



2025-2026 General Assembly

SENATE BILL 257: 2026 Appropriations Act, Sec. 8.4: Establish Standards for Agreements Between Constituent Institutions of The University of North Carolina and Local School Administrative Units for the Operation and Maintenance of Laboratory Schools

Analysis of: S.L. 2026-41, Sec. 8.4

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Section 8.4 of S.L. 2026-41 (Senate Bill 257) makes changes to the requirements for laboratory schools (lab schools), which are public schools operated by a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina in local school administrative units (LEAs) with low-performing schools. The changes to the requirements include all of the following:

- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU): Directs the chancellor of the constituent institution and the LEA to adopt an MOU for the operation and maintenance of the lab school that includes facilities and leases; transportation services; food services; and student support services. The chancellor and the LEA must review and update the MOU at least every three years and any updated MOU can take effect no earlier than the next school year. For proposals to amend a term regarding facilities, services, or operations of the lab school, the proposing party must provide at least six months' notice and the amendment cannot take effect earlier than the next school year.
- School Lunch Program – Clarifies that unless the lab school agrees in the MOU to administer the National School Lunch Program as the school food authority for its students, the LEA in which the lab school is located must administer the National School Lunch Program for the lab school as the school food authority. The LEA must:
 - Purchase, prepare, deliver, and serve food and drink for the lab school students.
 - Engage in any contracts or other actions needed to provide the food services, including procuring federal reimbursement funds.
- The LEA can charge the costs of the facilities and student support services provided to the lab school. The charges cannot exceed the standards determined jointly by the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina (BOG) and the State Board of Education (SBE). If the LEA fails to provide any of the required services, the lab school can provide those services on its own and can charge the LEA for the actual costs of those services even if the costs exceed the standards agreed upon by the BOG and SBE. The LEA must reimburse the lab school for those services from non-State funds.

This section became effective July 1, 2026.

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