



NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Remote Instruction for the 2025-2026 School
Year

S.L. 2022-74/Section 7.13.(b)

Date Due: September 15, 2026
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2026-2027

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION VISION

Every public school student in North Carolina will be empowered to accept academic challenges, prepared to pursue their chosen path after graduating high school, and encouraged to become lifelong learners with the capacity to engage in a globally-collaborative society.

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MISSION

The mission of the North Carolina State Board of Education and the North Carolina Superintendent of Public Instruction is to use their constitutional authority to guard and maintain the right to a public education for every student in North Carolina and to support public school units in providing every student an excellent education that prepares them for success in their next phase of life.

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NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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REMOTE INSTRUCTION: S.L. 2022-74. SECTION 7.13.(B)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Remote instruction remains a well-used, well-managed tool for maintaining instructional continuity during emergencies. For 2026–2027, 249 public school units submitted an approved remote instruction plan to the Department of Public Instruction; 28 units opted out. Governing boards report that the framework established under S.L. 2022-74 continues to strengthen planning, communication, and continuity of learning during emergency closures.

- **Strong adoption:** The large majority of PSUs maintain an active remote instruction plan and report genuine strengths in planning, family communication, and continuity of learning.
- **Persistent gap:** Rural connectivity remains the leading barrier to equitable remote instruction, followed by sustaining student engagement and supporting students with disabilities.
- **Converging practice:** Districts are standardizing digital tools and differentiating delivery by grade band — paper-based instruction for K–5, learning-management-system delivery for 6–12.
- **Legislative ask:** A growing number of districts, concentrated in the Northwest and Western regions, have exhausted their five-day remote instruction allotment and are requesting additional flexibility to manage severe winter weather without extending the school calendar (see Looking Ahead, below).

BACKGROUND

This report meets the legislative requirements set forth in NC Session Law 2022-74, Section 7.13.(b) states, “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:”. This report provides a statewide summary of the Remote Instruction Plans that were submitted to the NC Department of Public Instruction for the 2025-2026 school year.

This report includes:

1. A copy of each governing board's remote instruction plan.
2. A summary document of the following:
 - The number of remote instruction days or hours used by each public-school unit in the prior school year.
 - Strengths, challenges, and trends noted by the State Board in its review of how governing boards implement remote instruction.
 - 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.

LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

S.L. 2022-74 (House Bill 103), codified at G.S. 115C-84.2, authorizes public school units to use remote instruction in place of in-person instruction during emergency closures such as severe weather, energy shortages, power failures, or other emergencies. A public school unit may use up to five remote instruction days (30 hours) toward its required instructional calendar each year; a unit operating under an approved good cause waiver may use up to 15 remote instruction days (90 hours). Outside of this provision, remote instruction may not be used to satisfy minimum instructional day or hour requirements.

The purpose of the remote instruction plan requirement is to ensure every governing board has a detailed, board-approved framework in place before an emergency occurs, so that staff, students, and families know what to expect and instruction can continue without loss of learning time or added days to the calendar. Much of this framework reflects lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

PLAN REQUIREMENTS

Governing boards that intend to use remote instruction must submit a plan to the State Board by July 1 of each year, using a standardized template provided by NCDPI. At minimum, each plan must address:

- **Resources:** Identification of the resources that will be used to facilitate remote instruction.
- **Communication and training:** Opportunities for teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and students to learn to access and use remote instruction resources, including practice during non-remote days.
- **Attendance tracking:** Methods for tracking and reporting attendance, including protocols communicated to parents before remote instruction begins.
- **Staff roles and expectations:** Defined workday and accessibility expectations for teachers, and workday and responsibilities for non-certified staff.
- **Instructional quality:** Communication of daily learning targets and measures to ensure remote instruction supports continued progress toward the standard course of study.
- **Limited-connectivity accommodations:** Remote instruction options for students and teachers with limited connectivity, including advance downloads where practicable.
- **Students with disabilities:** Delivery of remote instruction consistent with each student's IEP or Section 504 plan, with remote supports considered during plan development and review.

COPY OF EACH GOVERNING BOARD'S REMOTE INSTRUCTION PLAN

Four fully virtual PSUs were exempt from the Remote Instruction Plan requirement. Of the remaining 340 PSUs, the Department of Public Instruction had received approved Remote Instruction Plans from 303 PSUs as of June 30, 2026; 30 PSUs opted out, and 7 PSUs had not responded. Submitted plans are available at go.ncdpi.gov/RIPlans26-27.

SUMMARY DOCUMENTS

Remote Instruction Days Reported

Data are reported at the school level within each Public School Unit (PSU), including local school administrative units, charter schools, laboratory schools, and regional schools. Remote instruction use varied across the state, with some PSUs using no remote instruction days, many using up to the standard five-day allotment, and others exceeding five days under approved waivers. Detailed school, charter, LEA, and overall PSU-level data are available at go.ncdpi.gov/RIDays25-26.

Strengths, Challenges, and Trends

Strengths

Public School Units highlighted a number of areas where their remote learning efforts were most successful:

- **Planning and Readiness:** PSUs noted that they were able to have clear, actionable plans in place for when students were unable to attend school face to face.
- **Effective Communication:** Schools were able to provide clear and consistent communication with stakeholders including parents, students, and staff. Some districts even noted high engagement from parents through communication platforms on remote learning days.
- **Continuity of Learning:** The ability to continue instruction during severe weather without the need for makeup days or extending the school year was seen as a major benefit.
- **Resource Distribution:** Successful implementation of one-to-one device initiatives and the use of hotspots helped maintain connection between families and schools. PSUs also successfully utilized a mix of digital and paper-based options to reach all students.

Challenges

Public School Units highlighted a number of challenges with remote instruction:

- **Inconsistent Internet and Connectivity:** The most cited challenge, especially in rural areas include: limited broadband access, data caps on hotspots, and service interruptions caused by power outages.
- **Variable Student Engagement:** PSUs struggled with maintaining high levels of student participation and motivation. Several plans specifically mentioned "Zoom fatigue" during extended periods of remote learning.
- **Logistical Support for Families:** PSUs recognized that remote learning places a heavy burden on parents, who may lack the time or technological knowledge to assist their children, especially when elementary devices are not routinely sent home

- **Limited Calendar Flexibility:** Feedback from several PSUs highlighted the need to reevaluate the current 5-day limitation on remote instruction. In regions experiencing frequent or severe winter weather, additional remote instructional days could reduce the operational and instructional impacts of makeup days later in the academic year.
- **Support for Special Populations:** Providing specialized services, such as physical or occupational therapy, and ensuring high-quality interventions for students with disabilities was more difficult in a virtual setting.

Trends

Upon review of the submitted remote instruction plans for the 2026-2027 school year the following trends emerged:

- **Standardization of Digital Ecosystems:** PSUs have standardized their primary instructional tools to minimize confusion for families and staff. This includes a standardized learning management system across all schools, a common virtual conferencing platform, and support resources found through digital curriculum platforms.
- **Developmentally Appropriate Instruction:** There is a distinct pattern of schools adjusting instructional delivery methods according to grade level.
 - **K-5:** Many plans state that grades K-5 will prioritize paper and pencil activities for younger students. This approach is intentionally designed to ensure that screen time remains age appropriate for younger learners while simultaneously supporting instructional accessibility for families who may lack 1-to-1 device access or reliable internet at home.
 - **6-12:** Middle and high school students will primarily access learning materials and assignments through the district learning management system, utilizing digital submissions and virtual meetings for support from staff.
- **Staff Expectations:** PSUs have established consistent expectations for staff during remote instruction days, with many requiring scheduled virtual office hours to support student instruction, provide academic assistance, and maintain regular communication with students and families.
 - Many districts require non-certified staff to complete asynchronous, self-paced professional development. These offerings often utilize centralized platforms to provide training on digital communication, school safety, and emergency protocols.
- **Request for Additional Flexibility:** Many districts, particularly in the Northwest and Western regions, have utilized their full 5-day remote instruction allotment and are seeking more flexibility to handle severe weather without extending the school calendar.

LOOKING AHEAD: CALENDAR FLEXIBILITY AND COST OF REMOTE INSTRUCTION DAYS

The most consistent feedback received from governing boards this year was a request to revisit the five-day cap on remote instruction. Districts in the Northwest and Western regions, where severe winter weather is most frequent, report exhausting their full allotment and then relying on traditional makeup days which extends the school calendar and disrupts staffing, transportation, and

extracurricular schedules. The State Board will continue to monitor this trend and welcomes the opportunity to discuss two related items with the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee: additional calendar flexibility, and a fuller accounting of the operational costs PSUs incur to resource and deliver remote instruction days.