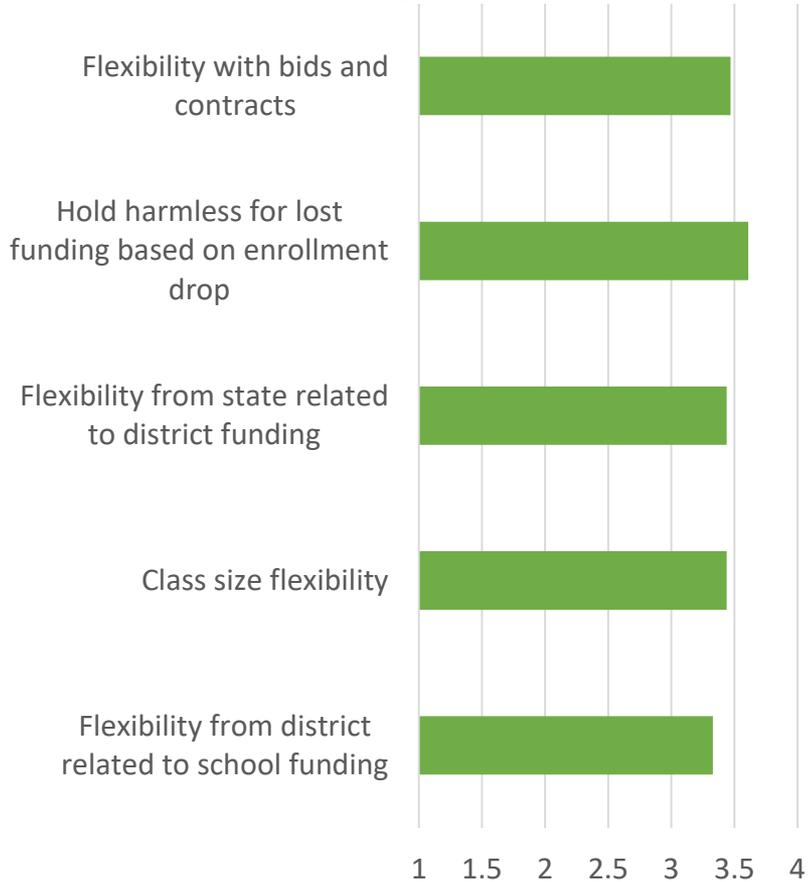


Flexibility Needed

2. Funding/budget issues were ranked high in importance, particularly in the hardest hit LEAs:
 - a. Flexibility in moving funds among line items
 - b. Hold-harmless provisions for allotments
 - c. Efficiency ratings for transportation; reimbursement of extra transportation costs
 - d. Bids and contracts

FUNDING/BUDGET POLICY ISSUES: *Importance*

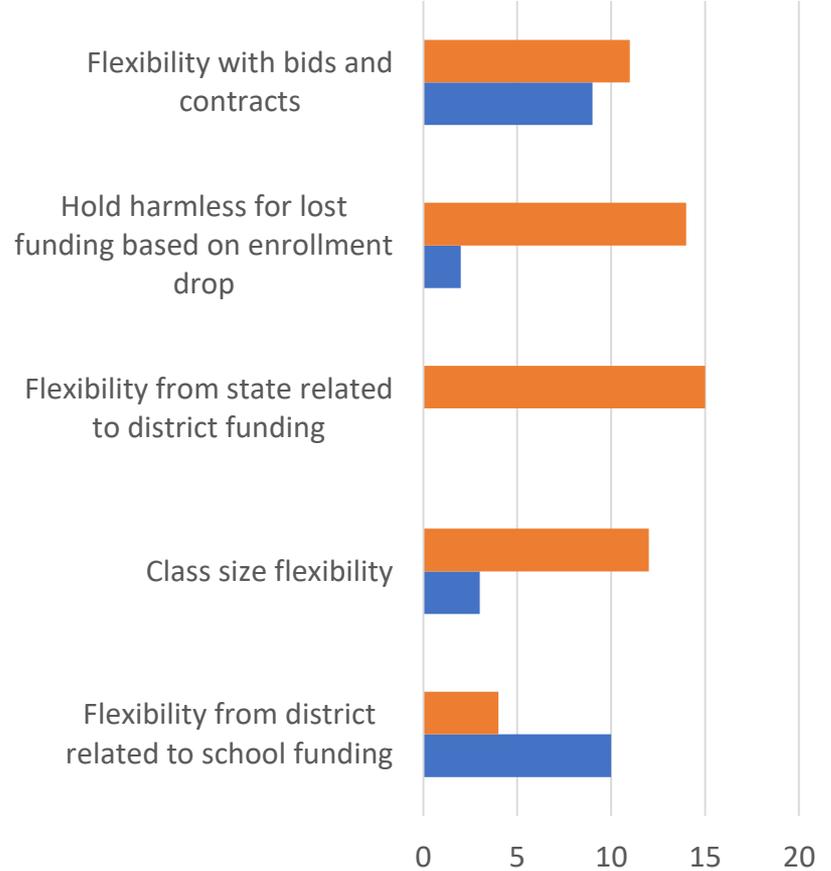
Mean Rating, Scale = 1-4



■ Importance

FUNDING/BUDGET POLICY ISSUES: *Jurisdiction*

of Respondents



■ State/Fed ■ Local



Flexibility Needed

- *Budget: Hold allotments harmless for one year. We lost enrollment in first year [following Hurricane Matthew]. Two years later, enrollment was back up.*
- *Procurement: Vendors focus on harder-hit facilities...and rightly so. But then we don't have enough to do competitive procurement. We don't have the luxury of 5 or 6 vendors who can come in and assess our stuff.*
- *Transportation: We're getting displaced students to their base schools. It costs a lot of money when there are large numbers of student. We need reimbursement for these costs.*



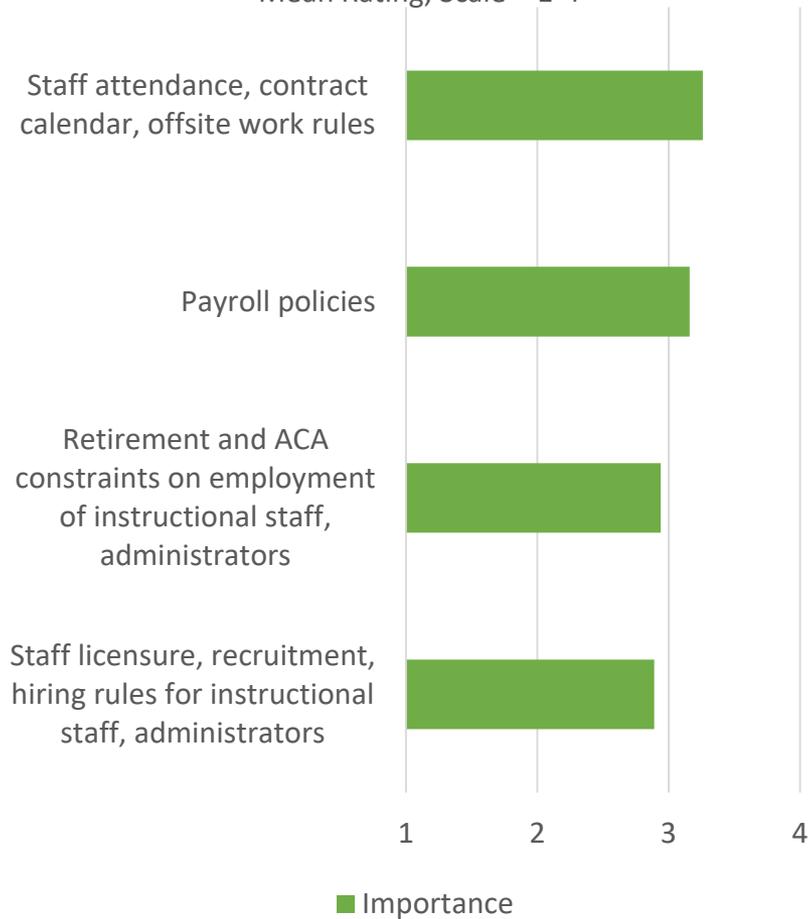
Flexibility Needed

3. Several human resources issues were ranked high in importance, particularly in hardest hit LEAs:
 - a. Staff licensure, recruitment, assignment
 - b. Work constraints based on retirement system, ACA regulations
 - c. Attendance, contract calendar, and offsite work rules
 - d. Payroll policies

HUMAN RESOURCE POLICY ISSUES

Importance

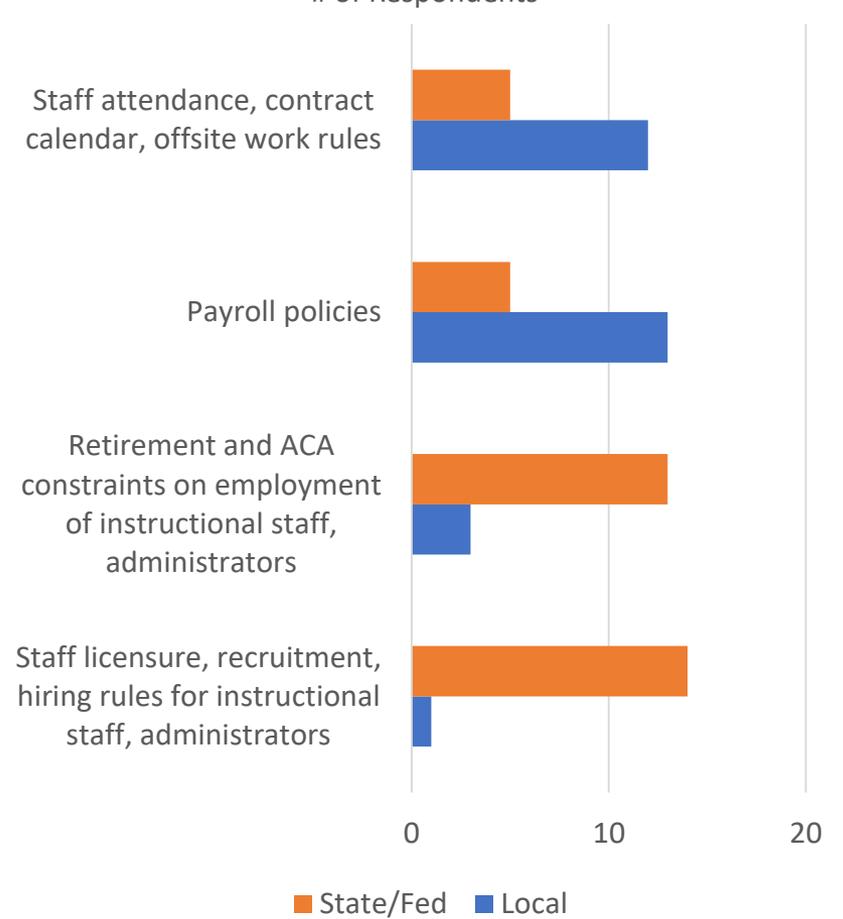
Mean Rating, Scale = 1-4



HUMAN RESOURCE POLICY ISSUES

Jurisdiction

of Respondents





Flexibility Needed

- *We lost some teachers. Some were from out of state. They went home before the storm and didn't come back. We need some latitude as we try to replace them.*
- *We are tuned in to the trauma our kids have experienced. But who's looking after the adults here.*



Participants were largely positive about the support that their schools/districts had received.

1. The greatest affirmation was for faith-based organizations and community organizations
2. Praise for other local government agencies with whom the LEAs interfaced before, during and after the storm
3. Perceptions about FEMA and DPI, while more positive than negative were more mixed



Participants were, in turn, proud of the support that their schools and colleagues had provided.

1. Schools served as shelters.
2. Schools served as emergency centers—even as a hospital.
3. District resources undergirded emergency response across multiple sectors; e.g., provision of fuel
4. Teachers and students “hit the streets,” taking food, supplies, encouragement into hard-hit neighborhoods
5. Students supported one another’s schools



What Comes Next?

If we combine the most consistently voiced concerns (loss of instructional time and impact on students) with the belief that damaging weather events are likely to persist, we are obliged to ask:



What Comes Next?

If we combine the most consistently voiced concerns (loss of instructional time and impact on students) with the belief that damaging weather events are likely to persist, we are obliged to ask:

What might we do to a) diminish the impact of future storms on teaching/learning and b) sustain support to traumatized students?



What Comes Next?

What might we do to diminish the impact of future storms on teaching and learning?

- *Return to school ASAP. Restore normalcy.*
- *Find someplace that you can set up as soon as possible.*
- *The quicker you can get children back with their peers, the better they'll be.*



What Comes Next?

What might we do to diminish the impact of future storms on teaching and learning?

1. Over three quarters of those interviewed discussed implementing an innovation that employed the internet:
 - a. House instruction online.
 - b. Pre-load instructional content and assignments.
Update routinely during days closed
 - c. Implement 1-to-1 device programs.
 - d. But...reliance on power and connectivity are a hurdle.



What Comes Next?

What might we do to diminish the impact of future storms on teaching and learning?

2. Expand the use of community facilities and/or share the use of limited school facilities as they reopen:
 - a. Community/governmental facilities: Pre-arrange locations that could serve as teaching/learning spaces. Resolve insurance and transportation issues in advance.



What Comes Next?

What might we do to diminish the impact of future storms on teaching and learning?

2. Expand the use of community facilities and/or share the use of limited school facilities as they reopen:
 - b. Share school facilities when damage necessitates re-opening schools on a staggered basis.

E.g., A-day/B-day alternating schedule. Students use pre-loaded and updated devices on the days that they are not at school.



What Comes Next?

What might we do to diminish the impact of future storms on teaching and learning?

2. Expand the use of community facilities and/or share the use of limited school facilities as they reopen:
 - c. Utilize morning and afternoon shifts for students from different schools.



What Comes Next?

What might we do to diminish the impact of future storms on teaching and learning?

3. Work with the state to create emergency, at-the-ready, mobile schools:
 - a. Trailerable classrooms
 - b. Modular-unit school
 - c. Field school (tent-based)
 - d. Classroom buses



What Comes Next?

What might we do to diminish the impact of future storms on teaching and learning?

4. Advance mutual assistance plans among LEAs:
 - a. Rapid-response advisory team of colleague superintendents and other key leaders
 - b. Pre-plan which districts will supply which resources in order to jumpstart operations in impacted LEAs



What Comes Next?

Some cautions from several participants. As solutions to fast-track the return to school are planned:

1. Ensure immediate and sustained counseling, mental health, and social work supports
2. Take steps to ensure that web-based innovations for rapid restoration of teaching and learning processes don't further exacerbate inequities and gaps for disadvantaged students.



What Comes Next?

What might we do to diminish the impact of future storms on teaching and learning?

6. Interview with Florida school disaster expert. In addition to those ideas generated by our participants, he urged:
 - a. “Harden” schools. Build schools to better withstand intense disasters.
 - b. Close down shelters efficiently to expedite the return of students.



What Comes Next?

What might we do to diminish the impact of future storms on teaching and learning?

6. Interview with Florida school disaster expert. In addition to those ideas generated by our participants, he urged:
 - c. Work with cellular providers in advance to rapidly set up mobile Internet stations in the wake of a storm.
 - d. Have a robust food delivery system that can replenish supplies expeditiously, especially when schools have served as shelters.



What Comes Next?

What might we do to diminish the impact of future storms on teaching and learning?

6. Interview with Florida school disaster expert. In addition to those ideas generated by our participants, he urged:
 - e. Cautions about temporary, mobile school facilities...
 - f. Provide and sustain support for traumatized students and staff.



What Comes Next?

Researcher Reflections

On the plus side:

1. Amazing responses to disaster, remarkable adaptability
2. Compelling stories of service to students and the community
3. Clarity and candor about what went well, what needs improvement



What Comes Next?

Researcher Reflections

On the food-for-thought side:

4. While insights are fresh, figure out what to do next time.
5. Intentionality and action are needed to ensure that declarations about sustained support turn into plans.

The needs of students will outlast the patience of adults.



Background

In January of 2019, The Innovation Project implemented research in order to learn about storm impact in TIP districts that were declared disaster areas. These counties include those impacted by Hurricane Florence (Craven, Onslow, Wayne, Lenoir, Cumberland), and one impacted by Hurricane Matthew (Edgecombe). Former state superintendent Mike Ward conducted the inquiry.