

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2021

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HOUSE BILL 79  
Committee Substitute Favorable 2/23/21

Short Title: Student Digital Learning Access.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

February 16, 2021

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

7 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

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

10 **"§ 115C-102.9. Digital learning dashboard.**

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

14 (1) In-school digital device access, including the following information  
15 disaggregated by public school unit, school, and grade level:

16 a. Number and percentage of students with access to digital devices  
17 within the school.

18 b. Source of digital devices, such as the public school unit or the student's  
19 home.

20 c. Type of device.

21 (2) Out-of-school digital device access, including the following information  
22 disaggregated by public school unit, school, and grade level:

23 a. Number and percentage of students with access to digital devices  
24 outside of the school.

25 b. Source of digital devices, such as the public school unit, the student's  
26 home, or both.

27 c. Type of device.

28 d. For homes with no devices, reason for lack of devices.

29 (3) Out-of-school internet connectivity, including the following information  
30 disaggregated by public school unit, school, and grade level:

31 a. Number and percentage of students with internet connectivity outside  
32 of the school available by the following categories:

33 1. Students with connectivity at home.

34 2. Students without connectivity at home but who have regular  
35 and reliable access to other sources of connectivity.



- 1                    b. For students without home connectivity, primary source for internet  
2                    connectivity outside of the school.  
3                    c. Type of connectivity, such as broadband, satellite, or dial-up.  
4                    d. For homes with no connectivity, reason for lack of connectivity.

5            (b) Each public school unit shall annually submit all categories of information included  
6 in the digital learning dashboard no later than November 15. For subdivisions (2) and (3) of  
7 subsection (a) of this section, residential schools shall report on access and connectivity  
8 separately for the dormitories and the student's home.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

30            "(5a) G.S. 115C-102.9, Digital learning dashboard."

31            **SECTION 1.(g)** This section is effective when it becomes law and applies beginning  
32 with the report due November 15, 2021, based on data for the 2021-2022 school year.

33            **SECTION 2.(a)** The Department of Public Instruction and the Department of  
34 Information Technology, in collaboration with the Friday Institute for Educational Innovation at  
35 North Carolina State University (Friday Institute), (collectively referred to herein as the  
36 Departments) shall conduct a statewide assessment of data related to out-of-school internet and  
37 device access for North Carolina elementary and secondary students obtained during the physical  
38 school closure and at-home learning that occurred due to COVID-19 during the 2019-2020 and  
39 2020-2021 school years. Public school units shall provide any relevant data from this period to  
40 the Departments upon request at the most granular level available. The assessment conducted by  
41 the Departments shall review the available data to identify the scope of students who lack  
42 out-of-school internet access or devices at home; the reasons students lack such access, including  
43 accessibility to adequate broadband in the homes, cost of broadband services, and lack of devices;  
44 and the methods students and schools used to address the lack of access during the 2019-2020  
45 and 2020-2021 school years. Based on the assessed data, the Departments shall identify and make  
46 recommendations for effective programs and policies to close the student digital access gap and  
47 shall recommend effective approaches to maintain current granular data on the student digital  
48 access gap.

49            **SECTION 2.(b)** The Superintendent of Public Instruction shall coordinate (i) access  
50 to available data from each public school unit for the Departments and (ii) the reporting of the  
51 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.