



NORTH CAROLINA
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Fifth Grade Career Awareness Program
§115C-157

Date Due: November 15, 2025
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2024-2025

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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OVERVIEW

The report was prepared in accordance with requirements of G.S. 115C-157.

§ 115C-157. Responsibility of local boards of education:

- (a) Each local school administrative unit shall provide free appropriate career and technical education instruction, activities, and services in accordance with the provisions of this Part for all youth, with priority given to youth in grades eight through 12, who elect the instruction and shall have responsibility for administering the instruction, activities, and services in accordance with federal and State law and State Board of Education policies.
- (b) Each local school administrative unit shall offer as part of its career and technical education program at least two work-based learning opportunities that are related to career and technical education instruction. A work-based learning opportunity shall consist of on-the-job training through an internship, cooperative education, or an apprenticeship program meeting the requirements of Chapter 115D of the General Statutes.
- (C) Each local board of education is encouraged to implement a career awareness program for students in grade five to educate students on the career and technical education programs offered in the local school administrative unit. A local board of education that adopts a career awareness program for fifth grade students shall report on program activities and student outcomes from the prior school year to the State Board of Education by October 1 of each year. By November 15 of each year, the State Board shall submit a consolidated report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on program outcomes and any legislative recommendations based on local board of education reports. (1977, c. 490, s. 2; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1993, c. 180, s. 3; 2004-124, s. 7.15(c); 2017-57, s. 7.23H(e)).

PART I: ACTIVITIES

The CTE Division developed and released a survey tool to all districts to collect data on activities completed during the 2024 – 2025 school year. The survey asked, “How did your district participate in the following fifth Grade Career Awareness Activities”, and included the following items:

1. Middle School Tours
2. High School Tours
3. Career Related Field Trips / Business Tours
4. Job Shadowing Opportunities
5. Guest Speakers
6. Career Fairs
7. Career Interest Inventories
8. Other Career Awareness Activities / Events

Survey Response: Though participation in the program is not required, we were pleased this year, the eighth year of the program, to have achieved a 100% response rate with 116 districts providing feedback. This is the third consecutive year with a 100% response rate. These numbers represent a large contrast to the 46% response rate during the first year of reporting (2017-2018).

PART II: STUDENT OUTCOMES

NCDPI CTE is pleased that the results of the Fifth Grade Career Awareness survey indicated approximately 218,147 fifth grade students were exposed to career awareness related to the CTE programs offered districts during the 2024-25 school year. This number does include some duplicative data between different career awareness event types. This is an increase from 200,174 reported in 2023-24.

The reported data from all districts reflect the following information for the 2024-25 school year, with the 2023-24 school year included for reference:

EVENT TYPE	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS 2023-24	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS 2024-25	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS 2023-24	NUMBER OF DISTRICTS 2024-25
MIDDLE SCHOOL TOURS	47,632	47,715	98	101
HIGH SCHOOL TOURS	9,567	7,310	32	27
CAREER-RELATED FIELD TRIPS / BUSINESS TOURS	24,800	7,760	68	71
JOB SHADOWING OPPORTUNITIES	918	1,223	12	7
GUEST SPEAKERS	40,313	45,103	87	95
CAREER FAIRS	24,911	55,291	64	75
CAREER INTEREST INVENTORIES	36,002	33,148	64	71
OTHER ACTIVITIES / EVENTS	16,031	20,597	52	52
TOTAL	200,174	218,147	116	116

The Office of Career and Technical Education (CTE) is increasing efforts to generate tools and resources for fifth grade educators in North Carolina and CTE support personnel, such as engaging School Counselors, CTE Directors, Career Development Coordinators, and other NC educators in working with fifth grade students. Some efforts by the NCDPI CTE staff are as follows: conducting sessions at the annual CTE Summer Conference sharing best practices and data collected on

Career Awareness Programs; generating publications to serve all NC educators as resources for increasing fifth grade career awareness education; encouraging districts to share their Career Awareness Programs and/or resources used at the local level with other districts by way of online resources hosted by the NCDPI CTE staff and in local public school unit gatherings and clusters; hosting webinars, panels, and “Collaboration Stations” for local CTE staff, such as Career Development Coordinators and CTE Directors; increasing visibility of 5th grade career awareness education initiatives by including school counselors in CTE work across the board when possible; and generating professional development opportunities for any North Carolina educators interested in attending to learn more about increasing fifth grade career awareness education.

PART III: STATE REPORT INFORMATION

The Career and Technical Education Division at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction is pleased to announce that, for the first time, all North Carolina public school units participated in the 5th Grade Career Awareness Program survey during the 2021–2022 school year. We are proud to have achieved and consistently maintained a 100% participation rate each year since.

Further background and insight to student participation in the program is as follows:

Program Survey / School Year	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2021	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025
Student Participation	50,868	63,957	163,075	212,756	200,174	218,147

As evidenced by the data above, the 5th Grade Career Awareness Program in North Carolina has experienced steady growth each year. From 2019 to 2025, student participation in the program increased by 23%.

PART IV: LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the emphasis being placed on Work Based Learning at the state and federal levels, we anticipate this program will continue to grow and expand across the state. The implementation of The Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) continues to support the adoption and implementation of career awareness programs in Grade 5. The recommendation is to continue with the current legislation.