GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2021

SENATE BILL 654
Education/Higher Education Committee Substitute Adopted 4/28/21
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Short Title: K-12 COVID-19 Provisions. (Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

April 7, 2021

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO PROVIDE RELIEF TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN RESPONSE TO THE
CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19) PANDEMIC.
The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

PART I. SCHOOL PERFORMANCE GRADES/ANNUAL REPORT CARDS

SECTION 1.1. Display of School Performance Grades. – Notwithstanding
G.S. 115C-12(9)c1. and G.S. 115C-83.15, the State Board of Education shall not calculate
achievement, growth, and performance scores nor display performance scores, growth
designations, and letter grades for schools for the 2021-2022 school year, based on data from the
2020-2021 school year, but shall display a brief explanation that achievement, growth, and
performance scores and letter grades were not calculated and assigned for the 2021-2022 school
year because assessment data was heavily impacted by COVID-19 during the 2020-2021 school
year.

SECTION 1.2.(a) Annual Report Cards. – Notwithstanding
G.S. 115C-12(9)c1. and
Part 1B of Article 8 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, the State Board of Education shall issue an annual report card for public school units for the 2021-2022 school year, based on data
from the 2020-2021 school year, that only meets the minimum accountability, school
identification, and related reporting requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education
Act of 1965 (ESEA), as amended, required under the federal waiver granted by the United States
Department of Education to the State of North Carolina for the 2020-2021 school year, dated
March 26, 2021.

SECTION 1.2.(b) Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-47(58), 115C-75.8(d)(7),
115C-218.65, 115C-238.66(11), 116-239.8(b)(14), and sub-subdivision 6(d)(2) of S.L. 2018-32,
for the 2021-2022 school year, based on data from the 2020-2021 school year, public school units
shall only be required to display the annual report card information issued by the State Board of
Education pursuant to this Part.

PART II. LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

SECTION 2.1. Low-Performing Schools. – Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-105.37 and
G.S. 115C-218.94(a), for the 2021-2022 school year, the following apply:

(1) The State Board shall not identify additional low-performing schools based
on data from the 2020-2021 school year.
(2) Schools previously identified as low-performing based on data from the 2018-2019 school year shall continue to be identified as low-performing.

(3) Previously identified low-performing schools shall continue to carry out the final plan approved by the local board of education pursuant to G.S. 115C-105.37(a1).

(4) The State Board and the local board of education shall continue to provide online access to each low-performing school's plan in accordance with G.S. 115C-105.37(a1)(5).

(5) The written parental notice required by G.S. 115C-105.37(b) is not required to be provided again, but local boards of education of low-performing schools shall include with their online final plans a brief explanation that low-performing identification continues pending assessment data from the 2021-2022 school year.

SECTION 2.2. Continually Low-Performing Schools. — Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-105.37A and G.S. 115C-218.94(b), for the 2021-2022 school year, the following apply:

(1) The State Board shall not identify additional continually low-performing schools based on data from the 2020-2021 school year.

(2) Schools previously identified as continually low-performing based on data from the 2018-2019 school year shall continue to be identified as continually low-performing.

(3) Previously identified continually low-performing schools shall continue to carry out the plan approved by the State Board pursuant to G.S. 115C-105.37A(a).

(4) Assistance and intervention levels provided for the 2019-2020 school year based on designation as low-performing for two years under G.S. 115C-105.37A(b) or low-performing for three years under G.S. 115C-105.37A(c) shall continue.

(5) Local boards of education may request to reform a continually low-performing school in accordance with G.S. 115C-105.37B.

SECTION 2.3. Low-Performing Local School Administrative Units. — Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-105.39A, for the 2021-2022 school year, the following apply:

(1) The State Board shall not identify additional low-performing local school administrative units based on data from the 2020-2021 school year.

(2) Local school administrative units previously identified as low-performing based on data from the 2018-2019 school year shall continue to be identified as low-performing.

(3) Previously identified low-performing local school administrative units shall continue to carry out the final plan approved by the local board of education pursuant to G.S. 115C-105.39A(b).

(4) The State Board and the local board of education shall continue to provide online access to each low-performing local school administrative unit's plan in accordance with G.S. 115C-105.39A(b)(5).

(5) The written parental notice required by G.S. 115C-105.39A(c) is not required to be provided again, but the local board of education shall include with its online final plan a brief explanation that low-performing identification continues pending assessment data from the 2021-2022 school year.

(6) The provisions of G.S. 115C-105.39(c) through (e) shall not apply.

PART III. PUBLIC SCHOOL UNIT CALENDARS FOR THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR
SECTION 3. (a) Part 2 of Article 8 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

“§ 115C-84.3. Remote instruction.

(a) Remote instruction means instruction delivered to students in a remote location outside of the school facility, whether synchronously or asynchronously. Instructional days or hours provided through any of the following shall not be considered remote instruction:

(1) North Carolina Virtual Public School courses.

(2) E-learning courses that meet the requirements of G.S. 115C-238.85.

(3) Institution of higher education courses, as provided in Article 16 of this Chapter or G.S. 115D-20(4).

(4) Homebound instruction required for a student by an individualized education program, as defined in G.S. 115C-106.3(8), or a section 504 (29 U.S.C. § 794) plan.

(5) Instruction provided to a student during a short- or long-term suspension.

(b) A public school unit in a county that has received a good-cause waiver for the school year, as provided in G.S. 115C-84.2(d), may use up to 15 remote instruction days or 90 remote instruction hours when schools are unable to open due to severe weather conditions, energy shortages, power failures, or other emergency situations and may use that time towards the required instructional days or hours for the school calendar. All other public school units may use up to five remote instruction days or 30 remote instruction hours when schools are unable to open due to severe weather conditions, energy shortages, power failures, or other emergency situations and may use that time towards the required instructional days or hours for the school calendar.

(c) Except as provided in subsection (b) of this section, a public school unit shall not use remote instruction to satisfy the minimum required number of instructional days or hours for the school calendar. However, a local board of education may provide virtual instruction as provided in Part 3A of Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes.

(d) A governing board that chooses to use remote instruction as provided in subsection (b) of this section shall submit to the State Board, by July 1 annually, a remote instruction plan that provides a detailed framework for delivering quality remote instruction to students for the upcoming school year and information on the number of remote instruction days or hours used in the prior school year to satisfy instructional requirements, when applicable. At a minimum, the plans submitted by governing boards shall include the following:

(1) Identification of the resources that will be used to facilitate remote instruction.

(2) Communication with and training opportunities for teachers, administrators, instructional support staff, parents, and students on how to access and effectively use remote instruction resources, including regular opportunities for students to use those resources during nonremote instructional days to ensure student success during remote instruction.

(3) Establishment of methods for tracking and reporting attendance during remote instruction, including protocols for determining attendance, the reporting system to be used, and how attendance procedures will be communicated to parents before remote instruction begins.

(4) Establishment of staff roles and expectations for remote instruction days, including teacher workdays, teacher accessibility, and noncertified staff workdays and responsibilities.

(5) Communication of learning targets to students on each remote instruction day and development of measures to ensure that remote instruction time, practice, and application components support learning growth that continues towards mastery of the standard course of study.
(6) Development of remote instruction options appropriate for teachers and students with limited connectivity capability, including the opportunity for students to download remote instruction materials in advance when practicable.

(7) Provision of remote instruction for students with disabilities in a manner consistent with each student’s individualized education program (IEP), as defined in G.S. 115C-106.3, or section 504 (29 U.S.C. § 794) plan. Remote instruction supports shall be considered and included, as appropriate for the student, when an IEP or 504 plan is initially developed or at any subsequent review or revision of an IEP or 504 plan.

(e) The State Board of Education shall report by September 15 annually to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the following information related to remote instruction:

(1) A copy of each governing board’s remote instruction plan.

(2) A summary document of the following:

a. The number of remote instruction days or hours used by each public school unit in the prior school year.

b. Strengths, challenges, and trends noted by the State Board in its review of how governing boards implement remote instruction.

c. Any other data deemed by the State Board to be useful to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee in evaluating the use and delivery of remote instruction in emergency circumstances.

SECTION 3.(b) G.S. 115C-84.2(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) School Calendar. – Each local board of education shall adopt a school calendar consisting of 215 days all of which shall fall within the fiscal year. A school calendar shall include the following:

(1) A minimum of 185 days or 1,025 hours of instruction covering at least nine calendar months. The local board shall designate when the instructional days shall occur. The number of instructional hours in an instructional day may vary according to local board policy and does not have to be uniform among the schools in the administrative unit. Local boards may approve school improvement plans that include days with varying amounts of instructional time. If school is closed early due to inclement weather, the day and the scheduled amount of instructional hours may count towards the required minimum to the extent allowed by State Board policy. The school calendar shall include a plan for making up days and instructional hours missed when schools are not opened due to inclement weather. Weather and may include the use of remote instruction in accordance with G.S. 115C-84.3."

SECTION 3.(c) G.S. 115C-218.85(a)(1) reads as rewritten:

"(1) The school shall provide instruction each year for at least 185 days or 1,025 hours over nine calendar months and may include the use of remote instruction in accordance with G.S. 115C-84.3."

SECTION 3.(d) G.S. 115C-238.53(d) reads as rewritten:

"(d) A cooperative innovative high school approved under this Part shall do the following:

(1) Provide instruction each school year for at least 185 days or 1,025 instructional hours during nine calendar months and may include the use of remote instruction in accordance with G.S. 115C-84.3. The requirements of G.S. 115C-84.2 shall not apply to the school calendar of a program approved under this Part."
shall comply with laws and policies relating to the education of students with disabilities, and shall comply with Article 27 of this Chapter. The requirements of G.S. 115C-84.2 shall not apply to the school calendar of a program approved under this Part."

SECTION 3.(e) G.S. 115C-238.66(1)d. reads as rewritten:
"d. The board of directors shall adopt a school calendar consisting of a minimum of 185 days or 1,025 hours of instruction covering at least nine calendar months and may include the use of remote instruction in accordance with G.S. 115C-84.3."

SECTION 3.(f) G.S. 116-239.8(b)(2)c. reads as rewritten:
"c. The chancellor shall adopt a school calendar consisting of a minimum of 185 days or 1,025 hours of instruction covering at least nine calendar months and may include the use of remote instruction in accordance with G.S. 115C-84.3."

SECTION 3.(g) Subdivision 6(e)(1) of S.L. 2018-32 reads as rewritten:
"(1) Provide instruction each year for at least 185 days or 1,025 hours over nine calendar months and may include the use of remote instruction in accordance with G.S. 115C-84.3."

SECTION 3.(h) Section 6(d) of S.L. 2018-32 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:
"(5a) G.S. 115C-84.3, Remote Instruction."

SECTION 3.(i) This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to the 2021-2022 school year. This section is repealed June 30, 2022.

PART IIIA. REMOTE INSTRUCTION FOR COVID-19 EMERGENCIES

SECTION 3A. Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-84.3, as enacted by this act, a public school unit shall have the authority to make day-to-day decisions for the 2021-2022 school year concerning whether shifting individual schools or individual classrooms that are providing in-person instruction to temporary remote instruction is necessary due to COVID-19 exposures that result in insufficient school personnel or required student quarantines. A public school unit shall report any shift by a school or classroom from in-person to temporary remote instruction as provided in this section to the Department of Public Instruction within 72 hours of the shift and shall return to in-person instruction as soon as personnel are available or the required quarantines are complete.

PART IIIB. VIRTUAL ACADEMIES

SECTION 3B.(a) Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Part to read:
"§ 115C-234. Virtual academies.
(a) A local board of education may apply to the State Board of Education for approval of virtual academies that meet the requirements of this Part. The State Board of Education shall limit total enrollment in all virtual academies granted to the local school administrative unit to no more than ten percent (10%) of the total student enrollment of that unit. The State Board shall grant no more than the following numbers of virtual academies per local school administrative unit, based on student enrollment at the time of application:

(1) One virtual academy for local school administrative units with 15,000 or fewer students.
(2) Two virtual academies for local school administrative units with between 15,001 and 30,000 students.
Three virtual academies for local school administrative units with between 30,001 and 50,000 students.

Four virtual academies for local school administrative units with between 50,001 and 100,000 students.

Five virtual academies for local school administrative units with more than 100,000 students.

A virtual academy is a public school that provides a majority of instructional hours through virtual instruction to all students enrolled in the school. Virtual instruction is instruction that primarily uses technology to deliver instructional content over the internet to students in a nonschool setting both synchronously and asynchronously.

A local board of education shall not provide the majority of instructional hours through virtual instruction in a school except as provided in this Part. However, a local board of education may provide remote instruction as provided in G.S. 115C-84.3.

§ 115C-234.5. Virtual academy requirements.

(a) Except as provided in this Part, a virtual academy shall meet all requirements for a public school included in this Chapter.

(b) Notwithstanding Article 17 of this Chapter, a virtual academy shall not be required to provide transportation or food services to enrolled students.

(c) A virtual academy may include any combination of grade levels.

(d) The following students shall be eligible to attend a virtual academy:

(1) A student whose parent or guardian applies for admission on that student's behalf, including a commitment to provide internet connectivity for that student if accepted into the virtual academy. A student with an individualized education program (IEP), as defined in G.S. 115C-106.3(8), shall be permitted to enroll in a virtual academy only if the student's IEP team determines that the virtual academy is the least restrictive alternative environment for that student.

(2) A student on a short-term or long-term suspension from another public school who is assigned to the virtual academy by the local school administrative unit operating such virtual academy when internet connectivity for that student is available.

(e) A virtual academy shall provide any hardware and software needed to participate in the virtual academy to an enrolled student. The local board of education may not charge any student a rental fee for the use of hardware or software. A student's parents or legal guardians may be charged damage fees for abuse or loss of hardware or software under rules adopted by the State Board of Education.

(f) A virtual academy may require students to attend an in-person or proctored assessment for State-mandated student assessments or to fulfill graduation requirements identified by the academy and may conduct optional in-person meetings between students and instructors or parents and instructors at a public school facility.

(g) The State Board of Education shall establish by rule additional minimum requirements for student monitoring, including, but not limited to, compliance with G.S. 115C-84.2, student attendance and testing requirements, infrastructure, and delivery of instruction in virtual academies.

§ 115C-234.10. Virtual academy approval process.

(a) Each local board of education seeking to offer a virtual academy shall submit to the State Board of Education for approval a plan that provides for the following:

(1) Considerations the local school administrative unit will make when reviewing applications for enrollment to attend the virtual academy.

(2) The range of grades for which the virtual academy will offer courses.
The method by which the virtual academy will monitor enrollment, course credit accrual, progress toward graduation, and course completion.

The means by which the virtual academy will communicate student progress with parents or legal guardians, including providing for in-person meetings at the discretion of the principal of the virtual academy.

The method for determining location for, safety precautions during, and personnel at an in-person meeting if the virtual academy plans to offer optional in-person meetings.

The means by which the local school administrative unit will communicate to the parents and legal guardians of prospective applicants and current enrollees information about the virtual academy so that parents and legal guardians may make informed decisions about enrollment.

The State Board of Education shall review and approve a plan submitted by a local board of education for the creation of a virtual academy that meets the requirements established in this Part. A virtual academy shall be approved for a period of five school years and may be renewed for additional five-year terms, upon resubmission of an application.

The State Board may revoke approval of a virtual academy at any time on the basis of substantial noncompliance with the requirements of this Part or the approved plan.

The State Board of Education shall evaluate the success of virtual academies approved under this Part. Success shall be measured by school performance scores and grades, retention rates, attendance rates, and for grades nine through twelve, high school completion and dropout rates. The Board shall report by November 15 of each year to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the evaluation of these schools and on any recommended statutory changes.”

SECTION 3B.(b) The State Board of Education shall adopt emergency rules for the implementation of Part 3A of Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, as enacted by this act, for use in the 2021-2022 school year only, in accordance with G.S. 150B-21.1A.

SECTION 3B.(c) The State Board of Education shall make the first evaluation report required by G.S. 115C-234.20, as enacted by this act, by November 15, 2022.

SECTION 3B.(d) Notwithstanding the limitations established by Part 3A of Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, as enacted by this act, a local school administrative unit that has been assigned a school code to operate a school with virtual instruction as the primary means of instruction by May 1, 2021, may continue to operate that school and provide virtual instruction at that school to satisfy the minimum required number of instructional days or hours for the school calendar during the 2021-2022 school year.
SECTION 3B.(e) A charter school may provide blended learning that includes virtual instruction during the 2021-2022 school year if the Office of Charter Schools has approved a curriculum amendment allowing blended learning for that school for the 2021-2022 school year no later than September 1, 2021.

SECTION 3B.(f) This section is effective when it becomes law and applies beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.

PART IV. PRINCIPAL RECRUITMENT SUPPLEMENT

SECTION 4. Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-285.1, for purposes of administering the principal recruitment supplement in the 2021-2022 fiscal year, a school identified as an eligible school in the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years pursuant to G.S. 115C-285.1(a)(2) and Section 2.13(a) of S.L. 2020-3, respectively, shall continue to be an eligible school in the 2021-2022 school year.

PART V. NOTIFICATION REQUIREMENT FOR TEACHER PERFORMANCE DATA

SECTION 5. Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-333.2, for the 2021-2022 school year, to the extent the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS) data regarding a teacher's performance includes data from more than one school year, when a principal notifies a teacher that the teacher's EVAAS data has been updated, the principal shall provide the teacher with additional context regarding the years on which the data is based and the extent to which the students on which the data is based were taught by another teacher.

PART VI. TEACHER EFFECTIVENESS REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

SECTION 6. Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-299.5, for the 2021-2022 school year, to the extent teacher effectiveness data reported pursuant to G.S. 115C-299.5 is based on more than one school year, local school administrative units and the State Board of Education shall contextualize that data by specifying the years on which it is based and the extent to which it is not reflective of teacher performance because the students on which the data is based were taught by more than one teacher.

PART VII. TEMPORARILY EXTEND CPR GRADUATION REQUIREMENT CHANGES

SECTION 7. Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-12(9d)a., for the 2020-2021 school year, any student in grade 12 who has not satisfied the requirement for completion of instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation shall be eligible to graduate if both of the following apply:

(1) Instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation cannot be completed due to the COVID-19 emergency.

(2) The student is eligible to graduate in all respects other than the statutory requirement described in this section, as determined by the principal of the school to which the student is assigned.

PART VIII. DELAY IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL STUDIES CHANGES

SECTION 8. Notwithstanding S.L. 2019-82, to provide additional time for the development of content and to ensure sufficient professional development opportunities delayed due to COVID-19, the following social studies standard course of study changes shall apply:

(1) The course requirements of G.S. 115C-81.45(d), Founding Principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: Civic Literacy, shall apply to all students entering the ninth grade in the 2022-2023 school year.

(2) The course requirements of G.S. 115C-81.65, Economics and Personal Finance, shall apply to all students entering the ninth grade in the 2022-2023 school year.
PART IX. TEACHER LICENSURE REQUIREMENTS

SECTION 9.(a) Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-270.15 and G.S. 115C-270.20, applicants for a continuing professional license holding a current initial professional license, residency license, lateral entry license, or limited license expiring June 30, 2021, who have not met the examination or coursework requirements established by the State Board as of June 30, 2021, shall be provided an extension until September 30, 2021.

SECTION 9.(b) G.S. 115C-270.20(a)(5) reads as rewritten:

"(5) Residency License or RL. – A one-year license, renewable twice, that meets both of the following requirements:
   a. Is requested by the local board of education and accompanied by a certification of supervision from the recognized educator preparation program in which the individual is enrolled.
   b. The individual for whom the license is requested meets all of the following requirements:
      1. A bachelor's degree, at least one of the following:
         I. A bachelor's degree.
         II. An advanced degree.
      2. Has either completed coursework relevant to the requested licensure area or passed the content area examination relevant to the requested licensure area that has been approved by the State Board.
      3. Is enrolled in a recognized educator preparation program.
      4. Meets all other requirements established by the State Board, including completing preservice requirements prior to teaching."

PART X. CLARIFY THE DEFINITION OF YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL

SECTION 10.(a) G.S. 115C-84.2(f)(5) reads as rewritten:

"(5) Year-round school. – A school with a single- or multi-track instructional calendar to provide instructional days throughout the entire school calendar year, beginning July 1 and ending June 30, by utilizing at least one of the following plans:
   a. A plan dividing students into four groups and requiring each group to be in school for assigned and staggered quarters each school calendar year.
   b. A plan providing students be scheduled to attend 45-four quarters of between 43 and 47 instructional days followed by 15 days of vacation, repeated throughout the each school calendar year, with vacation periods for students of between 14 and 18 days separating each quarter.
   c. A plan dividing the school calendar year into five nine-week sessions of classes and requiring each student to attend four assigned and staggered sessions out of the five nine-week sessions to complete the student's instructional year.
   d. In a local school administrative unit with both single- and multi-track instructional calendars, a plan for a single-track instructional calendar that is identical to at least one track of a multi-track instructional..."
calendar adopted by the local board that meets the requirements of either sub-subdivision a. or sub-subdivision c. of this subdivision."

SECTION 10.(b) This section is effective when it becomes law and applies beginning with the 2021-2022 school year.

PART XI. DELAY THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CLASS SIZE REQUIREMENTS FOR KINDERGARTEN CLASSES

SECTION 11. Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-301, Section 2(d) of S.L. 2018-2, and any other provision of law, for the 2021-2022 school year only, if the total kindergarten average daily membership for the first month of the 2021-2022 school year for a local school administrative unit is five percent (5%) or more than the total kindergarten average daily membership for the first month of the 2019-2020 school year for that unit, the following shall apply:

(1) The average class size for kindergarten in that unit shall not exceed one teacher per 20 students.

(2) At the end of the second school month and for the remainder of the school year, the size of an individual class in kindergarten in that unit shall not exceed one teacher per 23 students.

PART XII. ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND/USE OF RESERVE FUNDS

SECTION 12.(a) Section 3.2(a) of S.L. 2021-25 reads as rewritten:

"SECTION 3.2.(a) Except as otherwise provided in this section, federal funds received by the State under the American Rescue Plan Act for the programs set forth in the schedule below are appropriated in the amounts provided in the notification of award from the federal government or any entity acting on behalf of the federal government to administer the federal funds. Federal funds received by the State under the American Rescue Plan Act from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund are only appropriated up to the estimated amount set forth in the schedule below for the program. State agencies may, with approval of the Director of the Budget, spend these funds received from federal receipts and federal grants. Any positions created with the funds shall terminate at the earlier of the funds being fully expended or the deadline established by applicable federal law and guidance for use of the funds. The grant amounts in the schedule set forth in this subsection are estimates of North Carolina’s allocations to be deposited in the State’s Treasury and administered by State agencies.

Program

Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund

Amount

$3,260,772,533,599,191,706

Total Estimated Funding

$6,400,545,070,866,738,964,241"

SECTION 12.(b) Section 3.5 of S.L. 2021-25 reads as rewritten:

"SECTION 3.5. The Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund funds appropriated in Section 3.2 of this act shall only be used by the Department of Public Instruction to (i) allocate federal grant funds to public school units pursuant to subsection (d) of section 2001 of the American Rescue Plan Act and (ii) reserve twenty-one million five hundred thousand dollars ($21,500,000) three hundred fifty-nine million nine hundred seventeen thousand one hundred seventy-one dollars ($359,917,171) of the funds pursuant to subsection (f) of section 2001 of the American Rescue Plan Act to be used according to the following:

(1) $20,000,000 shall be used by the Department to allocate funds to each public school unit in the State, except for schools operated by the State Board of Education, to ensure that each public school unit receives a total amount from
the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief III (ESSER III) Fund of at least four hundred dollars ($400.00) per pupil in federal grant funds according to the following:

a. If a public school unit did not receive funds pursuant to subsection (d) of section 2001, the public school unit shall receive an amount equal to four hundred dollars ($400.00) per pupil.

b. If a public school unit received funds pursuant to subsection (d) of section 2001, the per pupil amount allocated under this subdivision shall be reduced so that (i) the total amount in federal grant funds from the ESSER III Fund is equal to four hundred dollars ($400.00) per pupil or (ii) the public school unit receives no additional funding because the total amount from the ESSER III Fund would exceed four hundred dollars ($400.00) per pupil.

(2) $1,500,000 to be allocated in equal amounts to the Governor Morehead School for the Blind, Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf, and North Carolina School for the Deaf for school facility repairs and improvements to enable operation of the schools to reduce risk of virus transmission and exposure to environmental health hazards and to support student health needs. The funds may be used for inspection, testing, maintenance, repair, replacement, and upgrade projects to improve the indoor air quality in school facilities, including mechanical and nonmechanical heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems, filtering, purification and other air cleaning, fans, control systems, and window and door repair and replacement.

(3) $36,000,000 to be held in a reserve by the Department to be allocated to public school units as grants to support COVID-19 related needs, including for in-person instruction supplemental programs to address learning loss and provide enrichment activities, such as for after-school and before-school programs, during the instructional year. The allocation of grants shall be prioritized to public school units based on need as demonstrated by the expenditure of existing federal funding received for COVID-19 related impacts. The Department may allocate up to fifty percent (50%) of the funds as grants to public school units prior to July 1, 2022.

(4) $36,000,000 to be held in a reserve by the Department to be allocated to public school units as grants to support COVID-19 related needs, including for in-person instruction summer programs to address learning loss and provide enrichment activities. The allocation of grants shall be prioritized to public school units based on need as demonstrated by the expenditure of existing federal funding received for COVID-19 related impacts. The Department may allocate up to fifty percent (50%) of the funds as grants to public school units prior to July 1, 2022.

(5) $10,000,000, of which up to fifty percent (50%) may be used prior to July 1, 2022, for the deployment of a competency-based education platform that enables the development of credit by demonstrated mastery for students for grades seven through 12 for credit recovery or acceleration to address various education delivery methods during the COVID-19 pandemic. The platform shall also be used for teacher competency and professional development and principal professional development. The Department shall submit an interim report by April 15, 2022, and a final report by April 15, 2023, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the deployment of the competency-based education platform, including the use of funds for professional development.
$10,000,000, of which up to fifty percent (50%) may be used prior to July 1, 2022, to support a common learning management system to be utilized for in-person and remote instruction for kindergarten through fifth grade for a period of up to three years. Funds may also be used for the kindergarten readiness programs based on the Science of Reading.

$37,500,000, of which up to fifty percent (50%) may be used prior to July 1, 2022, for teacher and principal professional development for implementing the Science of Reading and the requirements of the Excellent Public Schools Act of 2021.

$1,000,000, of which up to fifty percent (50%) may be used prior to July 1, 2022, to contract with external research partners pursuant to subdivision (4) of Section 5A of S.L. 2021-1, as enacted by Section 1.2 of S.L. 2021-3, to assess the impact of COVID-19 on public school units and the responses of the State to the challenges presented by COVID-19.

$2,500,000, of which up to fifty percent (50%) may be used prior to July 1, 2022, for five new time-limited and full-time equivalent positions in the Office of Learning Recovery and Acceleration of the Department and associated operating costs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

$500,000, of which up to fifty percent (50%) may be used prior to July 1, 2022, to support expansion of the North Carolina Preschool Pyramid Model (NCPPM) across and within local school administrative unit preschool programs and to support the implementation of NCPPM in kindergarten in a developmentally appropriate and vertically aligned manner. Funds shall be used to provide training, consultation, and ongoing support for local school administrative units to implement the NCPPM framework to prekindergarten and kindergarten classrooms, with priority given to low-performing schools and local school administrative units affected by COVID-19 that receive low-wealth supplemental funding.

$17,000,000, of which up to fifty percent (50%) may be used prior to July 1, 2022, to establish a grant program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic for the following purposes:

a. To provide contracted school health support services to public school units with a demonstrated need. Public school units receiving the funds shall contract with school health support personnel to provide additional physical and mental health support services for students.

b. To identify and locate students missing from public school units by contracting with any of the following:
   1. School resource officers.
   2. Local law enforcement agencies.
   3. School health support personnel.
   4. One or more third-party entities to provide technology to assist with this purpose.

For purposes of this subdivision, the term "school health support personnel" shall refer to school counselors, school nurses, school psychologists, and school social workers. No later than February 15, 2022, and annually thereafter through February 15, 2025, the Department shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the public school units that received funds pursuant to this subdivision, the specific services and products provided, the type of school health support personnel that provided services pursuant to this subdivision, and the amount of funding provided for each product or service in each public school unit.
$2,000,000, of which up to fifty percent (50%) shall be used prior to July 1, 2022, to contract with a third-party entity for a period of up to two years to develop and implement a system of tracking expenditures of State and federal funds provided for subscription services and technology in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

$100,000 to be used prior to July 1, 2022, to establish one new time-limited and full-time equivalent position at the Department to manage new software platforms for public school students funded pursuant to this section in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

$1,000,000, of which up to fifty percent (50%) shall be used prior to July 1, 2022, for the School Planning Section of the Department to contract with a third-party entity in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to make available to all local school administrative units and counties technology for the following purposes related to elementary and secondary education:

a. A consolidated information database regarding all of the following education-related expenses:
   1. Status and details of expected, proposed, and issued local bonds.
   2. Interactive listing of vendors providing products and services, including ratings and reviews of vendors.
   3. Document-sharing functionality related to purchased products and services, including capital improvement projects.

b. A software platform to advertise nationwide requests for proposals from local school administrative units and county governments for education-related products and services, including capital improvement projects.

$21,000,000, of which up to fifty percent (50%) shall be used prior to July 1, 2022, to be allocated to public school units on the basis of average daily membership in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to contract with a third-party entity for technology to mitigate cyberbullying, monitor student internet activity, monitor classroom educational devices, and assist with suicide prevention services.

$2,600,000 to be allocated prior to July 1, 2022, to local school administrative units and charter schools, including virtual charter schools authorized pursuant to Section 8.35(b) of S.L. 2014-100, as amended by Section 7.13 of S.L. 2018-5, to account for additional students enrolled in local school administrative units and charter schools during the 2020-2021 school year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Department shall allocate six hundred dollars ($600.00) per month for each student enrolled in a local school administrative unit or charter school above the number of students accounted for by the Department in the funded average daily membership for the unit or school from the 2020-2021 school year. For charter schools, funds shall be provided only for additional students legally enrolled at the school in accordance with the school’s charter, G.S. 115C-218.7(b), and Section 3.2 of S.L. 2020-97, as amended by Section 2.5 of S.L. 2021-3.

$100,000,000, of which up to fifty percent (50%) may be used prior to July 1, 2022, to be allocated to public school units to provide teachers with up to an eleventh month of salary pursuant to this subdivision. Notwithstanding G.S. 115C-302.1, for the 2021-2024 school years, a veteran teacher or growth teacher may apply to his or her principal to be employed for a term of 11 months. In the discretion of the principal, a teacher who receives a term of 11
months pursuant to this subdivision may either work for an additional month following the school year or work additional hours during the school year amounting to up to one additional month of employment. Work performed during this time shall address learning loss resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, including the supplementary instruction for students, professional development, and mentoring of other teachers. For purposes of this subdivision, the following definitions shall apply:

a. **Growth teacher.** – A teacher who received a bonus in January of 2020, based on data from the 2018-2019 school year, pursuant to any of the following programs:
   1. The Third Grade Read to Achieve Teacher Bonus Program provided in Section 8.8C of S.L. 2017-57, as amended by Section 2.10 of S.L. 2017-97 and Section 8.10 of S.L. 2018-5.
   2. The Fourth and Fifth Grade Reading Teacher Bonus Program provided in Section 8.8D of S.L. 2017-57, as amended by Section 8.11 of S.L. 2018-5.
   3. The Fourth to Eighth Grade Math Teacher Bonus Program provided in Section 8.8E of S.L. 2017-57, as amended by Section 8.12 of S.L. 2018-5.

b. **Veteran teacher.** – A teacher with at least 25 years of experience as a licensed teacher.

(18) $1,000,000, of which up to fifty percent (50%) may be used prior to July 1, 2022, in additional funding for services provided by Beginnings for Parents of Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Inc., for outreach to and support of North Carolina families affected by COVID-19.

(19) $970,000 for the Department to contract with Schools That Lead, Inc., to establish the Schools That Lead Program (Program) according to the following:

a. **Program; purpose.** – The Department shall contract with Schools That Lead, Inc., to provide professional development to teachers and principals in up to 75 schools, beginning with the 2021-2022 school year and ending in the 2023-2024 school year. The contract shall require Schools That Lead, Inc., to develop or purchase a statewide, online platform that allows teachers to share student performance improvement methods across the State. The selected schools shall be charter schools or schools under the authority of a local school administrative unit affected by COVID-19. Professional development services shall be offered to teachers and principals in grades K-12. The Superintendent of Public Instruction, in consultation with Schools That Lead, Inc., shall determine which schools are eligible to participate in the Program. At a minimum, the Program shall offer services to three cohorts of schools, as follows:
   1. High schools working to increase on-time graduation.
   2. Middle schools working to prepare students to succeed in high school by reducing the likelihood of retention in the ninth grade for multiple school years.
   3. Elementary schools working to reduce the number of students with early warning indicators of course failures, absences, and discipline.

b. **Evaluation.** – Of the funds allocated pursuant to this subdivision, the Department shall use up to one hundred thousand dollars ($100,000)
to contract with an independent research organization to measure the
impacts of the Program on student outcomes, including, but not limited
to, (i) on-time graduation in high school, (ii) ninth grade retention
rates, and (iii) course failures, absences, and discipline in elementary
schools. The independent research organization shall report its interim
findings to the Department no later than June 30 of each year, starting
in 2023, and shall submit a final report no later than June 30, 2025.

c. Report. – The Department of Public Instruction, in consultation with
Schools That Lead, Inc., shall submit a report on the impacts of the
Program authorized by this subdivision, including, but not limited to,
an accounting of expenditures, school performance data, principal
performance data, teacher performance data, and student outcome
data, beginning October 1, 2023, and continuing each year thereafter
until October 1, 2025, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight
Committee and the Fiscal Research Division. The October 1, 2025,
report shall include a summary and copy of the final report provided
by the independent research organization pursuant to sub-subdivision
b. of this subdivision.

d. Allocation of funds. – The Department shall allocate up to three
hundred thousand dollars ($300,000) to Schools That Lead, Inc., for
the contract prior to July 1, 2022. The Department shall allocate any
remaining funds for the contract on or after July 1, 2022.

(20) $18,000,000, of which up to fifty percent (50%) may be used prior to July 1,
2022, to provide coaching support and professional development for
principals and school improvement leadership teams in local school
administrative units. Funds shall be used (i) to design and implement a
leadership institute for principals employed in qualifying public schools and
(ii) to provide grants to local school administrative units in which a majority
of the public schools are qualifying public schools for flexible improvement
and intervention options approved by the Department to address negative
impacts of COVID-19. Up to two million dollars ($2,000,000) of these funds
may be used for 20 time-limited or full-time equivalent positions for the
Department to support the activities set forth in this subdivision. For the
purposes of this subdivision, a qualifying public school is a school meeting
the following criteria:

a. For the most recent year for which data are available, has a school
performance score in the lowest-performing five percent (5%) of all
schools.

b. Receives funds under Part A of Title I of the Elementary and
Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended.

c. Is governed by a local board of education.

d. Is not one of the following types of schools:

1. An alternative school.

2. A cooperative innovative high school.

3. A school that was in its first or second year of operation in the
previous school year.

4. A newcomers school. For the purposes of this subdivision, a
newcomers school is a school in which at least ninety percent
(90%) of its students are enrolled for no more than one year on
the basis of their status as recently arrived English language
learners.
$5,000,000 to be transferred to the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina to be allocated to the National College Advising Corps, Inc. (CAC), a nonprofit organization, to support a temporary expansion of the placement of college advisers in North Carolina public schools through their program over a two-year period for the purpose of increasing the number of underrepresented, low-income, or first-generation postsecondary degree or certificate students entering and completing their postsecondary education at community colleges and universities. In furthering its mission, CAC operates an innovative model of partnering with schools, communities, families, and postsecondary institutions, including providing for a two-year service opportunity to recent college graduates as near-peer college advisers working full-time in the public schools, with an emphasis on engaging college advisers who have similar backgrounds to the students the program seeks to serve. CAC uses near-peer college advisers to perform various services for students, including (i) attending postsecondary campus visits, fairs, and workshops with students, (ii) assisting with registering for college entrance exams, (iii) assisting with Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) registrations and completions, (iv) identifying available scholarships, (v) assisting with postsecondary applications, and (vi) engaging with parents. The Board of Governors may allocate up to two million five hundred thousand dollars ($2,500,000) to CAC prior to July 1, 2022. The Board of Governors may allocate the remaining funds to CAC through the deadline established by applicable federal law and guidance for the expenditure of the funds. Funds made available to CAC pursuant to this subdivision shall be matched by CAC on the basis of two dollars ($2.00) in private funds for every one dollar ($1.00) in federal funds. CAC shall use the funds provided to it under this subdivision to place college advisers in counties designated as tier one and tier two under G.S. 143B-437.08. CAC shall submit an interim report by October 1, 2022, and a final report by October 1, 2024, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division on the progress of expanding the placement of college advisers, data on the effectiveness of the program in increasing access for students to postsecondary education, and the use of the funds.

$2,400,000 to be allocated to Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc., to provide for the extension of nine-month contracts for its employees for the purpose of providing assistance and enrichment activities over the summers for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade experiencing learning loss and negative impacts from COVID-19. The Department shall allocate up to fifty percent (50%) of these funds to Communities in Schools of North Carolina, Inc., prior to July 1, 2022.

$10,500,000 to be used for career and technical education (CTE) programs to provide options for students outside traditional classroom instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic as follows:

a. $10,000,000 to provide grants for local school administrative units to create pilot programs for the expansion of credentials and certifications. The Department may allocate up to fifty percent (50%) of these funds as grants to local school administrative units prior to July 1, 2022.

b. $500,000 shall be allocated as grants to nationally certified programs in CTE focused on developing critical skills necessary for students to succeed in the retail sector. Funds shall be used to support instructor
and student training and testing to increase the State’s skilled workforce in the retail sectors. The Department may allocate up to fifty percent (50%) of these funds as grants to eligible programs prior to July 1, 2022.

(24) $13,200,000 to be allocated to the North Carolina Education Corps (NC ED Corps), a nonprofit corporation, for the purpose of NC ED Corps partnering with public school units to recruit, train, and deploy corps members, who include community college and university students, recent graduates, and retirees, to work as tutors and mentors with public school students. Corps members work in the public schools to build relationships and connect with students and help teachers reach students who need additional academic support. The program shall focus on accelerating COVID-19 learning recovery with students, families, and school personnel, particularly through high-impact literacy tutors grounded in the Science of Reading and reading instruction. The Department shall allocate up to three million two hundred thousand dollars ($3,200,000) of the funds provided under this subdivision to NC ED Corps prior to July 1, 2022. The Department shall allocate the remaining funds to NC ED Corps on or after July 1, 2022.

(25) $10,000,000 for the Department to contract with the State Education Assistance Authority (Authority) to establish and administer the Student Success Program to allow parents of eligible children to use federal funds intended to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19 towards allowable educational uses of their choice to address student learning loss and provide supplemental educational support. However, prior to the expenditure of any funds provided under this subdivision, the Department of Public Instruction shall obtain a letter of determination from the United States Department of Education that the use of funds as required by this subdivision is consistent with federal law and guidelines for the expenditure of funds from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act and the American Rescue Plan Act. Upon receipt of the determination letter from the United States Department of Education that the funds may be used for this purpose, the Student Success Program (Program) shall be established according to the following:

a. Program established; eligibility. – The Authority shall provide a one-time grant to eligible children through the Program. Grants awarded to eligible children shall be in an amount of one thousand dollars ($1,000) per child. For the purposes of this subdivision, an "eligible child" shall be a child residing in North Carolina who has not yet received a high school diploma and who meets all of the following requirements:

1. Is eligible to attend a North Carolina public school pursuant to G.S. 115C-366.

2. Has not enrolled in a postsecondary institution in a matriculated status eligible for enrollment for 12 hours of academic credit.

3. Resides in a household with an income level not in excess of one hundred fifty percent (150%) of the amount required for a student to qualify for the federal free or reduced-price lunch program.
Applications; priority of awards. – The Authority shall make information on the Program and the application process available on its website. Grants shall be awarded to eligible children during the application period established by the Authority in the order they are received according to the following priority schedule:

1. Awards shall first be awarded to eligible children who reside in households with an income level below the federal poverty level.

2. After the application period is open for two months, grants may also be awarded to eligible children who reside in households with an income level at the amount required for a student to qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

3. After the application period is open for four months, grants may also be awarded to eligible children who reside in households with an income level not in excess of one hundred fifty percent (150%) of the amount required for a student to qualify for the free or reduced-price lunch program.

Use of grant funds. – The Authority shall enter into a written agreement with the recipient of the grant to only use the funds for the following allowable expenditures prior to the receipt of the funds:

1. Tutoring services provided by an educator licensed by North Carolina, a person with experience teaching in higher education, or a person who has a bachelor's degree or graduate degree in the subject area in which tutoring is provided.

2. Textbooks, curriculum, or other instructional materials.

3. Therapies for children with disabilities from a licensed or accredited practitioner or provider, including, but not limited to, occupational, behavioral, physical, and speech language therapies.

4. Educational programs or courses offered for a fee or pursuant to contract by a local educational agency, charter school, nonpublic school, institution of higher education, or career and technical education program.

5. Fees for national standardized assessments, advanced placement examinations, examinations related to college or university admissions, or industry recognized certification examinations.

Grant funds must be spent by the recipient no later than September 1, 2023. Any unexpended funds remaining after September 1, 2023, shall be returned to the Authority and to the Department of Public Instruction.

Authorizations; limitations. – Household members of applicants for grants shall authorize the Authority to access information needed for verification of applications that are held by other State agencies, including the Department of Revenue, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Public Instruction. Any personally identifiable information included in an application related to eligible children receiving grants shall not be a public record under Chapter 132 of the General Statutes. For the purposes of this sub-section, personally identifiable information means any information directly related to a child or members of a child's
household, including the name, birthdate, address, social security number, telephone number, email address, financial information, or any other information or identification number that would provide information about a specific child or members of a specific child's household.

e. Administration. – The Authority may contract with outside organizations to administer the Program, including a vendor that provides a virtual e-wallet platform and an e-commerce marketplace. The outside organizations may also include vendors, auditing firms, or financial institutions who can restrict the use of funds to allowable expenditures or firms that preauthorize allowable expenditures. Up to five percent (5%) of the funds available for the Program may be used for administrative costs, including to contract with outside organizations. The Authority shall adopt any necessary rules for the administration of the Program.

f. Additional availability of funds. – Notwithstanding Section 5A of S.L. 2021-1, as enacted by Section 1.2 of S.L. 2021-3, or any other provision of law to the contrary, after August 15, 2021, any unencumbered funds remaining from the funds made available in the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief II Fund and reserved pursuant to subsection (c1) of Section 5 of S.L. 2021-1, as enacted by Section 1.3 of S.L. 2021-3, except for those funds reserved for the purposes set forth under subdivisions (6), (8), (9), (13), and (14) of Section 5A of S.L. 2021-1, shall be used for the purposes of the Program.

(26) If, on August 15, 2023, there are any funds that are unencumbered from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief III Fund reserve of funds pursuant to subsection (f) of section 2001 of the American Rescue Plan Act, those funds shall be reallocated to be used for expenditures on or after that date to meet additional needs of the elementary and secondary schools of the State within federal law and guidelines, as determined by the State Board of Education."

SECTION 12.(c) Within 15 days of the date this act becomes law, the Department of Public Instruction shall seek a letter of determination from the United States Department of Education regarding the establishment of the Student Success Program (Program) pursuant to subdivision (25) of Section 3.5 of S.L. 2021-25, as enacted by this act, and whether the use of funds for that Program is consistent with federal law and guidelines for the expenditure of funds from the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act and the American Rescue Plan Act, as described under the authorizing legislation. Upon receipt of the determination letter from the United States Department of Education, the Department of Public Instruction shall notify the State Education Assistance Authority of a determination of consistency or inconsistency with federal law and guidelines on the use of funds under the proposed Program and the authorizing legislation. If the letter contains a determination that the use of funds is consistent with federal law and guidelines, as described under the authorizing legislation, the State Education Assistance Authority shall open the application period for grants for the Program pursuant to sub-subdivision b. of subdivision (25) of Section 3.5 of S.L. 2021-25, as enacted by this act, within 30 days of notification from the Department of Public Instruction.

PART XIII. EFFECTIVE DATE
SECTION 13. Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes law.