



NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Virtual Education and Remote Academies Initiative
SL 2022-59 (HB 671) Section 2, Part 3a

Legislative Update (2024)

Data Provided for State Fiscal Year 2023-2024

Prepared by:
Office of Virtual Instruction Support, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction

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Executive Summary

This report provides an evaluation of remote academies as outlined in SL2022-59 and the importance of remote learning options for K-12 public school students in North Carolina, emphasizing performance data and key findings as follows:

"§ 115C-234.25. Evaluation. The State Board of Education shall evaluate the success of remote academies approved under this Part. Success shall be measured by school performance scores and grades, retention rates, attendance rates, and, for grades nine through 12, 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 2.(b) The State Board of Education shall make the first evaluation report required by G.S. 115C-234.25, as enacted by this section, by November 15, 2024.

In addition to survey findings, data on Average Daily Attendance (ADA) from remote academies reveals a diverse landscape of engagement. With 39 remote academies operational in the 2024-2025 school year, their distribution is heavily concentrated in the Piedmont-Triad, North Central, and Southwest regions, reflecting their alignment with densely populated areas. The ADA figures indicate varying levels of participation, with some academies achieving impressive attendance rates, which can be attributed to their ability to meet the unique needs of students.

The performance data for remote academies aligns closely with statewide data from traditional face-to-face schools, indicating that both educational models are experiencing similar trends in student achievement and engagement. The report also outlines the State Report Card scores and grades of these remote academies. A significant number of remote academies have received grades ranging from A to C, showcasing effective instructional practices. However, some academies are still facing challenges, as evidenced by a number of schools receiving D and F grades, indicating areas for improvement in delivering remote education.

Additionally, two significant trends in remote learning have emerged. First, the demand for online learning has surged, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the acceptance of online education. Many families have come to appreciate the flexibility and personalized nature of these programs, prompting more school districts to offer online and hybrid learning options.

Second, the benefits of online learning are manifold. The flexibility allows students to learn at their own pace, which is especially beneficial for those with unique needs or commitments. Additionally, online environments can enhance student focus by

minimizing traditional classroom distractions. Remote learning is particularly advantageous for students facing health issues or bullying, as well as those requiring specific accommodations. Furthermore, online education fosters the development of crucial digital skills necessary for future careers.

In conclusion, the rise of remote learning options reflects a response to growing demand and an acknowledgment of the numerous benefits these educational alternatives provide to diverse student populations. The insights and data gathered, including ADA and performance metrics, will be essential for shaping future policies and support systems within the educational landscape of North Carolina.

Key Characteristics of remote academy Legislation as Defined by SL2022-59

Structure and Governance

According to North Carolina legislation SL 2022-59, a remote academy is defined as a public school that primarily delivers instruction through online or digital means. These academies function as standalone institutions, differentiating them from traditional brick-and-mortar schools. This structure allows for a flexible educational environment tailored to meet the needs of students who thrive outside conventional settings.

Operational Requirements

Remote academies are mandated to adhere to the same state regulations as traditional schools. This includes maintaining established class size requirements to ensure appropriate student-to-teacher ratios and ensuring that educators possess valid teaching certifications. Compliance with these standards is critical to providing a quality educational experience.

To facilitate effective learning, remote academies are required to provide essential support for students. This includes ensuring access to necessary hardware and software, guaranteeing continuous internet access, and offering timely technical support to resolve any issues that may arise. These operational requirements are designed to create an equitable and conducive learning environment.

Instructional Delivery

Primarily, instruction in remote academies is conducted remotely, outside of conventional school facilities. Remote academies may also offer in-person learning; however, the frequency of this is determined at the local level. Educators can deliver lessons synchronously (in real-time) or asynchronously (via pre-recorded materials). Schools must establish robust systems for tracking and reporting attendance, clearly communicating learning targets, and supporting continued academic growth. This

structured approach ensures that students remain engaged and accountable in their learning journeys.

Student Considerations

Participation in remote academies necessitates parental permission, emphasizing the role of families in the educational process. Additionally, schools retain the authority to reassign students from remote to in-person instruction if deemed beneficial for their educational progress. Importantly, remote academies must not deny enrollment based on disability. Instead, they are required to provide appropriate accommodations for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans, ensuring inclusivity in education.

Accountability and Evaluation

Remote academies are subject to annual performance evaluations to assess their effectiveness and compliance with educational standards. LEAs must submit detailed plans and receive approval from the State Board of Education, ensuring accountability and transparency in the operation of a remote academy.

Application Process

The application process for establishing a remote academy is facilitated by the Office of Virtual Instruction Services, which supports Local Education Agencies (LEAs) from submission through approval. Throughout this process, the Office provides tailored technical support to meet the specific needs of individual districts, ensuring they have the necessary assistance to complete their applications effectively. Applications must be submitted by February 1st each year, and they are reviewed by the State Board of Education (SBE) during the May board meeting. Once approved by the SBE, schools are eligible to apply for a school code and may begin operations in the following academic year. Applications for remote academies operate on a five-year cycle. Any modifications to the approved plans must be submitted in writing to NCDPI.

Historical Context and Evolution of Virtual Instruction

The evolution of virtual instruction in the United States has been ongoing since the early 20th century, initially focusing on providing educational opportunities for students unable to attend traditional schools. This journey began with Distance Education and Correspondence Courses and evolved into TeleLearning with technological advancements in the early 1990s.

In North Carolina, remote or virtual learning has been an integral part of the educational landscape for over two decades. Public school students have benefited from various remote and hybrid learning models, including collaborations with community colleges and specialized programs like Edgenuity and Edmentum. The North Carolina Virtual Public School (NCVPS) and the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM) have also played crucial roles, contributing to a vast amount of educational opportunities. For the 2023-2024 school year, nearly 7,000 students were enrolled in approved remote academies, not including those in charter school remote academies.

Timeline of Remote Learning Milestones In North Carolina

- **2000:** The North Carolina State DELTA program was launched, marking the introduction of remote learning opportunities statewide.
- **2002:** The Cumberland Web Academy was established.
- **2006:** The Cumberland Web Academy evolved into the North Carolina Virtual Public School, which has since served nearly 710,000 students.
- **2018-2019 School Year:** The state hosted 5 full remote academies and 7 hybrid models.
- **2019-2020 School Year:** The number of full remote academies increased to 11, with 25 hybrid models implemented.
- **March 14, 2020:** An Executive Order closed all North Carolina public schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic, transitioning all educational institutions to Emergency Remote Instruction.
- **2020-2021 School Year:** The state expanded to 57 full remote academies and 39 hybrid models, with many schools offering hybrid scheduling options to all students.
- **August 2021:** Working Group on Virtual Academies with report delivered to the Joint Legislative Education Committee established
- **July 8, 2022:** Legislation SL 2022-59 (Senate Bill #671) was enacted, requiring all districts to obtain approval from both the legislature and the State Board of Education to establish remote academies.
- **2023-2024 School Year:** A total of 43 remote academies were approved to operate under a 5-year cycle. Two Public School Units never opened (Davidson and Kannapolis). Northampton's application was approved shortly after the application cycle.

Impact and Benefits of Remote Academies

The impact of remote academies in North Carolina is significant, providing families with numerous advantages. These include increased school choice, allowing for tailored

educational options, and flexible scheduling that accommodates various student needs. High-level athletes, students aiming to graduate early, those entering the workforce through Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, and students with chronic attendance issues all benefit from this flexibility.

Additionally, remote academies support diverse learning needs, addressing specific requirements for students dealing with mental health issues, students who are bullied, neurodivergent conditions, hospital or homebound situations, and chronic behavioral challenges. These benefits underscore the essential role remote academies play in enhancing educational access and meeting the varied needs of students throughout North Carolina.

In a recent survey conducted by UNC EPIC, parents of students enrolled in North Carolina's remote academies provided a total of 208 responses. Among these, an impressive 94% of parents expressed satisfaction with their child's current educational experience. Additionally, other positive indicators included: 92.79% of parents felt informed about their child's progress, 89.9% believed they were equipped to assist their child when needed, 93.78% knew how to seek help if their child faced challenges, and 95.17% were satisfied with the school's approach to discipline. The survey also included an open-ended section where parents could share their motivations for choosing virtual or hybrid learning for the current school year. Out of 54 responses, 8 parents cited concerns for personal safety, while 19 mentioned issues related to physical or mental health.

Support for Improvement

In North Carolina, all students have the right to a high-quality, free public education. Remote academies serve as a valuable alternative for students who require a non-traditional learning environment. Many students across the state are choosing public remote academies to accommodate various needs, such as a different pace of learning, medical fragility, or severe anxiety. Additionally, these academies support highly successful student-athletes who face demanding practice and competition schedules that may conflict with traditional classroom settings, allowing them to achieve academic success while maintaining their athletic commitments.

Remote academies also provide essential flexibility for students who need to work to support their families, ensuring they can still graduate from high school. Moreover, these academies offer options for students exhibiting severe challenges that make attendance in a brick-and-mortar school difficult. By providing these alternatives, remote academies are reintegrating families passionate about homeschooling into the Average Daily Membership (ADM), further enriching the educational landscape in North Carolina.

Many remote academies have begun to successfully adopt and refine best practices for virtual education through time-limited support of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction's Office of Virtual Instruction Support (OVIS) that is fully funded through a US Department of Education grant. This collaboration enables these academies to establish effective networks and implement blended learning methodologies with proficiency.

The evolution of remote learning in North Carolina has been driven by a commitment to delivering high-quality instruction that addresses the diverse needs of all students. The primary objective has been to tailor educational experiences to individual learners, ensuring that instruction is both accessible and effective.

Remote academies play a pivotal role in offering families across North Carolina increased choice and flexibility in their educational options. By providing an array of virtual and blended learning opportunities, these academies enable students to engage in learning environments that best suit their personal needs and circumstances.

An interactive map showing NC remote academies may be found at:

[NC Remote Academies](#)

School Performance Data for Remote Academies

This report presents an analysis of school performance scores and grades for remote academies in North Carolina. This data serves as a baseline for assessing the effectiveness of remote academies and will be crucial for future comparisons and evaluations of student performance and engagement. The data, which includes performance scores ranging and corresponding letter grades, reveals significant insights. The performance scores in the dataset range from 25 to 88, with corresponding letter grades spanning from A to F.

One school achieved an impressive A with a score of 88, showcasing effective remote learning environments that contribute to high academic achievement. This reflects the potential for success in remote education settings.

A diverse group of schools reflect School Performance Grades in ranging A-C. Nineteen schools earned a performance grade of C (scoring between 58 and 68). This range of performance suggests that many schools are working diligently to enhance their educational offerings as well as opportunities for growth and improvement. Fifteen schools received D and F grades, with thirteen schools earning D's (scores from 25 to 54) and 2 schools receiving F grades (scores of 25 and 35). These scores highlight

areas where challenges exist in delivering effective remote education, signaling a need for targeted support and resources.

Additionally, there are 4 instances marked as I (Incomplete). There was not enough data in each grade level to assess these remote academies. These incomplete grades may indicate areas for further exploration in data collection or reporting, suggesting opportunities to better assess and understand the performance of these schools.

School Performance Grades for Traditional Schools and Remote Academies

The comparison of school grades between traditional schools and remote academies in North Carolina presents a more balanced picture when viewed in a table format. The calculation of the percentage is based on the total number of traditional schools, with remote academies excluded to ensure an accurate representation of traditional and non-remote schools.

	A	B	C	D	F
Remote Academy	2.8%	2.8%	52.8%	36.1%	5.6%
Traditional Schools	7.5%	20.3%	38.8%	27.2%	6.3%

Traditional schools exhibit a diverse range of performance, with 194 receiving an A, 526 a B, and the majority, 1,008, a C. Remote academies, while fewer in number, show a somewhat similar distribution with one school earning an A, one a B, and 19 a C.

Both groups also face challenges, as traditional schools have 706 receiving a D and 163 an F, while remote academies have 13 rated D and 2 rated F. This table suggests that, despite their differences in scale and context, the performance trends of remote academies align closely with those of traditional schools. This observation underscores the potential for growth and improvement in both settings, highlighting the need for targeted support to enhance academic outcomes across the board. Overall, this comparison highlights the importance of continued support and resources for remote academies as they work to enhance their academic performance and adapt to the unique challenges of serving their student populations.

School Performance Scores and Grades

Remote Academy Name	LEA	School Performance Score	School Performance Grade
Alamance Virtual School	Alamance County Schools	58	C
Buncombe County Schools Virtual Academy	Buncombe County Schools	68	C
Burke Virtual Academy	Burke County Schools	*	I
Cabarrus County Schools Virtual Academy	Cabarrus County Schools	67	C
Caldwell Online Academy	Caldwell County Schools	48	D
Career Academy and Technical School	Iredell-Statesville Schools	68	C
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Virtual School	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	62	C
Chatham County Schools Virtual Academy	Chatham County Schools	51	D
Cleveland Innovation	Cleveland County Schools	60	C
Connect Academy	Moore County Schools	68	C
Connections Learning Academy	Edgecombe County Schools		Demerger - Operating as a Future School
Craven Virtual Academy	Craven County Schools	58	C
Crossroads FLEX	Wake County Schools	88	A
Cumberland Academy 6-12 Virtual School	Cumberland County Schools	60	C
Cumberland Academy K-5 Virtual School	Cumberland County Schools	51	D
Davidson County Schools Virtual Academy	Davidson County Schools		<i>Closed</i>
Davie County Virtual School	Davie County Schools	51	D

Remote Academy Name	LEA	School Performance Score	School Performance Grade
Gaston Virtual Academy	Gaston County Schools	62	C
Global E-Learning Academy	Elkin City Schools	59	C
Granville Academy	Granville County Schools	59	C
Guilford eLearning University Prep	Guilford County Schools	47	D
Harnett Virtual Academy	Harnett County Schools	42	D
Ignite Online Academy	Durham County Schools	50	D
ISS Virtual Academy	Iredell-Statesville Schools	54	D
J F Kennedy High	Winston Salem/Forsyth Schools	51	D
JCPS Virtual Academy	Johnston County Schools	60	C
Macon Virtual Academy	Macon County Schools	*	I
McDowell Virtual Academy	McDowell County Schools	55	C
Nash Everywhere Digital Academy (NEDA)	Nash County Schools	56	C
Northampton Virtual Academy	Northampton County Schools	*	I
Onslow Virtual School	Onslow County Schools	56	C
Person County Schools Virtual Academy	Person County Schools	62	C
Pitt County Virtual	Pitt County Schools	67	C
Stanly County Virtual Education	Stanly County Schools	25	F
Summit Virtual Academy	Rowan-Salisbury Schools	46	D
Surry Online Magnet School	Surry County Schools	50	D
The Virtual Academy at Randolph	Randolph County Schools	41	D

Remote Academy Name	LEA	School Performance Score	School Performance Grade
Vance Virtual Village Academy	Vance County Schools	35	F
Virtual Academy	Winston Salem/Forsyth Schools	41	D
Virtual Academy School	Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools	70	B
Watauga Virtual Academy	Watauga County Schools	63	C
Wilson Academy of Virtual Education	Wilson County Schools	*	I

Retention Rates

Note: Retention rates are not included in this report. NCDPI is actively working to ensure these data sets are included as defined by SL2022-59; however, the data is currently unavailable. An addendum will be submitted by March 15, 2025.

Attendance Rates

This past year has highlighted the resilience and adaptability of remote academies, particularly in densely populated regions where the demand for flexible learning options is high. Average ADA ranged from 14 (Macon Virtual Academy) to 773 (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Virtual). With an average daily attendance (ADA) of 213, the remote academies have shown consistent efforts to engage students in a remote learning environment.

Notably, many academies in more populated areas have demonstrated exceptional attendance figures. For example, one academy (Buncombe County Schools Virtual Academy) achieved an impressive ADA of 252, reflecting a strong commitment from students and educators to embrace the opportunities remote learning provides. This is particularly encouraging given the unique challenges faced by urban environments, where there are more opportunities to meet the needs that remote learning solves.

Attendance figures indicate promising levels of interest in remote learning, especially in areas where remote education is crucial for accommodating diverse student needs. While two remote academies do not have ADA data available—one has not completed the 2023-2024 operational year, and the other is in a district affected by a demerger—the overall trend remains positive.

It is also important to recognize the positive impact of remote learning options for rural counties. These programs provide essential access to education, enabling students in underserved areas to engage with quality resources, flexible learning environments, and diverse curriculum offerings that may not be available locally. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for students who may face barriers to traditional in-person schooling. In a recent survey conducted by UNC EPIC, parents of students enrolled in North Carolina's remote academies submitted a total of 208 responses. An open-ended question allowed parents to express their motivations for choosing remote education for their children, highlighting the positive aspects of this option. Parents noted various reasons, including the desire for enhanced school and personal safety, addressing bullying, supporting mental and physical health, accommodating high-level athletes and performers, and mitigating negative peer influences. Additionally, at least one district leverages its remote academy to attract homeschooled students, thereby generating additional revenue for the district.

In summary, the data reflects a landscape of growth and opportunity within our remote academies, particularly in densely populated and rural regions. The dedication shown by both students and educators is a testament to the effectiveness of remote learning. As we move forward, we are excited to build on this momentum, ensuring that every student, no matter their environment, can succeed.

Average Daily Attendance

Remote Academy	LEA	Average ADA	Open Date	Grades Served
Alamance Virtual School	Alamance-Burlington Schools	213	7/1/2021	6-12; XG
Buncombe County Schools Virtual Academy	Buncombe County Schools	252	7/1/2021	K-12
Burke Virtual Academy	Burke County Schools	21	7/1/2022	K-12
Cabarrus County Schools Virtual Academy	Cabarrus County	154	7/1/2020	K-12; XG

	Schools			
Caldwell Online Academy	Caldwell County Schools	135	7/1/2023	4-12
Career and Technical Academy (iAcademy)	Iredell-Statesville Schools	120	7/1/2010	6-12; XG
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Virtual School	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	773	7/1/2016	5-12; XG
Chatham County Schools Virtual Academy	Chatham County Schools	24	7/1/2022	9-12
Cleveland Innovation	Cleveland County Schools	161	7/1/2020	K-12; XG
Connect! Virtual Academy	Moore County Schools	311	7/1/2022	K-12
Connections Learning Academy (EDGE)	Edgecombe County Schools	0	*7/1/2026	K-12
Craven Virtual Academy	Craven County Schools	118	7/1/2021	4-12
Crossroads FLEX	Wake County Schools	128	7/1/2016	9-12
Cumberland Virtual Academy (CVA K-5)	Cumberland County Schools	201	7/21/2020	K-5
Cumberland Virtual Academy (CVA 6-12)	Cumberland County Schools	414	7/1/2020	6-12

Davidson County Schools Virtual Academy	Davidson County Schools	0		
Davie County Virtual School	Davie County Schools	37	7/1/2021	4-8
Gaston Virtual Academy	Gaston County Schools	280	7/1/2018	K-12
Global E-Learning Academy	Elkin-City Schools	57	7/1/2021	6-12; XG
Granville Academy	Granville County Schools	211	7/1/2018	K-12; XG
Guilford eLearning University Prep	Guilford County Schools	326	7/1/2020	K-8
Harnett Virtual Academy	Harnett County Schools	106	7/1/2021	K-12; XG
Ignite Online Academy	Durham County Schools	315	7/1/2021	K-12
Iredell-Statesville Schools Virtual Academy	Iredell-Statesville Schools	137	7/1/2021	K-12
Johnston County Public Schools Virtual Academy	Johnston County Schools	283	3/11/2021	K-12
John F. Kennedy High School	Winston Salem/Forsyth Schools	270	4/23/2011	6-12
Macon Virtual Academy	Macon County Schools	32	4/14/2020	K-12

McDowell Virtual Academy	McDowell County Schools	101	7/1/2021	6-12
Nash Everywhere Digital Academy (NEDA)	Nash County Schools	219	7/1/2022	4-12
Northampton Virtual Academy	Northampton County Schools	14	7/1/2021	6-12
Onslow Virtual School	Onslow County Schools	459	7/1/2020	1-12; XG
Person County Schools Virtual Academy	Person County Schools	58	7/1/2021	PK-12
Pitt County Virtual Academy	Pitt County Schools	56	7/1/2023	K-12
Stanly County Virtual Education (SCoVE)	Stanly County Schools	98	7/1/2018	2-12; XG
Summit Virtual Academy	Rowan-Salisbury Schools	166	7/1/2020	K-12
Surry Online Magnet School	Surry County Schools	107	7/1/2020	K-12
The Virtual Academy at Randolph	Randolph County Schools	93	7/1/2021	K-8
Vance Virtual Village	Vance County Schools	183	7/1/2020	6-12
Virtual Academy	Winston Salem/Forsyth Schools	257	7/30/2000	3-8
Virtual Academy School	Chapel Hill-Carrboro	28	7/1/2022	9-12

	City Schools			
Watauga Virtual Academy	Watauga County Schools	30	7/1/2021	K-8
Wilson Academy of Virtual Education (WAVE)	Wilson County Schools	46	7/1/2021	4-12
Total		6,994		

High School Completion Rates

The cohort graduation rates present a varied landscape, showcasing both strengths and areas for improvement among the remote academies. The rates range from a high of greater than 95% to a low of 27.3%, indicating significant disparities in graduation outcomes across different cohorts. Notably, several institutions achieved impressive graduation rates, such as 94.4%, 92.9%, and 91.7%, reflecting effective educational practices and strong student support systems.

However, the data also highlights several instances of missing or masked information, denoted by hyphens and asterisks, particularly for the 2023-2024 baseline year and due to agency masking policies. This lack of data may limit a comprehensive understanding of overall performance trends. Additionally, several schools reported graduation rates below the state average of 87%, with rates such as 57.9% and 27.3% indicating potential challenges in student retention or support.

Additional information is needed to determine whether students attending these remote academies were classified as at-risk, as this context is essential for fully understanding the implications of the reported graduation rates. Moving forward, it will be crucial to address these discrepancies and ensure that all institutions are equipped to support their students effectively, particularly those demonstrating lower graduation rates. It is also important to emphasize to districts potentially utilizing their remote academy as an alternative school for at-risk students that there are other effective strategies to meet the needs of these students without negatively impacting the performance of the remote academy. Additionally, by identifying districts where remote academies may be serving as alternative schools for at-risk students, we can offer targeted suggestions and options to support these students. Encouraging exploration of other avenues for assistance can help ensure that the needs of at-risk populations are met without compromising the overall performance and objectives of the remote academy. By

exploring a range of support options, districts can better serve at-risk populations while maintaining the integrity and success of the remote academy.

High School Completion Rates

Remote Academy Name	LEA	# Students in Cohort	4 Year Cohort Graduation Rate
Alamance Virtual School	Alamance County Schools	38	86.4
Buncombe County Schools Virtual Academy	Buncombe County Schools	67	94.4
Burke Virtual Academy	Burke County Schools	*	*
Cabarrus County Schools Virtual Academy	Cabarrus County Schools	25	89.3
Caldwell Online Academy	Caldwell County Schools	-	>95
Career Academy and Technical School	Iredell-Statesville Schools	-	>95
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Virtual School	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools	170	92.9
Chatham County Schools Virtual Academy	Chatham County Schools	8	72.7
Cleveland Innovation	Cleveland County Schools	21	80.8
Connect Academy	Moore County Schools	35	92.1
Connections Learning Academy	Edgecombe County Schools	demerger	demerger
Craven Virtual Academy	Craven County Schools	18	78.3
Crossroads FLEX	Wake County Schools	-	>95
Cumberland Academy 6-12 Virtual School	Cumberland County Schools	59	80.8
Cumberland Academy K-5 Virtual School	Cumberland County Schools	*	*
Davidson County Schools Virtual Academy	Davidson County Schools	closed	closed
Davie County Virtual School	Davie County Schools	*	*
Gaston Virtual Academy	Gaston County Schools	43	75.4
Global E-Learning Academy	Elkin City Schools		27.3
Granville Academy	Granville County Schools	39	88.6

Guilford eLearning University Prep	Guilford County Schools	*	*
Harnett Virtual Academy	Harnett County Schools	11	57.9
Ignite Online Academy	Durham County Schools	41	71.9
ISS Virtual Academy	Iredell-Statesville Schools	27	79.4
J F Kennedy High	Winston Salem/Forsyth Schools	84	80.8
JCPS Virtual Academy	Johnston County Schools	77	77.8
Macon Virtual Academy	Macon County Schools	11	91.7
McDowell Virtual Academy	McDowell County Schools	35	70
Nash Everywhere Digital Academy (NEDA)	Nash County Schools	-	>95
Northampton Virtual Academy	Northampton County Schools	*	*
Onslow Virtual School	Onslow County Schools	72	69.9
Person County Schools Virtual Academy	Person County Schools	-	>95
Pitt County Virtual	Pitt County Schools	*	*
Stanly County Virtual Education	Stanly County Schools	15	78.9
Summit Virtual Academy	Rowan-Salisbury Schools	*	*
Surry Online Magnet School	Surry County Schools	-	>95
The Virtual Academy at Randolph	Randolph County Schools	*	*
Vance Virtual Village Academy	Vance County Schools	27	75
Virtual Academy	Winston Salem/Forsyth Schools	*	*
Virtual Academy School	Chapel Hill-Carborro City Schools	14	63.6
Watauga Virtual Academy	Watauga County Schools	*	*
Wilson Academy of Virtual Education	Wilson County Schools	*	*

*Denotes that no data is available for these schools because 2023-2024 was a baseline year

-Denotes data that is unavailable for public reporting due to agency masking policies

Dropout Rates

Note: High School Dropout rates are not included in this report. NCDPI is actively working to ensure this data set is included as defined by SL2022-59; however, it is currently unavailable. An addendum including this important metric will be submitted by March 15, 2025.

Considerations and Recommendations for 2025

Timing of Reporting

Issue: Remote academies in North Carolina are evaluated based on school performance scores and grades, retention rates, attendance rates, and, for grades nine through twelve, high school completion and dropout rates. These data points must be submitted by November 15 each year to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee (JLEOC). To meet this timeline, reports must first be presented to the North Carolina State Board of Education at their October meeting, with submissions due one month prior. However, school performance scores and grades are embargoed until September, limiting the time available for accessing, disaggregating, and interpreting data related to NC remote academies. Retention rate data is not accessible until March, and high school completion and dropout rates are measured through graduation cohorts that track students over four years, meaning that many remote academies, particularly those in their first year of operation, will lack sufficient data for evaluation. Consequently, the only reportable data points by the November deadline are Average Daily Attendance, school performance grades and scores, and graduation cohort rates.

Recommendation: NCDPI recommends that the JLEOC reporting cycle be shifted from November 15 to March 15 due to validated standardized testing and dropout data availability. NCDPI also suggests reevaluating the criteria for assessing remote academy success, considering that many high schools do not have graduation cohorts.

School Performance Scores and Grades

Issue: Larger Local Education Agencies (LEAs) tend to correlate with higher average daily attendance in their associated remote academies, while smaller LEAs show more fragmented attendance. This variability impacts the evaluation of student effectiveness, as teachers must claim at least seven "effective" students for their data to be valid within

the Education Value-Added Assessment System (EVAAS), which measures student growth and educator effectiveness. Schools with fewer than seven students taking state assessments receive insufficient data, complicating the performance evaluation. Furthermore, some remote academies function as alternative learning environments, resulting in transient attendance patterns that affect performance scores.

Recommendation: NCDPI recommends adopting the Alternative Schools' modified accountability system, specifically Option C, as outlined in 16 NCAC 06G .0314. This option allows for modifications to the accountability system, contingent upon evidence demonstrating valid and reliable measures of student achievement and growth. This approach would accommodate LEAs that utilize remote academies to support students in alternative learning settings, as well as those with small enrollment figures taking state-required EOG/EOC exams.

Clarity of Application Changes

Issue: Each approved remote academy must adhere to the plans submitted to the State Board of Education unless modifications are approved in writing. Given the evolving needs of students and districts since the initial applications were submitted, remote academies must adapt their approaches. For example, adjustments may be needed regarding third-party providers, grade spans, or leadership changes. Currently, there is no clear guidance on managing or identifying plan modifications.

Recommendation: NCDPI recommends delegating the establishment of clear criteria for what constitutes major versus minor changes to NCDPI, along with a defined cycle for presenting these changes to the State Board of Education. Significant modifications should be submitted for review by April of each year for the subsequent school year.

Support of Remote Academies

Issue: Currently, support for remote academies, including application evaluation, review, and guidance on pedagogical approaches, is provided by the Office of Virtual Instruction Services which is currently funded through a federal grant set to expire on July 31, 2025.

Recommendation: To ensure the continuity and quality of support for remote academies beyond this date, it is recommended that consideration be given to establishing full-time, permanent positions within the Department of Public Instruction. This would provide sustained expertise, consistent assistance during the application review process, and ongoing development of best practices to address the evolving needs of remote learning environments.

Improve Access

Issue: With 39 remote academies operating in the 2024-2025 school year across a state with nearly 2,500 public schools, their distribution is heavily concentrated in the Piedmont-Triad, North Central, and Southwest regions. This pattern corresponds with the locations of densely populated areas. While these areas have a high number of remote academies, there remains a significant need for virtual instruction in the Northeast, Southeast, Northwest, and Western regions. Although remote academies are free public schools, students wishing to enroll in an academy outside their home Local Education Agency (LEA) may face out-of-district fees ranging from \$1,200 to \$3,000, creating inequity, particularly for medically fragile students or those with needs that cannot be met in traditional settings. Additionally, districts need the ability to apply for remote academy school numbers on a continuous basis in order to meet the unique needs of students.

Recommendation: NCDPI recommends classifying remote academies as schools of choice for students seeking enrollment outside their home district. This designation would enable students to apply for school vouchers to cover out-of-district fees, ensuring equitable access to virtual education in circumstances where established remote academy options are unavailable.

Supporting Documentation

In July and August 2024, the Office of Virtual Instruction Services partnering with UNC EPIC conducted a comprehensive survey of Public School Units (PSUs) participating in the Rethink Education initiative. The primary aim of this survey was to gather valuable insights into the implementation and effectiveness of virtual instruction services across North Carolina. Specifically, the survey sought to inform and guide the support provided by Regional Virtual Instruction Consultants, evaluate the effectiveness of Rethink Education services, and understand the reasons students choose to attend virtual academies.

The survey targeted PSUs involved in the NC Rethink Education initiative, which focuses on empowering teachers to create effective and positive learning experiences for all students, irrespective of their learning environment. Respondents included administrators, teachers, and other key stakeholders within these participating PSUs.

The survey explored two main areas of virtual instruction: blended learning support and implementation, and online learning demographics. In the first area, the survey assessed the utilization of Rethink Education resources, identified implementation

challenges and successes in blended learning environments, examined the professional development needs for educators, and investigated the integration of technology with traditional classroom practices. In the second area, the survey examined student enrollment trends in online programs that are not classified as remote academies and explored the factors influencing students' choices to participate in online learning.

The data collected helped provide a comprehensive view of the operational aspects of blended learning and the characteristics of the student population engaging in online education. This information is crucial for understanding the current landscape of blended learning and virtual instruction within participating PSUs, as well as for informing future strategies and support mechanisms. Additionally, a summary table presents the primary reasons students choose to attend virtual academies, offering valuable context for the increasing demand for virtual learning options and guiding future developments in this area.

Considering students in your PSU who are enrolled in online courses/classes, what are the top 3 reasons that they selected online learning? Check the top 3 options below that best match those reasons.	Percentage of Total Responses
Students who need a different path	63.89%
Students with anxiety	38.89%
Students are medically fragile	36.11%
Students who are independent	36.11%
Students who need a different pace	25.00%
Students who are competitive athletes	16.67%
Students who frequently travel	19.44%
Students who may need extra support	13.89%

In March 2022, pursuant to SL2021-130 and SB654, Part IIIC, a comprehensive study on virtual academies was conducted, revealing significant insights gained from the experiences of students and teachers during emergency remote instruction. It is important to distinguish between this emergency response and the planned, intentional implementation of virtual learning. While virtual instruction has been part of North

Carolina schools for nearly two decades, the pandemic led to increased familiarity and demand for virtual academies. Schools have recognized the potential of virtual instruction to provide flexible scheduling, improved access to courses, and better support for students with medical or social-emotional needs. This flexibility allows students to pursue additional interests, such as arts, athletics, or internships, thereby enhancing their overall educational experience. Schools are increasingly motivated to adopt virtual instruction as a standard practice to maintain competitiveness in education.

The report outlines several key recommendations to strengthen virtual academies based on feedback from the Working Group on Virtual Academies and consultations with school leaders. These include ensuring public school units (PSUs) provide families with clear information about schooling options and expectations, aligning virtual academies with the same policies and evaluations as in-person schools, and allowing PSUs without existing virtual academies to apply for school numbers. Additionally, the report recommends that all schools adhere to the same accountability standards, facilitate student transitions between virtual and in-person learning, and address barriers such as internet access. Ongoing research and support from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) are crucial for monitoring trends and developing best practices in virtual learning. Lastly, charter schools should be provided pathways to expand virtual options, and future studies should focus on identifying effective practices in virtual education across different grade bands.

Current research underscores the increasing significance of remote learning options for K-12 public school students, highlighting two key trends.

Firstly, there is a growing demand for online learning. Although online K-12 schools have been in existence for approximately two decades, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly accelerated their adoption and acceptance. Many students and families discovered a preference for the flexibility and personalized nature of online learning during the pandemic's remote schooling period. Consequently, an increasing number of school districts are now offering online and hybrid learning options to meet this heightened demand (The Post-Pandemic's Digital Learning Landscape | AASA).

Secondly, the benefits of online learning are substantial. The flexibility and personalization afforded by online education allow students to learn at their own pace and on their own schedules, making it ideal for those with various commitments or unique learning needs. This modality also enables greater customization of curriculum and instructional approaches. Additionally, some students report improved focus in online environments, free from traditional classroom distractions (Online Teaching in K-12 Education in the United States: A Systematic Review - Carla C. Johnson, Janet B. Walton, Lacey Strickler, Jennifer Brammer Elliott, 2023).

Online learning is particularly advantageous for students facing health issues, those who experience bullying, or individuals requiring specific accommodations (Capturing the Benefits of Remote Learning | The Post-Pandemic's Digital Learning Landscape | AASA). Furthermore, remote education fosters the development of essential digital skills and self-management capabilities necessary for future careers (The Nexus of ISTE Standards and Academic Progress: A Mapping Analysis of Empirical Studies | TechTrends).

In summary, the rise of remote learning options reflects both a response to growing demand and recognition of the myriad benefits these educational alternatives offer to diverse student populations.

References: Supporting Documentation Section

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Additional Resources

Remote Academy Applications Approved for 2023-2024 Academic Year

[2023 Remote Academy Applications](#)

Remote Academy Application Frequently Asked Questions

[Remote Academy Application FAQs](#)

Remote Academy Parent and Guardian Resources

[Rethink Education Resources for Parents and Guardians](#)

- [Rethink Education Caregiver Toolkit](#)

Remote Academy Instructional Support Resources

[Available K-8 Content from Rethink Education](#)

- [Parent and Family Support Guides \(Translated in five languages\)](#)

Remote Academy Webinars and Podcasts

[NC Rethink ED: Staying Connected Webinar Series](#)

[Education Empowered Podcasts with NC Rethink ED](#)

[NCDPI remote academy Resource Hub](#)

Alternative Schools' Modified Accountability System Option C Reports for 2021-2022

[Modified Accountability System Examples](#)

[24-25 Alternative Schools' Modified Accountability Report](#)