

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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**Ranking Member Katie Porter**  
**Subcommittee on Health Care and Financial Services**  
**Hearing on “America’s Report Card: Oversight of K-12 Public Education”**  
**January 30, 2024**

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

As a single mom of three school-age children and a former 8th grade teacher, I know how important it is that kids learn in the classroom and that we encourage their curiosity.

Many Members of this committee are also parents. And we all want what is best for our kids. We want them to feel supported and capable. After all, our kids are our future.

**Where we, as parents, can’t reasonably teach our kids everything, we rely on our communities, including afterschool programs and sports, to help fill in the gaps. We rely on school to help our children learn and grow. And working parents like me rely on educators keeping our kids safe, so we can do our jobs.**

We’re here today to discuss our nation’s K-12 public education system. It’s true that in many communities, our elementary and secondary education systems barely get a passing grade.

I’m concerned that over the next two hours, my colleagues will be more interested in pointing fingers than fixing problems.

Two of these fingers are being pointed at COVID-19 school closures and so-called “woke programs” that “indoctrinate students.”

Look, none of us miss the days of Zoom school with everyone crammed around the kitchen table or straining our home Wi-Fi capabilities. It sucked.

COVID-19 related school closures disrupted learning. Many kids missed out on important personal and academic growth. I won’t argue with my Republican colleagues about that point.

**But, the reality is that even before COVID-19 reached our shores and long before Republican politicians made critical race theory their rallying cry, K-12 academic achievement was less than outstanding. In 2019, our national K-12 achievement score was a C! I’ll say it again, a C!**

**If we are serious about solutions, we need to start with the facts and look at the real reasons our kids are struggling. A long history of unequal and inadequate funding for public education has not set our kids up for success. And, I fear that devaluing the crucial role of teachers, falsely painting them as agents of indoctrination rather than acknowledging their partnership in raising our kids, further exacerbates the problem.**

**We should be using this hearing to discuss solutions and support our states and localities in fully funding K-12 schools, including paying our teachers a living wage. That's how we will achieve better outcomes for our students.**

My Republican colleagues are happy to sit here today and point the finger at Democrats. But let's not forget that if Republican politicians had it their way, as we saw under Betsy DeVos during the Trump Administration, there would be no public schools. They have continuously underfunded the Department of Education, and Republican state legislatures and school boards are banning books and targeting LGBTQ+ children, making them feel unsafe in schools.

Whining about "left-wing ideologies" will not bring us closer to solving the real problem with the K-12 education system.

If we really want to address the problems in our education system, we need to take a closer look at how our education system is funded and uplift those who are teaching our children.

**Elementary and secondary education are critical for children's development. Adequate funding for K-12 education is an important investment in the future of our nation, and it benefits all Americans, whether we have kids or not, by strengthening our next generation of workers. To get there, we need to find better solutions and support our states and localities in adequately funding K-12 schools.**

I yield back.

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