



HOUSE BILL 959: Various Education Changes.

2025-2026 General Assembly

Committee:

Introduced by: Reps. Blackwell, K. Hall, Biggs
Analysis of: Conference Committee Substitute
(H959-CCSBE-2)

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OVERVIEW: *The 3rd edition of House Bill 959 would do all of the following:*

- *Require local boards of education to adopt an internet safety policy.*
- *Require the standard course of study to include instruction regarding social media and its effects on health.*
- *Require public school units to adopt wireless community policies that prohibit students from using, displaying, or having a wireless communication device turned on during instructional time except in certain situations.*

The Conference Committee Substitute would make the following changes to the 3rd edition:

- *Remove prohibitions related to TikTok from the required internet safety policy.*
- *Extend the deadline by which internet safety policies and wireless communication policies must be adopted.*
- *Add a provision allowing certain nonpublic schools to request residency licenses for teachers.*
- *Add a provision allowing certain community colleges to apply for reaccreditation by the Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission.*

REQUIRE INTERNET SAFETY POLICIES

CURRENT LAW: G.S. 115C-47 outlines the general powers and duties for local boards of education.

BILL ANALYSIS: **Section 1** would require local boards of education to adopt policies on student access to the internet on devices or internet services provided by local school administrative units. The policies would be required to do all of the following:

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

This section would be effective when it becomes law. Local boards of education would be required to adopt required policies by January 1, 2026.

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REQUIRE SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY INSTRUCTION IN SCHOOLS

CURRENT LAW: G.S. 115C-81.5 requires the State Board of Education to adopt a plan of education and a standard course of study which must include instruction in the areas of arts, communication skills, physical education and personal health and safety, mathematics, media and computer skills, science, second languages, social studies, and career and technical education. G.S. 115C-81.45(b) requires local boards of education to ensure that the standard course of study is taught in schools.

BILL ANALYSIS: Section 2 would require the standard course of study to include instruction on social media and its effects on health. Instruction would be required to be provided once during elementary school, once during middle school, and twice during high school. This instruction would be required to include information on at least the following:

- Negative effects of social media on mental health, including addiction.
- Distribution of misinformation on social media.
- Methods of manipulating behavior using social media.
- The permanency of information shared online.
- How to maintain personal security.
- How to identify cyberbullying, predatory behavior, and human trafficking on the internet.
- How to report suspicious behavior encountered on the internet.
- Personal and interpersonal skills or character education that enhances individual level protective factors and mitigates or reduces risk-taking or harmful behavior.

This section would be effective when it becomes law and would apply beginning with the 2026-2027 school year.

REQUIRE REGULATION OF STUDENT USE OF WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES DURING INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

Section 3 would require each governing body of a public school unit to establish a wireless communication policy that prohibits students from using, displaying, or having a wireless communication device turned on during instructional time, except in certain circumstances, including the following:

- If authorized by a teacher for educational purposes or for use in the event of an emergency.
- As required by the student's individualized education program (IEP) or section 504 plan.
- As required to manage a student's health care, in accordance with a documented medical condition.

The governing body of the public school unit would be required to establish the consequences for violations of the wireless communication policy. These consequences could include confiscation of the wireless communication device and disciplinary measures under the public school unit's Code of Student Conduct.

By September 1 of the year in which this law becomes effective, every public school unit would be required to send to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) a copy of the public school unit's wireless communication policy. The public school unit would be required to provide DPI with a copy of the wireless communication policy anytime it is changed. By October 1 of each year, DPI would be required to report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee the number of public school units that are in compliance with this statute and the names of any public school unit which is not in compliance.

This section would be effective when it becomes law. Governing bodies of public school units would be required to adopt required policies by January 1, 2026.

House 959 CCS

Page 3

RESIDENCY LICENSES FOR CERTAIN NONPUBLIC EC TEACHERS

CURRENT LAW: A residency license is a one-year teaching license that can be renewed twice. G.S. 115C-270.20(a)(5) authorizes the governing body of a public school unit to request a residency license for an individual if the individual meets all of the following requirements:

- Holds a bachelor's degree or advanced degree.
- Has completed coursework related to the requested licensure area or has passed a related content examination.
- Is enrolled in a recognized educator preparation program.

Parts 1 and 2 of Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes establish the requirements that nonpublic schools, excluding home schools, must meet.

BILL ANALYSIS: In addition to the governing body of a public school unit, **Section 4** would authorize certain nonpublic schools to request a residency license. The nonpublic school would be authorized to request a residency license if it meets both of the following:

- Meets the nonpublic school requirements in either Part 1 or Part 2 of Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes.
- Is approved and monitored by the Department of Public Instruction to provide special education and related services pursuant to a student's individualized education program (IEP).

This section would be effective when it becomes law and apply to applications for residency licenses occurring on or after that date.

ALLOW CERTAIN SCHOOLS TO APPLY FOR REACCREDITATION BY THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE EDUCATION AND TRAINING STANDARDS COMMISSION

BILL ANALYSIS: **Section 5** would require the Criminal Justice Education and Training Standards Commission to allow any school that received a suspension of its accreditation for at least four years to apply for reaccreditation after serving two years of the suspension.

This section would be effective when it becomes law and would apply to suspensions occurring on or before that date.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Except as otherwise provided, the bill would be effective when it becomes law.

**Hillary Woodard and Drupti Chauhan, Staff Attorneys with the Legislative Analysis Division, substantially contributed to this summary.*