



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

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# Report to the North Carolina General Assembly

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Driver Education Reform  
SL 2011-145, sec. 28.37(h,i)

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**Date Due: June 15, 2012**  
**Report # 74**  
**DPI Chronological Schedule, 2011-2012**

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## NC DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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This report provides a brief overview of the legislated requirements and directives related to Driver Education Reform and the progress which has been made by DPI in meeting these directives as well as the plans and timeline, in place, to complete these requirements. Originally, the Driver Education Reform Report was due by June 15, 2012. The decision was made by the Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee to delay the final report until all the requested information would become available. The complexity of securing the in-depth information necessary for the study was further impacted by students needing until August 31, 2012 to complete the Behind-The-Wheel portion of the Driver Education course and the difficulty in obtaining protected information from DMV. The final report will be submitted by September 14, 2012.

In North Carolina, the state has approximately 120,000 students who become eligible to take Driver Education, annually. About 92 % of those students (110,000) actually take the Driver Education course. All students who are 14 years and 6 months old are eligible to take Driver Education.

Currently, the Driver Education Program in North Carolina is funded through the Highway Fund administered by the NC Department of Transportation and funds are dispersed through the NC Department of Public Instruction to all

115 LEAs (local education agencies) in the state. All LEAs are accountable to DPI for proper use of Driver Education funds as monitored through the routine school financial operations, protocols and channels.

The Driver Education Reform Bill directed the State Board of Education to complete a variety of tasks in order to study and impact the Driver Education program offered in NC public schools. Please see Appendix A for the Driver Education Reform Bill.

- 1) The standardized Driver Education Curriculum has been developed, adopted and revised as directed by the NC General Assembly. All Driver Education teachers have been given copies of the Curriculum as developed by the committee of experts and approved by the State Board of Education in March of 2011 and revised in July of 2011 to include specific information on motorcycle safety as directed by the General Assembly. Also note, the reform bill indicates that all Driver Education programs utilizing state funding must use the newly adopted standard Driver Education Curriculum when teaching the course.

- 2) The Driver Education Advisory Committee has been appointed and is operational and integrally involved in the development of the Driver Education Strategic Plan. Please see Appendix B for the Driver Education Advisory Committee members.
- 3) The Driver Education Strategic Plan is currently in draft form. Parental involvement, professional development, instructor qualifications, agency oversight for the program, funding, and national safety standards are some of the areas addressed in the Strategic Plan. DPI was given an extension from the General Assembly to collect the necessary data we wanted and needed to use in developing and finalizing the plan. Upon careful review, it was determined that more research, study, data and information was needed to completely inform and guide the development of the details of the Strategic Plan while the framework of the strategic plan was helpful in guiding the collection of program data.
- 4) In addition, SL 2011-145, sec. 28.37(h, i) states:

(h)The State Board shall report on the implementation of the pilot program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee by June 15, 2012. The report shall include the cost per student of delivering the instruction and the success rate of program

participants in receiving a driver's license. In order to fairly and equitably report on the cost per student of delivering the Driver Education program, the four various methods of teaching Driver Education must be thoroughly researched.

As the study into the cost analysis progressed, it was determined that this in-depth level of inquiry would surpass the resources within DPI. Efforts were immediately put into place by contacting personnel in the UNC School of Government to conduct the study. The study would look at the costs of four Driver Education delivery systems: 1) traditional classroom method, 2) blended or hybrid method, 3) on-line (interactive) method and 4) on-line (non-interactive) method. As indicated, the program would be studied for cost (per student) as well as quality (outputs and results) and access (convenience, digital divide).

(i)The State Board of Education shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and to the Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee by June 15, 2012, on the following:

(1) The most cost-effective method of delivering driver education in the short and long-term. In making this determination, the State Board of Education shall consider the results of the pilot program implemented pursuant to Section 5 of this act. In order for the most cost effective method of delivering Driver

Education to be computed would involve the study of data related to the 30 hours of required content of Driver Education Instruction and the Behind-the-Wheel (BTW) portion of the course requirements (6 hours of observation and 6 hours of driving). The on-line pilot programs provide the 30 hours of Driver Education instruction, only, and were priced at \$20 per student for pilot purposes, only.

Both vendors used in the pilot have stated that they could not and would not be able to provide the on-line course which was piloted for \$20 per student. It is important to know that the on-line pilot programs only provided a non-interactive on-line program. Therefore, the pilot provided only one part of the course requirements (instructional content only, excluding BTW portion) and only one type or method of presentation. Most students who have completed the instructional course work are waiting to complete the Behind-The-Wheel portion of the class. This has created a complex scheduling situation with many of the students completing the course work at the same time outside of the usual organized and more controlled staggered schedule format. In addition, it should be noted that the virtual school course requirements had not yet been adopted by the State Board of Education when the RFP was put into place for pilot site selection. Five (5) LEAs volunteered to be in the pilot study. They are: Newton-Conover City Schools, Hyde County, Macon County, Pender County and Wilkes

County Schools for a total of 536 students in the pilot program as of June 15, 2012. See Appendix C for a Chart of Summary Information related to the On-line Pilot Program.

(2) The strategic plan adopted by the State Board of Education in accordance with G.S. 115C 215. As previously stated, in order to inform the Driver Education Strategic Plan more research, data and information was needed. Plans are underway for DPI to work with the UNC School of Government to use the resources and expertise of their personnel to conduct the deep dive study necessary to obtain all pertinent information necessary to finalize the Driver Education Strategic Plan as well as the cost analysis.

Many hours of collaboration among numerous driver and traffic safety experts in DPI, DOT, DMV, Highway Safety Institute, as well as Driver Education teachers from LEAs and commercial driving schools, representatives of the NC Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association and the use of state and national standards, resources, research and data have been utilized in the development of the draft strategic plan. In addition, collaboration within DPI has been essential in addressing the various aspects of Driver Education Reform. Input and guidance from the legislative, financial, licensure, curriculum, and virtual schools areas of



the agency has been a critical part of this process including the health officer, State Board of Education office and members of the State Board of Education, specifically the Healthy Responsible Students Committee members.

All students eligible for the state-funded Driver Education program, their families and communities desiring a better educated and safer driving population in North Carolina will benefit from this program study.

APPENDIX A

DRIVER EDUCATION REFORM

SECTION 28.37.(a) G.S.115C-215 reads as rewritten:

§ 115C-215. Instruction in driver training and safety education-Administration of driver education program by the Department of Public Instruction.

~~There shall be organized and administered under the general supervision of the Superintendent of Public Instruction a program of driver training and safety education in the public schools of this State, said courses to be noncredit courses taught by instructors who meet the requirements established by the State Board of Education. Instructors shall not be required to hold teacher certificates.~~

(a) In accordance with criteria and standards approved by the State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction shall organize and administer a standardized program of driver education to be offered at the public high schools of this State for all physically and mentally qualified persons who (i) are older than 14 years and six months, (ii) are approved by the principal of the school, pursuant to rules adopted by the State Board of Education, (iii) are enrolled in a public or private high school within the State, and (iv) have not previously enrolled in the program. The State Board of Education shall use for this purpose all funds appropriated to it for this purpose and may use all other funds that become available for its use for this purpose.

(b) The driver education curriculum shall include the following:

- (1) Instruction on the rights and privileges of the handicapped and the signs and symbols used to assist the handicapped relative to motor vehicles, including the "international symbol of accessibility" and other symbols and devices as provided in Article 2A of Chapter 20 of the General Statutes.
- (2) At least six hours of instruction on the offense of driving while impaired and related subjects.
- (3) At least six hours of actual driving experience. To the extent practicable, this experience may include at least one hour of instruction on the techniques of defensive driving.
- (4) At least one hour of motorcycle safety awareness training.

(c) The State Board of Education shall establish and implement a strategic plan for the driver education program. At a minimum, the strategic plan shall consist of goals and performance indicators, including the number of program participants as compared to the number of persons projected to be eligible to participate in the program, the implementation of a standard curriculum for the program, expenditures for the program, and the success rate of program participants in receiving a drivers license as reported by the Division of Motor Vehicles. The strategic plan shall also outline specific roles and duties of an advisory committee consisting of employees of the Division of Motor Vehicles and the Department of Public Instruction and other stakeholders in driver education. (d) The State Board of Education shall adopt a salary range for driver education instructors who are public school employees and who are not licensed teachers.

Driver education instructors who are public school employees and who are licensed teachers shall be paid on the teacher salary schedule. A day of employment for driver education instructors who hold teacher certificates shall be the same number of hours required of all regular classroom teachers as established by the local board of education.

(e) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to permit local boards of education to enter contracts with public or private entities to provide a program of driver education at public high schools. All driver education instructors shall meet the requirements established by the State Board of Education; provided, however, driver education instructors shall not be required to hold teacher certificates."

SECTION 28.37.(b) G.S.115C-216 reads as rewritten:

§ 115C-216. Boards of education required to provide courses in operation of motor vehicles.

(a) Course of Training and Instruction Required in Public High Schools. – The State Board of Education and local-Local boards of education are required to provide as a part of the program of the public high schools in this State a course of training and instruction in the operation of motor vehicles, in accordance with G.S. 20-88.1, shall offer noncredit driver education courses in high schools using the standardized curriculum provided by the Department of Public Instruction.

(b) Inclusion of Expense in Budget. – The local boards of education of every local school administrative unit are hereby authorized to shall include as an item of instructional service and as a part of the current expense fund of the budget of the several high schools under their supervision, the expense necessary to install and

~~maintain such a course of training and instructing eligible persons in such schools in the operation of motor vehicles to offer the driver education course.~~

~~(c) to (f) Repealed by Session Laws 1991, c. 689, s. 32(c)."~~

~~SECTION 28.37.(c) G.S. 20-88.1 reads as rewritten:~~

~~§ 20-88.1. Driver education.~~

~~(a) In accordance with criteria and standards approved by the State Board of Education, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction shall organize and administer a program of driver education to be offered at the public high schools of this State for all physically and mentally qualified persons who (i) are older than 14 years and six months, (ii) are approved by the principal of the school, pursuant to rules adopted by the State Board of Education, (iii) are enrolled in a public or private high school within the State, and (iv) have not previously enrolled in the program. The State Board of Education shall use for such purpose all funds appropriated to it for said purpose, and may use all other funds that become available for its use for said purpose.~~

~~The driver education program established pursuant to this section must include the following:~~

- ~~(1) Instruction on the rights and privileges of the handicapped and the signs and symbols used to assist the handicapped relative to motor vehicles, including the "international symbol of accessibility" and other symbols and devices as provided in Article 2A of this Chapter.~~
- ~~(2) At least six hours of instruction on the offense of driving while impaired and related subjects.~~
- ~~(3) At least six hours of actual driving experience. To the extent practicable, this experience may include at least one hour of instruction on the techniques of defensive driving.~~

~~(b) The State Board of Education shall adopt a salary range for driver education instructors who are public school employees and who do not hold teacher certificates.~~

~~Driver education instructors who are public school employees and who hold teacher certificates shall be paid on the teacher salary schedule. A day of employment for driver education instructors who hold teacher certificates shall be the same number of hours required of all regular classroom teachers as established by the local board of education.~~

~~(b1) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules to permit local boards of education to enter contracts with public or private entities to provide a program of driver education at public high schools. All driver education instructors shall meet the requirements established by the State Board of Education; provided, however, driver education instructors shall not be required to hold teacher certificates.~~

~~(c) All expenses incurred by the State in carrying out the provisions of this section the driver education program administered by the Department of Public Instruction in accordance with G.S.115C-215 shall be paid out of the Highway Fund.~~

~~(d) The Division shall prepare a driver license handbook that explains the traffic laws of the State and shall periodically revise the handbook to reflect changes in these laws. At the request of the Department of Education, Public Instruction, the Division shall provide free copies of the handbook to that Department for use in the program of driver education offered at public high schools."~~

~~SECTION 28.37.(d) G.S.20-11(b) reads as rewritten:~~

~~(b) Level 1. A person who is at least 15 years old but less than 18 years old may obtain a limited learner's permit if the person meets all of the following requirements:~~

- ~~(1) Passes a course of driver education prescribed in G.S. 20-88.1 G.S. 115C-215 or a course of driver instruction at a licensed commercial driver training school.~~
- ~~(2) Passes a written test administered by the Division.~~
- ~~(3) Has a driving eligibility certificate or a high school diploma or its equivalent."~~

~~SECTION 28.37.(e) G.S.20-322(b) reads as rewritten:~~

~~(b) Regulations adopted by the Commissioner shall state the requirements for a school license, including requirements concerning location, equipment, courses of instruction, instructors, financial statements, schedule of fees and charges, character and reputation of the operators, insurance, bond or other security in such sum and with such provisions as the Commissioner deems necessary to protect adequately the interests of the public, and such other matters as the Commissioner may prescribe. A driver education course offered to prepare an individual for a limited learner's permit or another provisional license must meet the requirements set in G.S. 20-88.1 G.S. 115C-215 for the program of driver education offered in the public schools."~~

**SECTION 28.37.(f)** The State Board of Education shall report to the Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee by July 15, 2011, on the status of the implementation of Section 7.12 of S.L. 2010-31, which mandates the creation of a standard curriculum to be used for the driver education program in the Department of Public Instruction.

**SECTION 28.37.(g)** For the 2011-2012 school year, no State funds shall be used for driver education programs that do not use the standard driver education curriculum created in accordance with Section 7.12 of S.L. 2010-31.

**SECTION 28.37.(h)** The State Board of Education shall establish a pilot program to deliver driver education by electronic means. At least five local school administrative units shall participate in the pilot program. Funds appropriated for driver education shall be used to implement the pilot program. The State Board shall report on the implementation of the pilot program to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee by June 15, 2012. The report shall include the cost per student of delivering the instruction and the success rate of program participants in receiving a drivers license.

**SECTION 28.37.(i)** The State Board of Education shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and to the Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee by June 15, 2012, on the following:

- (1) The most cost-effective method of delivering driver education in the short- and long-term. In making this determination, the State Board of Education shall consider the results of the pilot program implemented pursuant to Section 5 of this act.
- (2) The strategic plan adopted by the State Board of Education in accordance with G.S. 115C-215.

## Appendix B

### North Carolina Driver Education Advisory Committee

Cliff Braam

Traffic Safety Systems  
Department Of Transportation

Reggie Flythe

Driver Education Coordinating Teacher  
Wake County Schools

Dale Fox

Director of Driver Education  
Iredell-Statesville Schools

Mark Hooper

Director of Transportation  
Jackson County Schools

Don Johnson

School Bus/Traffic Safety Education  
Department Of Transportation

Ed Johnson

Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Division  
Department Of Transportation

Chuck Lehning

Operations Manager  
Jordan Driving School-Charlotte Office

Mitch Myers

Retired Driver Education Teacher  
Macon County

Don Nail

Governor's Highway Safety Program  
Department Of Transportation

Connie Sessoms

Driver Education Specialist  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

Joe Shrader

Driver Education Professor  
East Carolina University

Paula Hudson Hildebrand

Chief Health and Community Relations Officer  
Department of Public Instruction

Larry McDonald

Driver Education Consultant  
Department of Public Instruction

Joshua DeFisher

Governor's Highway Safety Program  
Department Of Transportation

Allen Robinson

CEO of American and Driver Traffic Safety Education Association  
Indiana, Pennsylvania

Brett Robinson

Vice President of Highway Safety Services  
Indiana, Pennsylvania

APPENDIX C

Participant	LEA#	Vendor	Estimated # of participants	# Enrolled
				0
Newton-Conover City Schools	182	DriversEd.com	30-50	78
Hyde County	480	DriversEd.com	8	15
Macon County Schools	560	Costech	80	152
Pender County	710	Costech	20	21
Wilkes County	970	Costech	200	270
				Total Enrolled 536

DriversEd.com = 93 students

Costech = 443 students