

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2025

SESSION LAW 2025-38
HOUSE BILL 959

AN ACT TO PROMOTE INTERNET SAFETY, TO REQUIRE SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS, TO REQUIRE REGULATION OF STUDENT USE OF WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES DURING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME, TO ALLOW CERTAIN NONPUBLIC SCHOOLS TO REQUEST RESIDENCY LICENSES FOR TEACHERS, AND TO ALLOW CERTAIN SCHOOLS TO APPLY FOR REACCREDITATION BY THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE EDUCATION AND TRAINING STANDARDS COMMISSION.

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-102.10. Internet safety policy.

Local boards of education shall adopt policies for student access to the internet on devices or internet services provided by the local school administrative unit. The policies shall do at least the following:

- (1) Limit access by students to only age-appropriate subject matter and materials.
- (2) Protect the safety and security of students when accessing email, chat rooms, and other forms of electronic communication.
- (3) Prohibit unauthorized access by students to data or information maintained by the local school administrative unit, including by "hacking" and other unlawful online activities.
- (4) Prevent access to websites, web applications, or software that do not protect against the disclosure, use, or dissemination of a student's personal information.
- (5) Prohibit and prevent students from accessing social media platforms, except when expressly directed by a teacher solely for educational purposes."

SECTION 1.(b) G.S. 115C-47 is amended by adding a new subdivision to read:

"(70) To Adopt an Internet Safety Policy. – Local boards of education shall adopt policies for internet safety in accordance with G.S. 115C-102.10."

SECTION 1.(c) This section is effective when it becomes law. Local boards of education shall adopt the policies required by this section by January 1, 2026.

SECTION 2.(a) Part 1 of Article 8 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new section to read:

"§ 115C-81.26. Social media and mental health.

The standard course of study shall include instruction on social media and its effects on health, including social, emotional, and physical effects. Instruction shall be provided once during elementary school, once during middle school, and twice during high school. Instruction on this topic shall include at least the following:

- (1) Negative effects of social media on mental health, including addiction.
- (2) The distribution of misinformation on social media.
- (3) Methods of manipulating behavior using social media.



- (4) The permanency of information shared online.
- (5) How to maintain personal security.
- (6) How to identify cyberbullying, predatory behavior, and human trafficking on the internet.
- (7) How to report suspicious behavior encountered on the internet.
- (8) Personal and interpersonal skills or character education that enhances individual level protective factors and mitigates or reduces risk-taking or harmful behavior."

SECTION 2.(b) This section is effective when it becomes law and applies beginning with the 2026-2027 school year.

SECTION 3.(a) Article 7B of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new Part to read:

"Part 8. Miscellaneous Requirements.

"§ 115C-76.100. Regulation of wireless communication devices.

(a) The following definitions apply in this section:

- (1) Wireless communication device. – Any portable wireless device that has the capability to provide voice, messaging, or other data communication between two or more parties, including the following:
 - a. Cellular telephones.
 - b. Tablet computers.
 - c. Laptop computers.
 - d. Paging devices.
 - e. Two-way radios.
 - f. Gaming devices.
- (2) Wireless communication policy. – A policy governing the use of wireless communication devices by students.

(b) The governing body of a public school unit shall establish a wireless communication policy. At a minimum, except as permitted in subsection (c) of this section, the policy shall prohibit students from using, displaying, or having a wireless communication device turned on during instructional time.

(c) A wireless communication policy shall allow student use of a wireless communication device during instructional time as follows:

- (1) If authorized by a teacher for educational purposes or for use in the event of an emergency. The governing body may establish parameters to be followed by a teacher in granting authorizations.
- (2) As required by the student's individualized education program or section 504 (29 U.S.C. § 794) plan.
- (3) As required to manage a student's health care, in accordance with a documented medical condition.

(d) The governing body shall establish the consequences for violations of the wireless communication policy, which may include confiscation of the wireless communication device and disciplinary measures under the public school unit's Code of Student Conduct.

(e) No later than September 1 of the year in which this section becomes effective, every public school unit shall send to the Department of Public Instruction a copy of the public school unit's wireless communication policy. The public school unit shall provide the Department of Public Instruction with a copy of the wireless communication policy anytime it is changed. No later than October 1 of each year, the Department of Public Instruction shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee the number of public school units that are in compliance with this section and the name of any public school unit which is not in compliance with this section."

SECTION 3.(b) This section is effective when it becomes law. Governing bodies of public school units shall adopt the policies required by this section by January 1, 2026.

SECTION 4.(a) G.S. 115C-270.1 reads as rewritten:

"§ 115C-270.1. Definitions.

As used in this Article, the following definitions shall apply:

...

(1b) Individualized education program (IEP). – As defined in G.S. 115C-106.3.

(2) Professional educator. – An administrator, teacher, or student services personnel.

(3) Recognized educator preparation program or recognized EPP. – As defined in G.S. 115C-269.1(15).

(3a) Related services. – As defined in G.S. 115C-106.3.

(3b) Special education. – As defined in G.S. 115C-106.3.

...."

SECTION 4.(b) G.S. 115C-270.20(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) Teacher Licenses. – The State Board shall adopt rules for the issuance of the following classes of teacher licenses, including required levels of preparation for each classification:

...

(5) Residency License or RL. – A one-year license, renewable twice, that meets both of the following requirements:

a. Is requested by ~~the governing body of a public school unit~~ an eligible entity and accompanied by a certification of supervision from the recognized educator preparation program in which the individual is enrolled. For the purposes of this sub-subdivision, an eligible entity is one of the following:

1. The governing body of a public school unit.

2. A nonpublic school that meets all of the following:

I. Meets the requirements of Part 1 or Part 2 of Article 39 of this Chapter.

II. Is approved and monitored by the Department of Public Instruction to provide special education and related services pursuant to a student's IEP.

b. The individual for whom the license is requested meets all of the following requirements:

1. Holds 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.

...."

SECTION 4.(c) This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to applications for residency licenses occurring on or after that date.

SECTION 5.(a) Notwithstanding any law or rule to the contrary, the Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission shall allow any school that has received a

suspension of its accreditation for a term of at least four years to apply for reaccreditation pursuant to 12 NCAC 09C .0401 after two years of suspension.

SECTION 5.(b) This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to any suspension of accreditation by the Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission occurring on or before the effective date.

SECTION 6. Except as otherwise provided, this act is effective when it becomes law.

In the General Assembly read three times and ratified this the 26th day of June, 2025.

s/ Rachel Hunt
President of the Senate

s/ Destin Hall
Speaker of the House of Representatives

s/ Josh Stein
Governor

Approved 9:39 a.m. this 1st day of July, 2025