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State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

School Technology Break/Fix Rate Report
Session Law 2025-46

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BREAK/FIX RATE REPORTING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In alignment with Session Law 2025-46, this inaugural statewide report provides a baseline analysis of technology costs and device Break/Fix rates reported by North Carolina Public School Units (PSUs) for the 2025–26 school year. Data submitted by 323 PSUs through the Digital Learning and Media Inventory represent 2,165,511 student, staff, and instructional technology devices. As the inaugural year of statewide Break/Fix reporting, these findings establish an initial benchmark for the state. NCDPI is committed to strengthening data collection, validation, and analysis in each subsequent reporting cycle to provide the General Assembly with increasingly precise and actionable information.

The State Board has also adopted a rule (16 NCAC 06G .0602) implementing the technology cost evaluation requirements of G.S. 115C-102.10, effective August 1, 2026.

PSUs reported 311,436 distinct devices repaired, resulting in an overall repair rate of 14.38%. Of those repairs, 124,794 (40.07%) were covered by warranty, leaving an estimated 186,642 non-warranty repairs and an estimated statewide Break/Fix rate of 8.62%. PSUs also reported approximately \$6.62 million in technology device repair expenditures. Student devices represent approximately 84.2% of the statewide inventory, with student laptops accounting for the largest device population and the highest repair activity.

The statewide data reflects a substantial variation in technology purchasing and support strategies across PSUs. PSUs purchase devices from a range of manufacturers and select different models, warranty structures, management services, and replacement strategies. Consequently, warranty terms, coverage periods, repair responsibilities, and related costs vary across PSUs and device types. These differences are important when interpreting repair and break/fix rates as a repair covered under one PSU's warranty may result in a direct local cost for another PSU.

The findings demonstrate that the cost of providing and maintaining school technology extends beyond the initial purchase price. Repair expenses, warranty coverage, anticipated expected lifecycles, and replacement needs all contribute to the Total Cost of Ownership. This is increasingly important as devices purchased with federal ESSER (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund) funding age and require replacement. Of the 323 PSUs reporting, 174 (53.9%) reported that local funding alone is insufficient to support their ongoing device refresh needs. These findings highlight the need for continued consideration of dedicated, recurring funding for student technology devices. The PSU Total Cost of Ownership calculations should be used to inform procurement and lifecycle planning. Ongoing annual Break/Fix reporting combined with improvements to the statewide technology inventory data, will establish stronger benchmarks for future technology purchasing, maintenance, and replacement decisions.

LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

This report, pursuant to Session Law 2025-46, provides statewide and Public School Unit (PSU) level analysis of ongoing technology costs and device Break/Fix rates to support a better understanding of the long-term costs associated with acquiring, maintaining, and replacing technology in North Carolina public schools.

Each governing body of a public school unit shall submit a report on the following information to the State Board of Education by August 15 annually:

- (1) The break/fix rate of the school technology devices in the public school unit for the previous school year.
- (2) The total number of school technology devices currently in operation in the public school unit.
- (3) The total number of school technology devices in the public school unit requiring repair that (i) underwent repair or (ii) were no longer in service during the previous school year.
- (4) The total amount of funds spent to repair or replace school technology devices during the previous school year.

State Board Rulemaking Status

In compliance with Chapter 115C, Article 2A of the North Carolina General Statutes, the State Board of Education adopted 16 NCAC 06G .0602 (Technology Cost Considerations), implementing the technology cost evaluation requirements of G.S. 115C-102.10. The rule became effective August 1, 2026. The text of the rule is available at dpi.nc.gov.

Key Definitions

- **Break/Fix Rate:** The percentage obtained by dividing the number of school technology devices reported as malfunctioning or needing repair due to physical damage, hardware failure, or other breakage incidents prior to the stated life cycle period, not covered by insurance or a policy plan period, by the total number of school technology devices in operation during that period.
- **Overall Repair Rate:** The percentage of devices reported as requiring repair, regardless of whether the repair was covered by warranty. This measure is included in the report to provide context for overall device reliability but is distinct from the statutory Break/Fix rate.
- **Warranty-Covered Repair:** A reported repair to a device that was covered under an applicable manufacturer, vendor, or other warranty.
- **Non-Warranty Repair:** A reported repair that was not covered by warranty. For purposes of the statewide analysis, this is calculated as total repairs less warranty-covered repairs.
- **Long-Term Cost of Ownership (LTCO):** The costs associated with acquiring and maintaining technology over its expected useful life, including acquisition and repair costs and, where applicable, other lifecycle considerations identified in the legislation.
- **Device Lifecycle:** The period a PSU expects a device to remain in service before replacement or retirement.

- **Resale or Salvage Value:** The anticipated value of technology at the end of its target lifecycle, informed by the resale or salvage value of comparable technology.
- **School Technology Device:** Any electronic or computerized equipment provided for educational purposes in a public school unit, including computers, tablets, interactive whiteboards, and similar devices or anything considered a digital device for purposes of the digital learning dashboard pursuant to G.S. 115C-102.9.

These definitions form the basis for the statewide calculations and analyses presented in this report. Because the statutory Break/Fix calculation excludes warranty-covered repairs, the report presents both overall repair rates and warranty-adjusted Break/Fix rates. This distinction provides a view of both total device repair activity and potential non-warranty repair.

DATA COLLECTION AND METHODOLOGY

This report is based on data submitted by 323 Public School Units (PSUs) through the annual Digital Learning and Media Inventory reporting process. Of the 336 PSUs who were required to report Break/Fix Data, 13 charter schools did not submit. The report focuses on technology devices in service during the 2025–26 school year, including repair activity and expenditures, warranty coverage, planned device lifecycles, acquisition methods, and related technology costs in the same year. This count includes charter schools, laboratory schools, and the other public school entities separately cited for break/fix reporting under G.S. 115C-150.12C, 115C-218.33, and 115C-238.66.

Calculation of Break/Fix Measures

- Overall Repair Rate was calculated by dividing total reported repairs by the number of devices in service.
- Warranty-Covered Repairs were identified separately to distinguish repairs covered through warranty agreement from other repair activity.
- Estimated Non-Warranty Repairs were calculated by subtracting warranty-covered repairs from total repairs.
- The Break/Fix Rate was calculated using non-warranty repairs relative to devices in service, consistent with the statutory reporting requirement.
- Statewide rates were calculated using aggregate device and repair counts. This ensures that each device contributes equally to the state rate regardless of PSU size.

Total Cost Of Ownership

- Total Cost of Ownership analyses incorporated reported acquisition costs, repair expenditures, and anticipated device lifecycles.
- Device lifecycle values were retained as reported by PSUs. Where a lifecycle value did not support an annualized Total Cost of Ownership calculation, the reported values were retained without estimating a replacement lifecycle.
- A reported lifecycle of zero years was not treated as missing data; it may reflect a PSU approach in which devices are not on a fixed refresh cycle.

Data Validation and Quality Assurance

During data validation, NCDPI identified a limited number of submissions in which reported repair and warranty values were mathematically inconsistent or reflected differing interpretations of the reporting fields. Where a PSU provided clarification or corrected information, the clarified values were used for analysis. In other instances, where the intended relationship among total, warranty-covered, and non-warranty repairs could be reasonably determined from the submitted data, NCDPI reconciled the values necessary to calculate the statutory measures. Original source submissions were retained, and reconciled values are documented in the supporting PSU-level data. Values were not adjusted solely because they appeared unusually high or low.

Interpretation of Results

- Repair expenditures represent costs reported by PSUs.
- Warranty services, internal staff labor, existing parts inventories, vendor service agreements, and other support arrangements may reduce or eliminate direct reported expenditures.
- Manufacturer and device comparisons are descriptive and should not be interpreted as causal measures of device quality because warranty arrangements, device age, acquisition method, lifecycle, grade level, and local repair practices vary among PSUs.

PSU FINDINGS

To review individual PSU data, this summary provides a consolidated view of the data (go.ncdpi.gov/BreakFixSummary25-26) and calculations for each Public School Unit. Individual PSU summaries, including detailed Break/Fix and long-term cost of ownership information, are available in this folder (go.ncdpi.gov/BreakFixPSUReports).

STATEWIDE TRENDS

Break/Fix and Repairs

During the 2025–26 school year, 323 Public School Units reported 311,436 repairs across an inventory of 2.16 million devices, representing an overall repair rate of 14.38%. In addition to devices that underwent repair, PSUs reported 89,409 devices that required repair but were no longer in service during the reporting period. Of the repairs reported, 124,794, or approximately 40.07%, were covered by warranty. PSUs also reported approximately \$6.62 million in technology device repair expenditures during the school year.

Statewide, PSUs reported \$1.12 billion in modeled total cost of ownership across technology devices, an average of \$441 in annualized cost per device (tablets and laptops assigned to students and staff). This figure is calculated as total modeled TCO divided by total devices statewide, so it reflects actual dollars spread across the actual device population rather than an average of PSU-level rates, which would weigh a small charter school's device fleet the same as a large county system's.

PSUs reported \$2.57 million in resale revenue from end-of-life device activity statewide. This figure reflects historical disposition activity rather than resale or salvage value expressed as a percentage of original purchase price, which is what the statute requires. NCDPI recommends that future DLMI collections capture that ratio directly so this factor can be evaluated consistent with G.S. 115C-102.10.

Break/Fix by Device Type

Looking across the different user and device types included within the statutory definition of a school technology device, repair rates and warranty coverage vary considerably, highlighting meaningful differences in the repair experience across device categories. The table below provides information on student and staff laptops, student and staff tablets, student and staff desktops, and interactive panels used within classrooms across the state.

Device Type	Total Number of Devices	Total Number of Repaired Devices	Overall Repair Rate	Warranty Insurance Repairs	Estimated Break/Fix Rate
Student Laptops	1,532,978	272,675	17.79%	110,706	10.57%
Student Tablets	259,654	13,515	5.21%	6,510	2.70%
Student Desktops	30,955	1,538	4.97%	113	4.60%
Staff Laptops	195,104	18,618	9.54%	6,591	6.16%
Staff Tablets	29,036	457	1.57%	203	0.87%
Staff Desktops	59,205	3,121	5.27%	195	4.94%
Interactive Panels	58,579	1,512	2.58%	476	1.77%

For purposes of this report, the Estimated Break/Fix Rate is calculated using the corrected estimated non-warranty repair counts in the statewide dataset. During data validation, NCDPI identified instances in which warranty-covered repairs were reported separately from total repairs or were otherwise entered in a manner that resulted in mathematically inconsistent values. Where the intended relationship between reported repairs and warranty-covered repairs could be reasonably determined from the submitted data, values were reconciled to support calculation of the statutory Break/Fix rate. PSU-reported values were otherwise retained as submitted.

Repair Costs and Total Cost of Ownership

The initial purchase price represents only one part of the overall investment in technology. Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) captures the additional costs incurred over a device's useful life, including extended warranties and repair services, replacement batteries and chargers, software subscriptions and license renewals, endpoint security and device-management tools, help desk and

technical support labor, setup and deployment, user training, network and connectivity requirements, replacement of lost or damaged devices, and secure data wiping, recycling, or disposal at end of life.

The following Total Cost of Ownership figures were reported statewide: \$441 per device; student devices (laptops and tablets), \$382 per device; staff devices (laptops and tablets), \$912 per device; desktops (student and staff combined), \$833 per device; interactive panels, \$2,620 per device. These figures are calculated by dividing total modeled TCO by total devices within each group, so they reflect actual dollars spread across the actual device population rather than an average of PSU-level rates, which would weigh a small charter school's device fleet the same as a large county system's. Student laptops and tablets totaled \$684.7 million in modeled TCO across 1,792,632 devices. Staff laptops and tablets totaled \$204.4 million in modeled TCO across 224,140 devices. Desktops, combining both student and staff units, totaled \$75.1 million in modeled TCO across 90,160 devices. Interactive panels totaled \$153.5 million in modeled TCO across 58,579 devices. Combined, these figures represent \$1.12 billion in modeled TCO across 2,165,511 devices statewide. Interactive panels carry the highest per-device figure of any category, reflecting their higher unit cost and longer expected lifecycle compared with laptops or tablets.

During the 2025-26 school year, PSUs reported approximately \$6.62 million in technology device repair costs. Cost reporting varied considerably by device type and PSUs as some repairs may have been completed in-house staff using parts that were already available in the inventory or repurposed from retired devices. PSUs also reported \$85.10 million in device replacement costs. This included approximately \$58.83 million in student-device purchases, as part of the PSUs' replacement efforts, and \$26.27 million in staff-device and interactive-panel purchases. These figures represent purchase costs for devices acquired during the reporting period. The collected data does not separately identify the portion of these expenditures attributable specifically to replacement devices; therefore, the total should not be interpreted as replacement-only spending due to broken devices.

Device warranties covered the repair costs of 40.07% (124,794) of all reported repairs statewide. When PSUs are evaluating technology acquisitions, warranty coverage should be clearly defined and considered alongside initial purchase price, anticipated repair rates, device lifecycle, and other long-term costs. Understanding both the cost and scope of warranty coverage can help PSUs evaluate the total cost of ownership and make more informed, sustainable technology purchasing decisions.

Warranty coverage and replacement timing can have a significant impact on the cost of maintaining a device fleet. Replacing devices within or near their warranty period may reduce direct repair expenditures because a greater share of repairs can be covered under warranty. Extending the use of devices beyond warranty coverage may reduce the frequency of new device purchases but can increase a PSU's financial responsibility for repairs as devices age. These considerations illustrate the tradeoffs PSUs must evaluate when determining replacement schedules and estimating the Total Cost of Ownership of technology.

As devices reached the end of their useful life, PSUs reported devices that were retired or disposed of, along with associated disposal costs and trade-in or resale revenue, including approximately \$2.57 million statewide in trade-in or resale revenue associated with end-of-life device activity. This demonstrates that some PSUs are able to recover a portion of the value of technology assets through trade-in or resale strategies, which may help offset a portion of lifecycle costs. These findings provide useful historical context for the end-of-life component of Total Cost of Ownership and reinforce that technology planning extends beyond replacement. However, the reported trade-in and resale revenue reflects historical disposition activity and should not be interpreted as the anticipated future resale, salvage, or residual value of devices currently in service. G.S. 115C-102.10 directs PSUs to consider anticipated resale or salvage value as a percentage of a device's initial purchase price when evaluating technology acquisitions. The trade-in and resale revenue reported above reflects historical disposition activity in dollar terms and is not expressed as a percentage of original purchase cost. NCDPI recommends future DLMI collections capture resale and salvage value relative to original acquisition cost so this factor can be evaluated consistent with the statutory framework.

The statewide findings support evaluating technology investments using a combination of acquisition cost, historical Break/Fix performance, warranty coverage, anticipated lifecycle, repair expenditures, replacement needs, and potential resale or salvage value. Considering these factors together provides a more complete picture of the resources required to sustain a reliable technology environment over time.

Technology Funding and Replacement Context

PSUs reported information about technology purchasing plans, replacement needs, and available funding. Federal ESSER funding provided PSUs with an opportunity to expand access to technology, significantly increasing the availability of devices for students and staff across the state. As ESSER funding has ended, PSUs must sustain and eventually replace these investments using other available funding sources.

PSUs reported they do not have sufficient funding to maintain current device inventory. As stated earlier, PSUs purchased devices with one-time ESSER funding. Consequently, of the 323 PSUs reporting, 174 (53.9%) indicated that they do not have sufficient funding to maintain their ongoing device refresh needs.

Device Refresh Cycle

The data shows refresh cycles vary by device type and local strategy and may be influenced by expected useful life, warranty coverage, usage, device condition, and available funding. The table below provides a statewide view of the planned refresh cycles reported by PSUs:

Device Type	# of PSUs *out of 323 reporting PSUs	1-4 Year Planned Refresh Cycle	5-6 Year Planned Refresh Cycle	7-10 Year Planned Refresh Cycle	11+ Year Planned Refresh Cycle	0/No Refresh Cycle Reported
Student Laptops	304	30.10%	52.9%	10.30%	-	6.17%
Student Tablets	161	27.6%	55.8%	12.9%	-	3.7%
Student Desktops	81	14.9%	58.6%	21.8%	-	4.6%
Staff Laptops	308	30.4%	58.1%	8.8%	-	2.7%
Staff Tablets	149	29.5%	54.4%	12.8%	-	3.4%
Staff Desktops	179	15.10%	60%	22.2%	-	2.7%
Interactive Panels	163	11.3%	35.7%	45.8%	3%	4.2%

A reported refresh cycle of 0 years may indicate that the PSU does not use a fixed replacement schedule and instead replaces or rotates devices based on condition, need, or available funding. A PSU may appear in more than one refresh-cycle band when multiple lifecycle values were reported for the same device category; therefore, the bands should not be summed to determine a unique PSU total.

FINDINGS BY DEVICE TYPE

While the statewide Break/Fix rate provides an overall view of technology repair activity, the data show that repair experiences vary considerably by device type. Differences in portability, frequency and type of use, expected lifecycle, warranty coverage, protective gear, and local repair practices may all influence how often devices require repair and the costs associated with maintaining them. The following sections examine student devices, staff devices, and interactive panels separately to provide additional context for these differences and identify considerations for long-term technology planning.

Student Devices

Student devices make up the majority of technology reported by North Carolina public schools. More than 1.82 million student devices were reported statewide, representing approximately 84.2% of all school technology devices included in the collection.

Student laptops represent both the largest device population and the greatest source of repair activity. During the 2025–26 school year, student laptops had an overall repair rate of 17.79% and an estimated Break/Fix rate of 10.57%, the highest rates among the student device categories.

Student tablets had a 5.21% overall repair rate and 2.70% estimated Break/Fix rate, while student desktops had rates of 4.97% and 4.60%, respectively.

Several factors may contribute to these differences. Student laptops are portable devices that are frequently transported between classrooms, homes, and other learning environments, increasing opportunities for physical damage and wear. They are also used across large student populations and may experience daily handling, charging, opening and closing, and transportation throughout their lifecycle. By comparison, desktop computers generally remain in a fixed location, while tablets have fewer moving components and may be used differently depending on grade level and instructional purpose.

These differences are also reflected in reported repair expenditures. Student laptops accounted for approximately \$5.52 million of the \$6.62 million in statewide reported repair expenditures. However, repair expenditures should be interpreted alongside the size of the student-laptop inventory, warranty coverage, device age, local repair practices, and the availability of in-house repair staff and replacement parts.

Given the size of the student-device inventory and the level of repair activity associated with student laptops, student computing devices represent a significant component of PSU technology sustainability planning. Acquisition decisions should consider not only purchase price, but also expected durability, warranty coverage, repair history, and anticipated useful lifecycle.

Staff Devices

PSUs reported approximately 283,345 staff laptops, tablets, and desktop computers in service during the 2025–26 school year. Although staff devices represent a smaller portion of the statewide inventory, they support instruction, communication, administrative functions, and access to digital systems necessary for school operations.

Staff laptops accounted for the majority of staff-device repair activity. Of the 195,104 staff laptops reported statewide, 18,618 repairs were reported, resulting in a 9.54% overall repair rate and an estimated 6.16% Break/Fix rate. Staff desktops had a 5.27% overall repair rate and 4.94% estimated Break/Fix rate, while staff tablets had substantially lower rates of 1.57% and 0.87%, respectively.

As with student devices, differences in repair activity may reflect how the devices are used. Staff laptops are portable and may move between classrooms, offices, meetings, and home, while desktop computers generally remain stationary. Staff devices may also experience different handling patterns and workloads than student devices and may be maintained on different replacement cycles or warranty agreements.

Staff laptops also accounted for the majority of reported staff-device repair expenditures. However, lower repair rates do not necessarily mean lower long-term importance or cost. Staff technology may remain in service longer than student devices, and replacement strategies may differ based on job responsibilities, available funding, and local technology standards.

These findings support treating staff technology as a distinct component of lifecycle planning rather than assuming that the same acquisition, warranty, and replacement strategies used for student devices will produce the same results for staff devices.

Interactive Panels

PSUs reported 58,579 interactive panels in service statewide. Interactive panels had an overall repair rate of 2.58% and an estimated Break/Fix rate of 1.77%, considerably lower than the rates reported for student and staff laptops.

The lower repair rate is reasonable given the different nature of these devices. Unlike laptops and tablets, interactive panels are generally installed in a fixed classroom location and are not routinely transported or handled in the same manner as portable computing devices. This may reduce exposure to drops, transportation damage, charging-related wear, and other conditions experienced by mobile devices.

At the same time, interactive panels represent a different type of long-term technology investment. The refresh-cycle data show that many PSUs expect interactive panels to remain in service longer than laptops and tablets, with 77 PSUs reporting planned lifecycles between seven and ten years and six reporting lifecycles greater than ten years. This longer expected lifecycle can spread acquisition costs over a greater period but may also create different maintenance and replacement considerations as panels age beyond manufacturer warranty periods.

Reported repair expenditures for interactive panels were relatively low compared with laptops, but direct repair expenditures alone may not capture the full impact of a panel failure. Because an interactive panel is typically a shared classroom resource rather than an individually assigned device, a single failure may affect access for an entire classroom until the device can be repaired or replaced.

For this reason, interactive panels should be considered separately from portable computing devices when PSUs evaluate lifecycle, warranty coverage, repair strategy, and replacement planning.

INNOVATION & FLEXIBILITY

PSUs statewide deploy a mix of student device types and platforms based on instructional purpose, grade band, program need, and local context. Of the 323 PSUs included in the statewide Break/Fix collection, 167 (51.7%) reported more than one type of student device in service, including 64 PSUs that reported student laptops, tablets, and desktops. This flexibility allows PSUs to match devices to instructional purpose, grade band, and program need rather than standardize on a single platform, and it supports a range of built-in accessibility features, such as screen readers, switch access, speech-to-text, and magnification tools, that vary by platform and can be matched to individual student needs, including students with disabilities and English Learners. Maintaining this flexibility, rather than moving toward a single statewide device standard, is likely to better support the diverse instructional and accessibility needs found across PSUs.

This same flexibility extends to how PSUs manage devices once they are in service, and even after those devices reach the end of their useful life. Several PSUs have developed student-led device repair and refurbishment programs, in which trained student teams recover usable components from devices that are no longer functional and use those parts to extend the service life of other units in the fleet. Rather than selling these retired devices back at end of life, many PSUs choose to retain them, having determined that the devices are worth more kept in-house, both as a source of parts for ongoing repairs and as hands-on learning tools for students, than the return they would receive through resale. These programs give students real-world experience with hardware diagnostics and repair, building job-ready technical skills and, in some PSUs, contributing toward industry-recognized certifications, while also helping PSUs stretch limited technology budgets by reducing the number of full device replacements needed each year. Taken together, these practices reflect a consistent statewide pattern: PSU technology leaders are exercising flexibility not only in what devices they choose, but in how they manage those devices across their full lifecycle, to best serve student needs while making the most of every technology dollar.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the 2025–26 statewide Break/Fix data collection from PSUs, NCDPI offers the following recommendations for consideration and ways to reduce PSU break/fix rates:

1. Reduce Break/Fix Rates Through Device Durability, Warranty Coverage, and Care Practices.

Because break/fix rates vary considerably by device type, NCDPI recommends that the State Board and PSUs pursue targeted, evidence-based practices aimed directly at reducing device breakage, rather than relying on funding and lifecycle planning alone. Student laptops had the highest estimated Break/Fix rate of any device category at 10.57%, more than double the rate for student tablets (2.70%) and roughly six times the rate for interactive panels (1.77%), suggesting that portability and frequency of handling are closely associated with breakage. PSUs should be encouraged to incorporate durability specifications and protective cases into student laptop procurement, extend manufacturer or vendor warranty and accidental-damage protection coverage on the device categories with the highest break/fix rates to reduce non-warranty repair exposure, and reinforce student and staff device-care expectations, such as responsible-use agreements and handling guidance, particularly for portable devices that travel between classrooms, homes, and other learning environments. Prioritizing these interventions for the device categories with the highest break/fix activity, rather than applying a single statewide approach across all device types, is likely to produce the greatest reduction in break/fix rates.

2. Sustain support for student technology devices.

Identify dedicated and recurring state funding for student technology devices to help PSUs maintain predictable refresh cycles and reduce reliance on temporary or one-time funding sources. This recommendation is consistent with prior NCDPI recommendations to the General Assembly and is

further supported by the current findings. Student devices represent approximately 84.2% of all school technology devices reported statewide, while 174 PSUs (53.9%) report that they do not have sufficient funding to maintain ongoing refresh needs post-ESSER funding. Predictable funding would support acquisition, warranty coverage, maintenance, repair, and scheduled replacement throughout the device lifecycle. The previous statewide digital learning report similarly identified recurring state funding as necessary to stabilize PSU device refresh cycles following the conclusion of ESSER and ECF funding. Modern, up-to-date devices are more likely to remain covered by manufacturer and extended warranties while meeting current durability, security, and support standards. Predictable device refresh cycles also reduce PSU exposure to costly out-of-warranty break/fix repairs and support the long-term sustainability of technology investments.

3. Strengthen Total Cost of Ownership and lifecycle planning.

NCDPI recommends PSUs evaluate technology acquisitions based on Total Cost of Ownership (TCO), including historical Break/Fix performance, warranty coverage, repair costs, expected lifecycle, replacement needs, and resale or salvage value rather than purchase price alone, with lifecycle strategies tailored by device type rather than a single statewide interval. To make this practical for PSUs of all sizes, NCDPI should pursue a statewide convenience contract for a technology asset management or TCO-tracking solution: many PSUs, particularly smaller districts, currently lack a system to track this data, which limits both local procurement decisions and the consistency of statewide reporting. NCDPI should also continue annual Break/Fix data collection, refining future DLMI collections to clearly distinguish warranty and non-warranty repairs, and capture the total funds spent to repair or replace devices consistent with G.S. 115C-102.11(b)(4), and gather device-failure-cause data so future recommendations can target the specific drivers of break/fix activity.

NCDPI further recommends amending G.S. 115C-102.11 to move the State Board's Break/Fix report deadline from November 15 to align with the January due date for the Digital Learning Progress (Digital Dashboard) report. Both reports draw on the same Digital Learning and Media Inventory submission from PSUs, so aligning the deadlines would reduce duplicative reporting burden on PSUs while giving NCDPI more than the current three-month window between the August 15 PSU submission deadline and the November 15 report deadline to validate submitted data, reconcile inconsistent submissions like those identified during this year's collection, and work directly with PSUs on strategies to reduce break/fix rates before the next collection cycle begins. Beyond compliance, this report as a whole is intended to help PSUs make better, more informed technology decisions, and additional review time would strengthen that value in future years.

This report has already proven valuable in helping PSUs identify the right time to sell or retire devices, informed by break/fix trends and device performance data rather than age alone, and a longer reporting window would allow NCDPI to work more closely with PSUs on applying these same insights. It is worth noting, however, that not all PSUs have equal flexibility in acting on this information: some school districts are funded on a county budget cycle, and that funding cycle,

rather than device performance data alone, often drives the timing of their device replacement and sustainability decisions.

DATA LIMITATIONS

Self-Reported Data

The findings in this report are based on data submitted by Public School Units (PSUs) through the 2025–26 school year. While the data provide a statewide baseline for understanding technology repair activity, costs, warranty coverage, and device lifecycles, several limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Self-Reported Data. Data are reported directly by PSUs and reflect local inventory, repair, and financial tracking practices. The systems and processes used to maintain these records vary across PSUs, which may affect the level of detail and consistency of reported information.

Interpretation of Repair Data

During validation, NCDPI identified differences in how PSUs interpreted total repairs and warranty-covered repairs. In some instances, warranty repairs were reported separately from total repairs, resulting in mathematically inconsistent values. Where the intended relationship could be reasonably determined from the submitted data, values were reconciled to support calculation of the statutory Break/Fix rate. PSU-reported values were otherwise retained as submitted.

Repair Expenditures

Reported repair expenditures should not be interpreted as the full statewide cost of maintaining school technology. PSUs may complete repairs using in-house staff, existing parts inventories, parts repurposed from retired devices, warranty services, or other arrangements that result in little or no direct reported expenditure. Staff time and other indirect costs associated with diagnosing, repairing, managing, shipping, and returning devices may also not be reflected. G.S.

115C-102.11(b)(4) directs PSUs to report funds spent to repair or replace devices; the 2025–26 DLMI collection captures actual repair expenditures but does not yet capture actual replacement expenditures, and the replacement estimate cited earlier in this report is modeled from device counts and average unit cost rather than reported spending. NCDPI recommends refining future collections to capture actual replacement expenditures directly.

Device Age and Use

The collection includes planned device lifecycles but does not provide sufficient information to determine the exact age or condition of every device at the time of repair. Differences in grade level, portability, frequency of use, take-home practices, and local device-management practices may also influence repair rates. As a result, differences among device types, manufacturers, or PSUs should not be interpreted as evidence that one device or manufacturer is inherently more or less reliable.

Warranty Coverage

Warranty-covered repairs were collected; however, the cost and scope of warranty agreements were not consistently available. Therefore, the analysis can demonstrate the impact of warranty coverage on non-warranty repair activity but cannot determine whether a particular warranty strategy provides a greater financial return.

First-Year Baseline

This reporting cycle establishes an initial statewide baseline. A single year of data is not sufficient to establish long-term trends in device reliability, repair costs, or lifecycle performance. Continued annual collection will provide a stronger basis for identifying trends and developing statewide benchmarks over time.

Despite these limitations, the data provides a meaningful statewide view of school technology inventory and repair activity and establishes a foundation for improving future data collection, monitoring changes over time, and supporting technology acquisition and lifecycle planning.

CONCLUSION

The 2025–26 Digital Learning and Media Inventory provides North Carolina with an initial statewide baseline for understanding the costs associated with maintaining school technology devices. Across 323 Public School Units, more than 2.16 million devices were represented in the collection. PSUs reported 311,436 repairs, resulting in an overall repair rate of 14.38%. Warranty coverage played an important role in reducing repair exposure, covering 40.07% of reported repairs and resulting in an estimated statewide Break/Fix rate of 8.62%.

The findings demonstrate that the cost of providing technology extends beyond the initial purchase of a device. Repair performance, warranty coverage, expected lifecycle, replacement needs, and available funding all contribute to the Total Cost of Ownership. These considerations are particularly important for student devices, which represent more than 84% of the statewide device inventory and require continued investment to maintain reliable access.

Sustaining these investments remains a significant challenge. More than half of reporting PSUs indicated that they do not have sufficient funding to maintain ongoing device refresh needs post ESSER funding received during the COVID-19 pandemic. As devices purchased during and following the pandemic continue to age, predictable lifecycle planning and sustainable funding will become increasingly important to maintaining the technology currently available to students and staff.

Continued annual collection of Break/Fix and technology cost data will allow NCDPI to build on this baseline, improve data quality, identify trends, and develop benchmarks that can better inform technology acquisition and replacement decisions. Together with consideration of Total Cost of

Ownership and sustainable device funding, these data can support PSUs in maintaining reliable technology environments while making responsible long-term investments in school technology.

This inaugural report reflects NCDPI's commitment to bringing greater rigor and transparency to how North Carolina understands the cost of school technology. NCDPI looks forward to refining this reporting process in the years ahead to provide the General Assembly and PSUs with an increasingly valuable resource for technology planning.