

Value, Balance and the Future of Educational Technology in North Carolina

May 2026



DIGITAL LEARNING & SCHOOL CONNECTIVITY
NC Department of Public Instruction

NCDPI Team



Dr. Vanessa Wrenn
Chief Information Officer



Matthew Mayo
Director Digital Learning
& School Connectivity



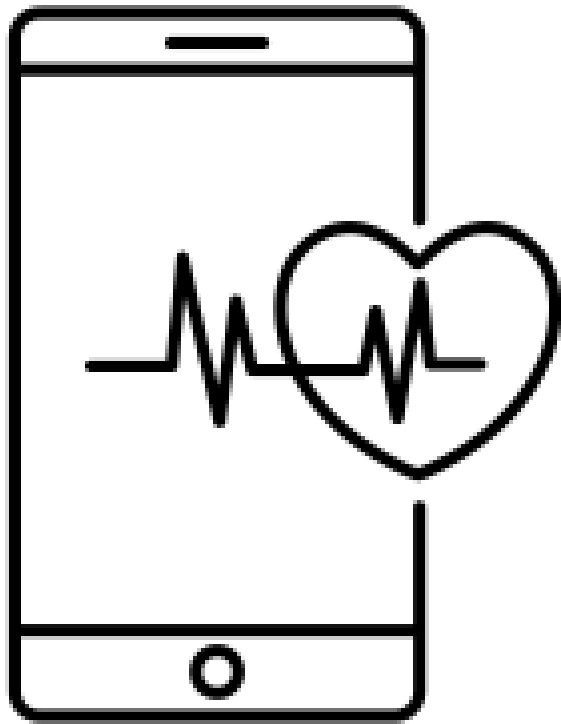
Dr. Ashley McBride
Section Chief
NCED Connect



Heather Pennica
Section Chief
Digital Learning Initiative



Framing Today's Conversation



**Acknowledge
the Moment**



**Align with Research
and Practice**



Refine the Focus



What does research say about educational technology and student well being today?



Today's Guest



Dr. Ellie Ebrahimi
UNC-W



Dr. Krista Glazewski
Friday Institute



Sue Thotz
Common Sense Media



Dr. Karl Johnson
Winston Center



We hear two sides of this issue, one extolling the benefits of technology in education and another raising red flags. We know that most times, the research is more nuanced. Can you help us understand the major findings from the research, both advantages and disadvantages, of ed tech?



What do we know about how technology affects attention, learning, and retention in K–12 settings, particularly across different age groups?



**How does technology (screen use, AI, etc.)
impact students' social development,
mental health, and overall well-being? And
is age an appropriate qualifier when
examining this issue?**



Under what conditions does educational technology actually improve student outcomes, and what distinguishes effective use from less effective use?



Given what we know, and what we're still figuring out, what should school leaders or policymakers be paying attention to right now?

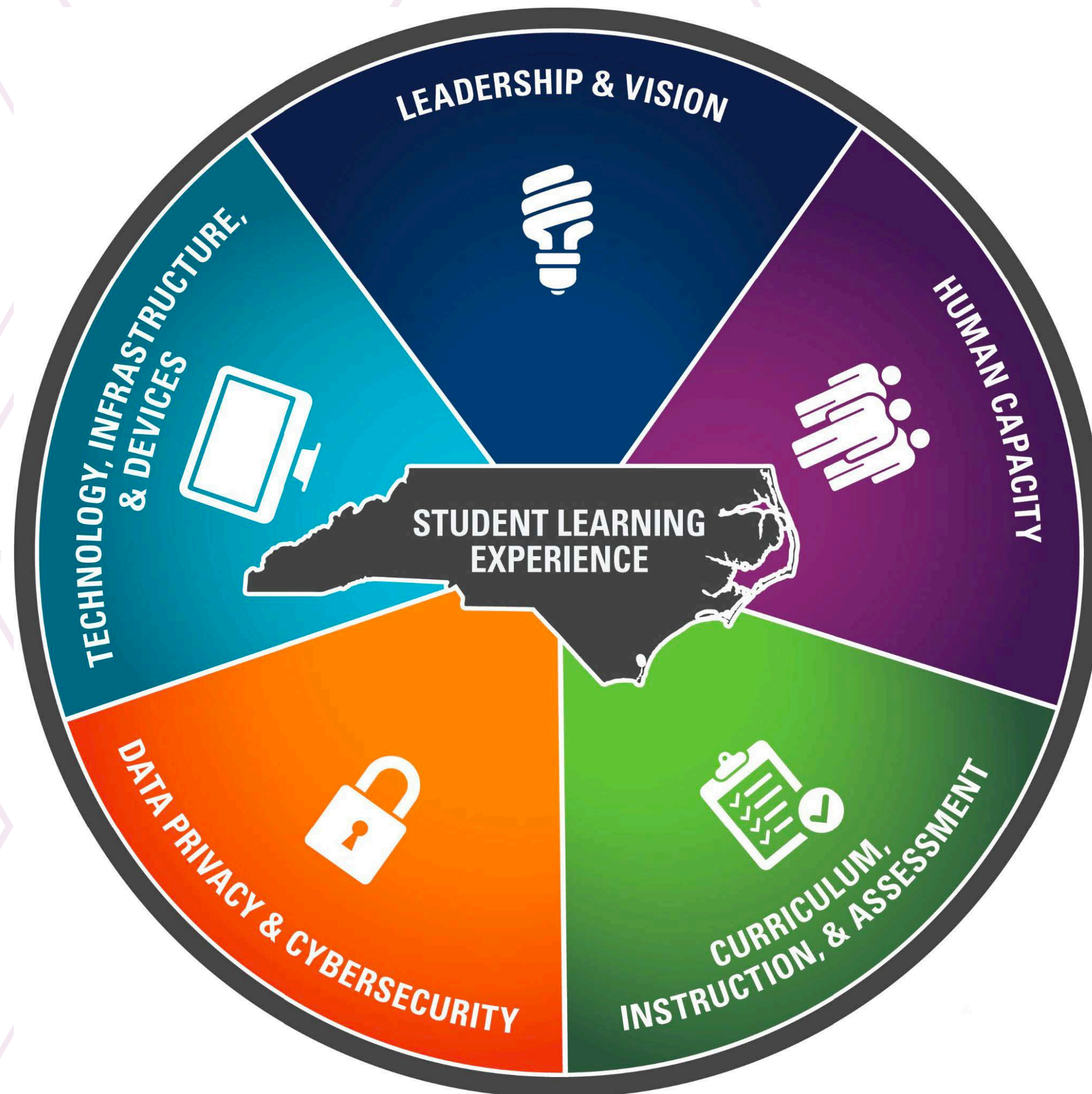


As AI becomes more prevalent, what new opportunities and risks should educators and policymakers be aware of, and where is the research still emerging?

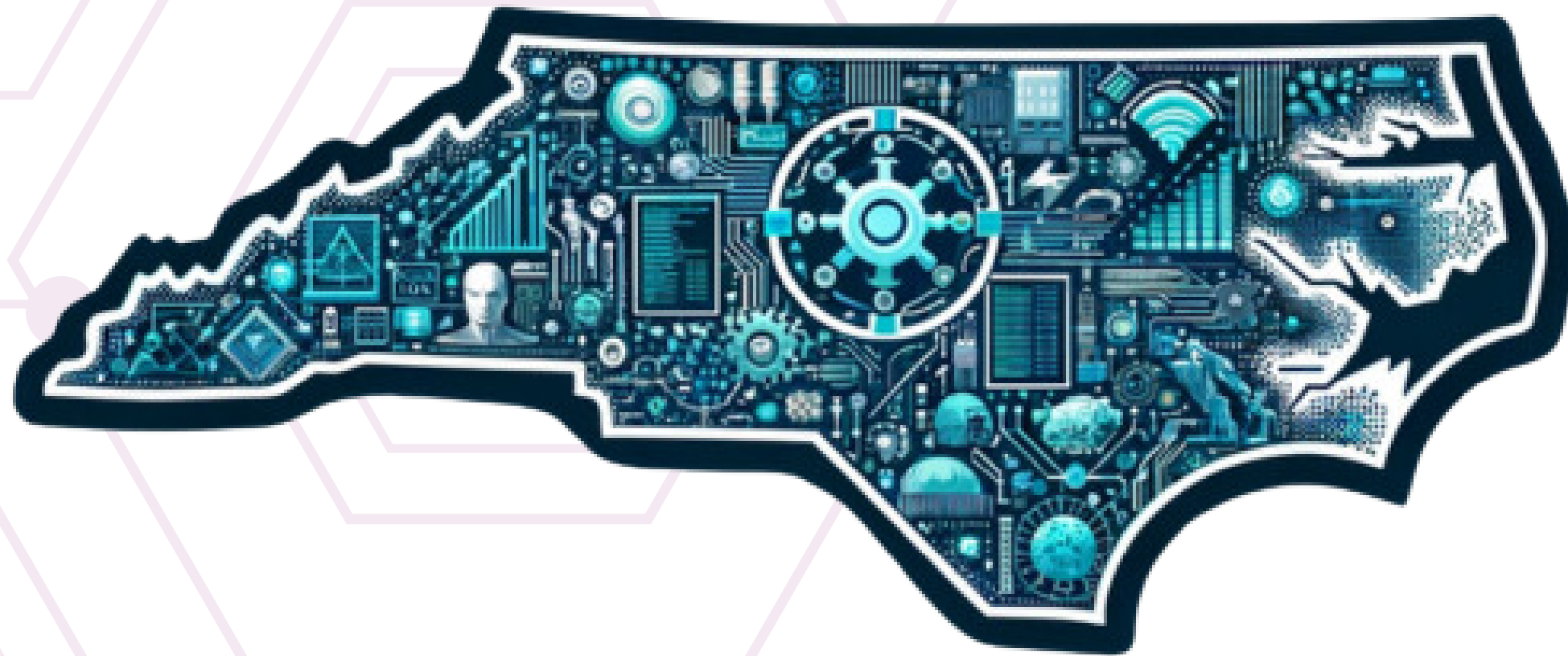


The Instructional Core: How NC's Digital Learning Plan Guides the Work





NCDPI Generative AI Implementation Recommendations and Considerations for PK-13 Public Schools



go.ncdpi.gov/AI_Guidelines

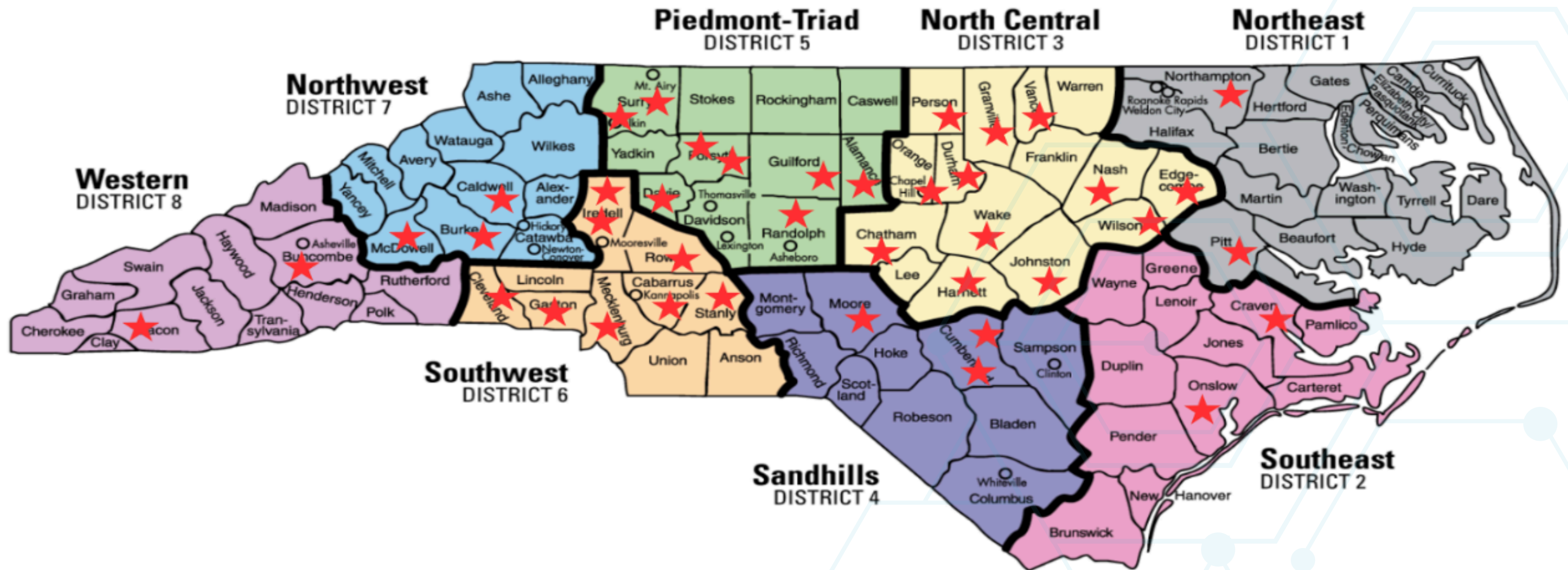


Guidance for
Purposeful
Screen Use
— in Schools —

Understanding Remote Academies



Remote Academy Locations



★ Indicates SBE approved remote academy for 2023-2024 school year

Remote Academy Requirements

Session Law 2022-59: Authorizes Local Education Agencies to apply and establish a remote academy with SBE approval.

- A remote academy is a public school whose instruction is provided online or a combination of online and face-to-face instruction.
- A LEA must submit a plan to the SBE for approval for a 5 year cycle.
- Remote academies are not unregulated virtual programs as they operate under public school requirements with additional safeguards around access, support, and accountability.

Remote Academy Required Components

The LEA must submit a plan that includes:

- **Grade levels served**
- **Methods for:**
 - Attendance tracking
 - Enrollment monitoring
 - Course completion & credit tracking
 - Progress toward graduation
- **Description of:**
 - Hardware, software, and platform for instructional deliververy (Learning Management System)
- **Instructional design:**
 - Synchronous + asynchronous structure
 - Alignment to the Standard Course of Study

Remote Academy Required Components

The LEA must submit a plan that includes:

- **Grade levels served**
- **Methods for:**
 - Attendance tracking
 - Enrollment monitoring
 - Course completion & credit tracking
 - Progress toward graduation
- **Description of:**
 - Hardware, software, and platform for instructional deliververy (Learning Management System)

Student Requirements

- Parental permission
- Schools retain the authority to reassign students
- Enrollment may not be denied based on disabilities
- Appropriate accommodations must be made for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) or 504 plans
- Consistent Internet and equipment access

Staffing and Personnel Requirements

- **Teachers must meet same licensure and evaluation standards as traditional schools**
- **Professional learning to teachers on remote instruction pedagogy and digital teaching practices**
- **Must provide dedicated support staff, including:**
 - Instructional technology facilitator
 - Media coordinator
 - Data manager
 - Technical support staff

Evaluation

*§ 115C-234.25. Evaluation. The State Board of Education shall evaluate the success of remote academies approved under this Part. Success shall be measured by school performance scores and grades, retention rates, attendance rates, and, for grades nine through 12, high school completion and dropout rates. The Board shall report by **November 15** of each year to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee on the evaluation of these schools and on any recommended statutory changes." SECTION 2.(b) The State Board of Education shall make the first evaluation report required by G.S. 115C-234.25, as enacted by this section, by November 15, 2024.*

Accountability and Evaluation

A report is presented to the state board and shared with the General Assembly annually.

Success will be measured by:

- School performance scores and grades
- Retention rates
- Attendance rates
- For grades 9-12, high school completion and dropout rates
- Any changes require SBE approval

Understanding Remote Academies



Dr. Melanie Shaver
Superintendent
Hyde County Schools



Christie Nottingham
Principal
WCPSS Crossroads Flex



Dr. Tony Jackson
Superintendent
Chatham County Schools

Stories from the Field



Interacting with Edtech Student Panel



Overall, what is your experience with technology in the schools? Are there times when technology makes learning harder or less effective for you? What should adults understand about that?



**From your perspective, what is the difference between technology that helps you learn and technology that becomes a distraction?
Can you give a specific example of each?**



How have your teachers used technology in ways that made learning more engaging, clear, or personalized for you? What stood out about those moments?



With tools like the internet and AI, where do you personally draw the line between getting help and cheating?



If you could speak directly to education leaders, what would you want them to understand about how technology is helping prepare you for your future?



Infrastructure and Resources That Makes It Work



From Contracts to Classrooms

Solves for variances in school's human capacity, resources, and abilities

Leverages economies of scale and standardization

NCDPI managed and shared services levels the playing field for all students and teachers no matter where they are located

Contracts to Classrooms

Centralized, Managed Contracts

- School Connectivity (Erate Category 1)-*MCNC, Friday Institute (FI)*
- CybersecurityServices-*KnowBe4, CrowdStrike, RunZero, MCNC, PaloAlto, FI*
- Student Information System - *Infinite Campus*
- Identity Management and Unique Identifier System - *Rapid Identity*
- Educator Effectiveness & Licensure -*NCEES PowerSchool*
- Unique Identifier System - *eScholar*
- Library Research Tools and Academic Literature - *EBSCO, Britannica*
- Open Education Resource - *GoOpenNC*
- Reading assessment - *Amplify*
- NCDPI Longitudinal Data System - *eScholar*
- Internet and Academic Content Filtering- *GoGuardian, Gaggle*
- Interactive Academic Standards/HQIM Resources - *Common Good Learning*

Contracts to Classrooms

Consortium Contracts

- Network Hardware (Erate Category 2)- *Various*
- Microsoft Enterprise Education Licenses
- Reading Assessment - *Amplify*
- Instructional Support Systems - *Pearson Schoolnet*
- Learning Management System -*Canvas*
- Digital Literacy Curriculum - Learning.com
- Applicant Tracking System/Staff Onboarding- *PowerSchool*
- Legacy System Hosting - *Ensono AS400*

PSU Technology Leader Supports

CETL (Chief Education Technology Leader) Certification

CeCTO Certification (UNC-CH School of Government)

Technology Director of the Year Program

COSN Memberships

Digital Teaching & Learning Hub

Bi-Monthly Virtual Meetings

Bi-Annual Convenings

Office of CIO Steering Committee

How Do We Monitor?

Return On Investment

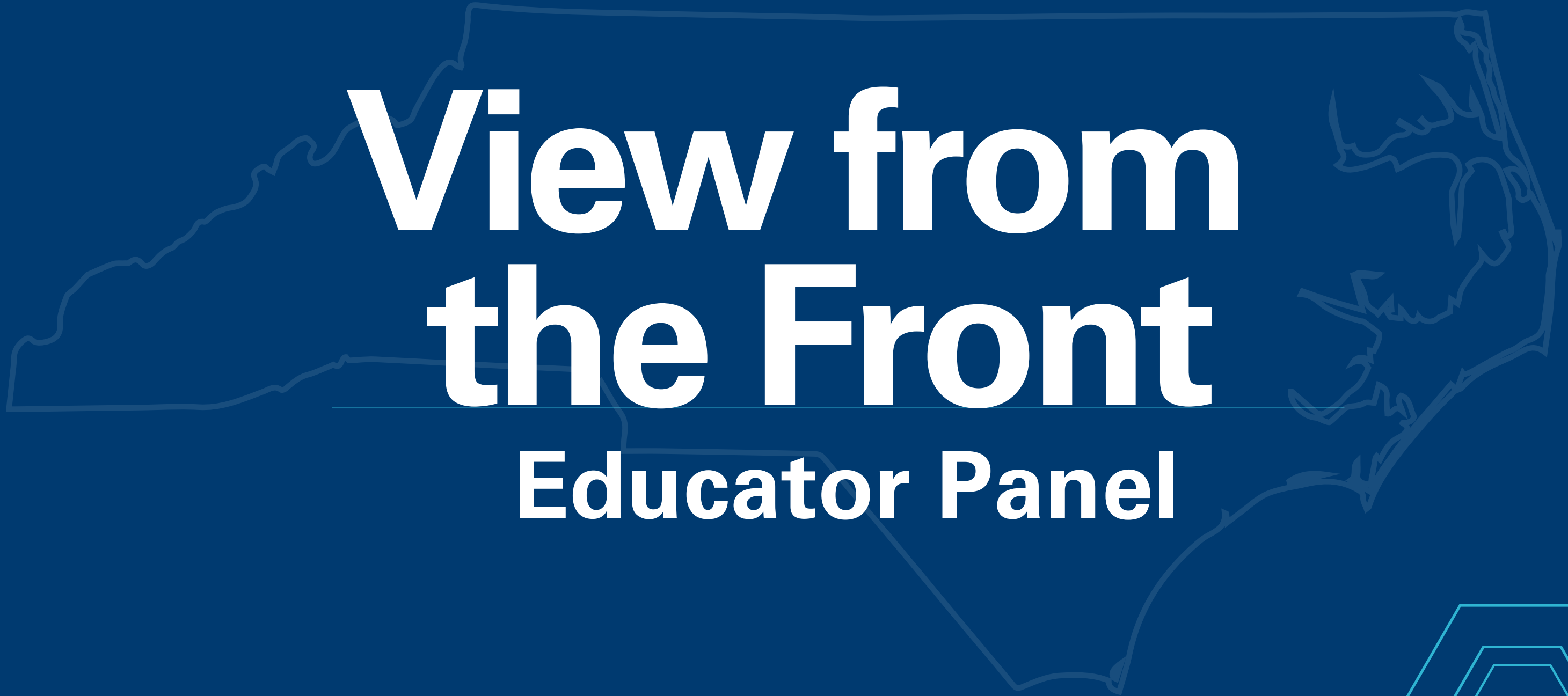
Quarterly Business Value Assessments

Digital Learning Media Inventory

Service Level Agreements

CIO Steering Committee

Bi-Monthly Statewide Collaborative Webinars



View from the Front

Educator Panel



Educator Panel



Dr. Tony Jackson
Superintendent
Chatham County Schools



Robin May
Assistant Superintendent
Wilson County Schools



Lindsay Skidmore
Director of Curriculum
Technology Innovation
Duplin County Schools



Kimberly Jones
Teacher of the Year
Chapel Hill-Carrboro City
Schools



Dr. Melanie Honeycutt
Executive Director
NCTies



**Where have you seen
technology not add value or
even create challenges for
learning? What should we
rethink or do differently?**



How are you working to find the right balance between using technology meaningfully and addressing concerns like distraction, screen fatigue, and student well-being?



What kinds of support, whether technical, instructional, or professional learning, are most critical to help educators use technology effectively without adding to workload or burnout?



As AI tools become more common, how are you seeing students use them today? What opportunities and concerns do you see with student use of AI tools?



Many districts are now managing 1-to-1 device programs beyond pandemic funding. What does that look like in practice in your school or district?



How do decisions about technology and what tools to use and how to use them get made in your school or district?



**If you could give one piece of advice
to the State Board as they think
about the future of technology in
schools, what would it be?**



Closing Remarks Q&A



Value, Balance and the Future of Educational Technology in North Carolina

May 2026



DIGITAL LEARNING & SCHOOL CONNECTIVITY
NC Department of Public Instruction