

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2021

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HOUSE BILL 79

Short Title: Student Digital Learning Access. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Blackwell, Clemmons, Elmore, and Hurley (Primary Sponsors).  
*For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.*

Referred to: Education - K-12, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

February 16, 2021

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT TO REQUIRE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO MAINTAIN A DIGITAL  
LEARNING DASHBOARD UPDATED ANNUALLY BY PUBLIC SCHOOL UNITS  
AND TO REQUIRE RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE JOINT LEGISLATIVE  
EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE BASED ON INFORMATION ON STUDENT  
DIGITAL LEARNING ACCESS DURING COVID-19, AS RECOMMENDED BY THE  
JOINT LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.(a)** Part 3A of Article 8 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is  
amended by adding a new section to read:

**"§ 115C-102.9. Digital learning dashboard.**

(a) The State Board of Education shall establish and maintain an electronic dashboard to  
publicly display information related to digital learning. The State Board shall include in the  
dashboard, at a minimum, the following categories of information to be reported:

(1) Digital devices available to students within the school, with information  
available by the following categories:

- a. Public school unit.
- b. School.
- c. Grade level.
- d. Devices provided by the public school unit.
- e. Devices provided by the student's home.
- f. Type of device.
- g. Personal devices provided for student use.

(2) Out-of-school internet connectivity for students, with information available  
by the following categories:

- a. Public school unit.
- b. School.
- c. Grade level.
- d. Type of connectivity.
- e. For homes with no connectivity, reason for lack of connection.
- f. For students without home connectivity, primary nonschool source for  
internet connectivity.

(3) Digital devices available to students outside of the school, with information  
available by the following categories:

- a. Public school unit.



- b. School.
- c. Grade level.
- d. Devices provided by the public school unit.
- e. Devices provided by the student's home.
- f. Type of device.
- g. For homes with no devices, reason for lack of devices.

(b) Each public school unit shall annually update all categories of information included in the digital learning dashboard no later than November 15.

(c) The State Board of Education shall annually report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by February 15 on statewide trends reflected in the digital learning dashboard, successes and continued challenges in ensuring all students have digital learning access both in and out of school, and recommendations on ways to continue to close the digital learning accessibility gap."

**SECTION 1.(b)** G.S. 115C-75.9 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(o) Digital Learning Dashboard. – An innovative school shall annually update information to the digital learning dashboard, as required by G.S. 115C-102.9."

**SECTION 1.(c)** G.S. 115C-218.75 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

"(i) A charter school shall annually update information to the digital learning dashboard, as required by G.S. 115C-102.9."

**SECTION 1.(d)** G.S. 115C-238.66 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(17) Digital learning dashboard updates. – A regional school shall annually update information to the digital learning dashboard, as required by G.S. 115C-102.9."

**SECTION 1.(e)** G.S. 116-239.8(b) is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(19) Digital learning dashboard updates. – A regional school shall annually update information to the digital learning dashboard, as required by G.S. 115C-102.9."

**SECTION 1.(f)** Section 6(d) of S.L. 2018-32 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(5a) G.S. 115C-102.9, Digital learning dashboard."

**SECTION 1.(g)** This section is effective when it becomes law and applies beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.

**SECTION 2.(a)** The Department of Public Instruction and the Department of Information Technology, in collaboration with the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at North Carolina State University (Friday Institute) (collectively referred to herein as the Departments) shall conduct a statewide assessment of data related to out-of-school internet and device access for North Carolina elementary and secondary students obtained during the physical school closure and at-home learning that occurred due to COVID-19 during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. Public school units shall provide any relevant data from this period to the Departments upon request at the most granular level available. The assessment conducted by the Departments shall review the available data to identify the scope of students who lack out-of-school internet access or devices at home; the reasons students lack such access, including accessibility to adequate broadband in the homes, cost of broadband services, and lack of devices; and the methods used to address the lack of access during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. Based on the assessed data, the Departments shall identify and make recommendations for effective programs and policies to close the student digital access gap and shall recommend effective approaches to maintain current granular data on the student digital access gap.

**SECTION 2.(b)** The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall coordinate (i) access to available data from each public school unit for the Departments and (ii) the reporting of the recommendations of the Departments as provided in this section. The Superintendent of Public

- 1 Instruction shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the assessment  
2 of the student digital access gap no later than October 15, 2021.  
3 **SECTION 3.** This act is effective when it becomes law.