



Public Schools of North Carolina
State Board of Education
Department of Public Instruction

Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

Remote Instruction Plans

*School Calendar For The 2020-2021
School Year*

SB 704/S.L. 2020-3/Section 2.11.(c)

Date Due: September 15, 2020
DPI Chronological Schedule, 2020-2021

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 is to use its constitutional authority to guard and maintain the right of a sound, basic education for every child in North Carolina Public Schools.

ERIC DAVIS

Chair: Charlotte – At-Large

JILL CAMNITZ

Greenville – Northeast Region

TODD CHASTEEN

Blowing Rock – Northwest Region

ALAN DUNCAN

Vice-Chair: Greensboro – Piedmont-Triad Region

REGINALD KENAN

Rose Hill – Southeast Region

DONNA TIPTON-ROGERS

Brasstown – Western Region

DAN FOREST

Lieutenant Governor: Raleigh – Ex Officio

AMY WHITE

Garner – North Central Region

J. WENDELL HALL

Ahoskie – At-Large

DALE FOLWELL

State Treasurer: Raleigh – Ex Officio

OLIVIA OXENDINE

Lumberton – Sandhills Region

J.B. BUXTON

Raleigh – At-Large

MARK JOHNSON

Secretary to the Board: Raleigh

JAMES FORD

Charlotte – Southwest Region

NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

Mark Johnson, State Superintendent :: 301 N. Wilmington Street :: Raleigh, North Carolina 27601-2825

In compliance with federal law, the NC Department of Public Instruction administers all state-operated educational programs, employment activities and admissions without discrimination because of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, color, age, military service, disability, or gender, except where exemption is appropriate and allowed by law.

Inquiries or complaints regarding discrimination issues should be directed to:

Joe Maimone, Chief of Staff

6307 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-6307 / Phone: (984) 236-2206 / Fax: (984) 236-2349

Visit us on the Web: www.dpi.nc.gov

0720

Report to the NC General Assembly: Remote Instruction Plans Senate Bill 704. Session Law 2020-3. Section 2.11.(c)

BACKGROUND:

This report meets the legislative requirements set forth in NC Session Law 2020-3, Section 2.11.(c) that states, “No later than September 15, 2020, the State Board shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the implementation of subsection (a) of this section”. This report provides a statewide summary of the Remote Instruction Plans that were submitted to the NC Department of Public Instruction by July 20, 2020, by each public school unit (PSU) reflecting the required components.

This report includes the following:

1. A copy of each Remote Instruction Plan submitted.
2. All online remote instruction resources used by public school units, listed by public school unit (PSU).
3. All offline remote instruction resources used by public school units, listed by public school unit.
4. A list of any public school unit using only offline remote instruction resources.
5. The number and percentage of public school units that did and did not provide plans addressing every item required by subsection (a) of this section.
6. Strengths, challenges, and trends noted by the State Board in its review of how public school units implement remote instruction.
7. Any other data deemed by the State Board to be useful to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee in evaluating the delivery of statewide remote instruction.

As stated in Subsection (a) of Section 2.11, “The purpose of the (Remote Instruction) Plan is to provide a detailed framework for delivering quality remote instruction to all students within the public school unit during the 2020-2021 school year...” The components addressed in the Remote Instruction Plans are:

1. Consulting with teachers, administrators and instructional support staff, parents, students, community partners, and other stakeholders in developing the Plan and effectively communicating the Plan to all involved parties.
2. Training for teachers and staff on the effective use of the remote instruction resources utilized by the public school unit and the process for student submission of completed work; and identifying any learning management system, online instructional resource, or an offline instructional resources that will be made available to all students in a grade-level across the public school unit.
3. Defining and clearly communicating staff roles and expectations for remote instruction days, including teacher workdays, teacher accessibility, and noncertified staff workdays and responsibilities. The Plan may include variances for staff expectations when remote instruction days are also used as teacher workdays.
4. Surveying student and teacher home connectivity and providing for remote instruction that is appropriate for teachers and students with limited connectivity capability, including the opportunity for students to download remote learning materials in advance when practicable.

5. Engaging with community partners on services that parents and students can utilize on remote instruction days, including community partners willing to provide free broadband access or connectivity for remote instruction and community partners with child care options, and communicating remote instruction schedules with those partners.
6. Developing effective design and delivery of remote instruction lessons within professional learning communities.
7. Teaching and practicing opportunities for students on accessing and using remote instruction platforms and methods, including how to locate, complete, and submit assignments; and including regular opportunities for students to use the platforms and methods during non-remote instruction days to ensure student success during remote instruction.
8. Communicating learning targets to students on each remote instruction day and ensuring that lesson design provides instructional time, practice, and application components to demonstrate learning; and including a process for monitoring the quality of remote instruction materials.
9. Ensuring that remote instructional time, practice, and application components support learning growth that continues towards mastery of the standard course of study; and including work measurement guidelines appropriate to each grade level, including deadlines for submission of assignments and methods to assess and grade learning during remote instruction.
10. Ensuring that students with disabilities have equal access to the remote instruction provided by their public school units and that remote instruction is provided in a manner consistent with each student's individualized education program (IEP) or 504 plan. Remote learning day supports shall be considered and included, as appropriate for the student, when an IEP or 504 plan is initially developed or at any subsequent review or revision of an IEP or 504 plan.
11. Tracking and reporting attendance on remote instruction days, including protocols for determining attendance, the reporting system to be used, and how attendance procedures will be communicated to parents before remote instruction begins.
12. Providing online and offline contact options for students to communicate with teachers or staff for remote instruction days that are not used as teacher workdays.
13. Providing technical support for students experiencing technical difficulties on remote instruction days.
14. *Responding to how the needs of English learners, Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted learners and students who have been identified and are served under the McKinney-Vento Act as homeless will be met during remote instruction.
15. *Describing the limitations that exist for implementation of quality remote learning based on each public school unit's local context.

*Note: These two additional components were added by the State Board of Education to make the Remote Instruction Plans even more complete.

REPORT INTRODUCTION:

As PSUs developed Remote Instruction Plans, they initially designed their responses to provide a framework of quality instruction for 5 days of remote instruction; however, with the ratification of SB 113, LEA's and Charters now have the flexibility to increase Remote Instruction Days as needed for student

and staff safety. It is important to note Remote Instruction Plans are not *Plan B* or *Plan C* as designated by the NC Department of Health and Human Services. Remote Instruction Plans do not include topics of health, safety, and transportation or reflect scheduling logistics to reduce social density; the Remote Instruction Plans focus on the required components indicated above, which address operationalizing teaching and learning.

NCDPI oversees a total of 325 PSUs. PSUs consist of 116 local education agencies (district and city school systems), and 219 charter, regional, & lab schools. As of August 18, 2020, 100% of the state's 325 PSUs have submitted Remote Instruction Plans.

Overall, PSUs have been committed to the development of quality Remote Instruction Plans in response to SL 2020-3, Senate Bill 704. The desire to provide clear guidance and a quality framework for effective student learning on remote instruction days was evident in the responses and plans submitted. There is a range in the responses provided and some plans are more comprehensive than others, but the intent is clear. This is a clear indication of the dedication and focus PSUs have to meet the needs of their students, teachers, and school communities during this time of COVID-19.

To support PSUs in the development of these Remote Instruction Plans, NCDPI developed a cross-agency resource document, [Remote Instruction Guidance](#), and provided weekly technical assistance sessions, some with hundreds of attendees. Collaboration with the Office of Charter Schools, consistent communication, and ongoing support have contributed to the high submission rate of Remote Instruction Plans.

NCDPI is continuing to support PSUs with remote instruction as the school year continues with several initiatives already underway, including:

- Partnering with Regional Case Managers and Regional staff for coaching and technical assistance based on the Remote Instruction Plans.
- Sharing specific components from the Remote Instruction Plans with various areas across the agency, especially EC, EL, AIG, and McKinney-Vento, to facilitate state-wide support.
- Providing responsive professional learning opportunities for district leaders and school-based personnel focused on academic content areas as well as various program areas across the agency, ranging from Office Hours to Monthly Meet Ups to more focused, comprehensive, professional development sessions.
- Building capacity for Digital Teaching and Learning for LEAs and Charters through a Coaching Cohort in partnership with Friday Institute. Currently, in the first cohort, 150 participants are developing their understanding of effective principles of remote instruction and digital teaching and learning in schools and will be equipped to support educators in their PSUs.
- Sharing and developing various instructional resources for academic and program areas, such as:
 - Remote Instruction Resources and Information website
<https://sites.google.com/dpi.nc.gov/remote-learning-resources/home>
 - English Language Arts Remote Learning Resources
<https://sites.google.com/dpi.nc.gov/englishlanguagearts/resources/remote-learning>

- Academically and/or Intellectually Gifted (AIG) Remote Learning Resources <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/students-families/enhanced-opportunities/advanced-learning-and-gifted-education/2020-aig-remote-learning-resources>
- Office of Early Learning Resources: <https://sites.google.com/dpi.nc.gov/nck-3fap/home>
- Updating the current ***Lighting the Way Forward Guidebook: NC's Guidebook for Reopening Schools*** with additional ideas and strategies for PSUs: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1z5Mp2XzOOPkBYN4YvROz4YOyNIF2UoWq9EZfrjvN4x8/edit?usp=sharing>

REPORT REQUIRED COMPONENTS:

(1) A copy of each Remote Instruction Plan submitted:

Each PSUs Remote Instruction Plan is available at this [link](#)

(https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/e/2PACX-1vQ8PjGFWB7EDVD2dYh2ZKtvHPAxB057q8Ay29Gg5kUxWR_9WxICXvG2cS8V0opQuzOQZY2QvucODRL/pubhtml).

They are also viewable by State Board of Education region at this [link](#):

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1CmLdSnSVkTt1nhme60yI_GT8kf2oQvhU

(2 and 3) All online remote instruction resources used by public school units, listed by public school unit and all offline remote instruction resources used by public school units, listed by public school unit:

PSUs submitted a spreadsheet listing each online and offline resource used by grade level. All online and offline remote instruction resources, listed by the public school unit are located at this [link](#) (<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/e/2PACX-1vT9hC16GV-CDhNHMMMXcab8mKysvhB1-bya6dY3ghBD3XFghi0IGnQ4tiGv1p8XXvQFW2Npup09wgsu/pubhtml>).

(3) A list of any public school unit using only offline remote instruction resources.

None of the 325 PSUs indicated they were only using offline remote instruction resources. Fourteen PSUs (4.3 percent) did not submit offline resources; however, all 325 (100 percent) PSUs submitted online resources and indicated specific Learning Management Systems being used by grade level.

(4) The number and percentage of public school units that did and did not provide plans addressing every item required by subsection (a) of this section.

All of the 325 public school units (100 percent) submitted a Remote Instruction Plan. All of the 325 plans submitted (100 percent), addressed all of the 13 components required in SB 704 (SL2020-3) and the 2 additional items required by the State Board of Education in SBE policy SPLN-006.

(5) Strengths, challenges, and trends noted by the State Board in its review of how public school units implement remote instruction.

On August 14, 2020, each PSU was surveyed to provide insight into the strengths, challenges, and trends they are experiencing.

STRENGTHS:

As PSUs developed high-quality Remote Instruction Plans, many strengths emerged in the process of development of the most effective teaching and learning for NC's public school students.

The primary strengths reported by PSUs are:

- **Professional Development/Teacher Readiness:** PSUs reported that significant professional learning to support remote instruction has been occurring since March 2020. Professional development has been focused on pedagogical shifts to support remote/blended instruction, the social-emotional well-being of students, and digital teaching and learning.
- **Alignment:** PSUs reported better overall alignment of curriculum and instruction, community involvement, communication, processes, online tools, and learning platforms to deliver instruction remotely. The Remote Instruction Plan has strengthened the communication, development, and delivery of remote instruction and focused the PSUs on one vision during this time of COVID-19.
- **Teachers/Staff:** PSUs reported on the incredible dedication, support, and willingness of their teachers and staff to learn, adapt and be flexible during this period of change. Teachers and staff have worked together to meet the needs of remote learning.
- **Community/Families:** PSUs reported that the support and understanding from families and communities in response to the changes, challenges, and opportunities faced by PSUs during this time were exceptional.
- **Devices:** PSUs reported increased access to devices for students and staff have been a major strength in delivering remote instruction.
- **Digital Content/LMS:** PSUs reported increased implementation, standardization, and usage of Learning Management Systems and digital content, both locally created and purchased. The digital platforms provide the ability to provide individualized and group instruction using the teacher's digital content.
- **Funding:** PSUs reported an appreciation for funding to increase access to mobile connectivity, student and teacher devices, and other related items.
- **Support and Feedback:** PSUs reported increased support, feedback, and communication between all entities, including between NCDPI, PSUs, administrators/teachers, and families/students.

Below are several excerpts from the PSU survey sharing strengths for remote learning:

"The cross-departmental effort has provided a comprehensive plan for the district to implement a cohesive remote learning experience for our learners and students. It's a living document and will be amended as we move into the implementation of remote instruction. Continuous reflection and feedback from all stakeholders will guide this work"

"A major strength has been the willingness, intensity, and creativity of our teachers as they learn how to teach online and create online classrooms that are appealing, motivating, and provide substantive learning. This process has made them think more deeply about teaching and learning and will pay dividends when we return to face-to-face instruction."

"A large percentage of students have access to the internet at home and a Chromebook. Teachers have been well-trained on remote learning tools, better preparing them to implement our plan, and raise the rigor of online learning. Implementation of the *Remote Learning Guidebook* a collaborative planning process with school administrators occurred. Clarity on attendance and grading procedures, Virtual Open House with lessons and resources created by ITF's".

“Students are being provided with district-wide learning platforms and student learning progressions to support remote instruction; teachers have access across the district to consistent instructional resources to support remote learning.”

“We are so impressed with the flexibility of our team.”

“We have utilized the requirement of the Remote Instruction Plan to strengthen our Teaching and Learning team, which represents every school and the district office. This was our opportunity to debrief with teachers, parents, administrators, and the community about how our district responded during the Spring school closure. We implemented most of the feedback as a way to build a stronger plan for remote learners this fall, as our district offered a menu of options for families. The remote instruction plan can support our educators serving remote learners again, and will also be used district-wide if we have to return to Plan C for all.”

“Thank you for the financial support that helped make opening school safely possible.”

“I have appreciated all the state-led calls to help keep school leaders informed and connected. Thank you for all of your efforts and resource documents shared.”

“I believe our plan has many strengths (commitment to one LMS, 1x1 devices for all students K-12, consistent canvas course/shell experience for students/parents, equitable approach to grading and attendance, deep professional learning for our teachers, and robust supports provided for EL, EC and AIG students.). We learned from our experience last Spring and have spent the summer creating enhanced end-user experiences that are incredibly robust with high-quality curriculum and interventions embedded in canvas courses.”

CHALLENGES:

While PSUs have developed high-quality Remote Instruction Plans, challenges remain to ensure the most effective teaching and learning for NC’s public school students.

The primary challenges reported by PSUs are:

- **Internet Access:** PSUs reported that reaching families in remote areas with limited or no internet access or effective connectivity is one of the biggest challenges to remote learning. This leads to less quality instruction through paper-pencil packets and the additional complications of transportation and delivery of these offline resources.
- **Professional Development, Teacher Readiness:** PSUs reported challenges to continue developing the expertise of their educators for remote/blended learning to increase student engagement in remote learning; to provide equity in teaching and learning for every student, including EC and EL; and to be more digitally competent with various online tools and programs. PSUs reported the issue of time to prepare educators and continue professional learning as a major challenge.
- **Lack of Devices:** PSUs are immediately concerned that some device orders have not yet been received by LEAs/Charters due to the global shortage and delay in shipments. PSUs are concerned that orders cannot be filled on time.
- **Additional Funding:** PSUs reported that financial needs still exist for student devices, internet subscriptions, and curriculum resources.

- **Supporting Families:** PSUs reported that supporting families during this process is another critical challenge. Balancing students being home remotely learning while adults may be teleworking, understanding online tools, devices, and new processes for learning, and providing childcare for employees and families in the community generally are all issues that remain.

Below are several excerpts from the PSU survey sharing challenges with remote learning:

“The greatest limitation we foresee is the lack of access, readiness, and capacity of students and families to engage in online learning. This is both an access to online resources-issue and a lack of time to learn-issue for students, families, and school personnel. “

“The greatest challenge right now is Broadband.”

“Our challenges continue to be accessibility for our low-income families.”

“Due to our geographical isolation connectivity is an issue for the majority of our students. We do not have the infrastructure to support remote learning in terms of streaming content and lessons.”

“One of the greatest challenges was not having enough time to provide staff development to prepare our staff for remote learning. We have been working very hard to provide training and get everything ready in a short amount of time. Additional time to prepare before remote instruction would have been very helpful.”

“Lack of teacher workdays to do some of the quality PD we needed to do. We made it work through online modules but would have loved more FtF time with teachers. COVID safety training had to be the priority this week while we had them.”

“Hands-on learning experiences that are difficult to simulate remotely; Helping teachers and administrators re-envision instead of putting 21st-century teaching and learning into a 20th-century model.’

“Our district is rural and connectivity has always been the most difficult challenge when instructing remotely. Ensuring that ALL students have adequate and equitable access to all materials and instruction is the most concerning aspect of remote learning if it is totally online.”

“Our most pressing limitations include students not having support at home to engage in high-quality instruction. Some parents are not able to support students for a variety of reasons.”

“.... it is still a monumental switch to move to remote learning for an extended period of time and that took changes in policies, grasping best practice for remote learning and additional resources/cost that we had to adjust to.”

“Our biggest challenge will be helping families access affordable childcare options, and supporting our most fragile students (EC, EL, Tier 3).”

“Our challenges center around equity and how to ensure that all students are provided a quality education that meets their needs. X-County is not a 1:1 school district and we have a very limited number of devices to provide for student use at home. There are also students who do not have Internet access within their homes. Additionally, there are some areas in the community that does not have the capability for connectivity to the Internet which also creates an obstacle to providing equitable learning environments and resources for all students. As a result, we are forced to provide paper and pencil packets to students who lack devices and Internet service which may not have the same quality and reinforcements that the online platform will give to students.”

STATEWIDE TRENDS:

- **Asynchronous and Synchronous Instruction:**
 - The use of live, synchronous lessons, and asynchronous lessons are being used extensively by PSUs.
 - Many schools implemented schedules that simulate a physical school schedule; while others are using various asynchronous formats.
- **Connectivity**
 - Struggles for broadband connectivity is the most prevalent limitation, especially in areas without cellular availability.
 - Expanded usage of mobile wifi hotspots where cellular coverage is available.
 - Non-connected households are being served with paper-pencil packets and telephone communication, which may not be as high of quality as connected methods.
- **Creative Solutions using Existing Resources:**
 - PSUs are developing fully virtual learning programs/academies as a choice for families; Families are choosing virtual learning programs at a higher rate than in previous years.
 - PSUs repurposed stationary computing equipment to distribute to students and staff.
 - Existing school building network infrastructure is being employed to expand WiFi connectivity to parking lots and outdoor areas.
- **Digital Resources and Platforms**
 - Significant increase in the implementation of one-to-one computing, where each student and teacher is assigned a mobile computing device, primarily Chromebooks.
 - PSUs who were already one-to-one before COVID-19 had experience with devices and platforms; which allowed focusing on professional learning and family support of remote instruction.
 - Increased use of consistent Learning Management Systems and digital content.
 - Schools are noting an increase in the need for staff skilled in Digital Learning Competencies and digital learning standards for students.
 - Decreased global supply of devices has impacted the ability for PSU's to obtain computers as quickly as needed. This has been caused by the immediate depletion of existing inventories in April 2020 and manufacturing delays.
 - PSUs continue to need access to high quality, standards-aligned online K-12 curriculum.
- **Community Involvement**

- PSUs show understanding and flexibility for families in various work and home settings.
- Increased communication, feedback, and responsiveness to needs are occurring.
- **Remote Instruction Plan Development**
 - Continued refinement and revisions of plans as districts provide remote and blended instruction.
 - Multiple stakeholder groups were engaged in the plan development.
- **Professional Development**
 - More time needed for professional development for remote instruction and digital tools and devices
- **Heightened Concerns Meeting Needs Certain populations**
 - Specific concerns meeting needs of K-2
 - EL, EC and Low-Performing Students

(6) Any other data deemed by the State Board to be useful to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee in evaluating the delivery of statewide remote instruction.

As the majority of students began school on August 17, PSUs are in the beginning stages of operationalizing the remote instruction plan. Many have indicated that their plan will be adjusted as needed to best serve the needs of students, families, and staff.

Overall, PSUs shared the Remote Instructions Plan components helped them to plan, communicate, and to deliver effective and quality education remotely while continuing to mitigate limitations.

The SBE would also like to share its concern of the financial hardship on families during remote instruction, especially for those families who are not able to telework and need childcare.

NCDPI will continue to provide professional development opportunities, technical assistance, coaching and instructional/programming resources, and to monitor patterns and trends. NCDPI will intentionally review concerns heard from stakeholders to determine if further support is needed through practices or policies and to share promising practices with the field to build capacity and success during this unique time of teaching and learning.

For questions/concerns, please contact:
 Vanessa Wrenn, Director, Digital Teaching and Learning
vanessa.wrenn@dpi.nc.gov

Sneha Shah-Coltrane, Director, Advanced Learning and Gifted Education
sneha.shahcoltrane@dpi.nc.gov