

SUBCHAPTER IX. PROPERTY.

Article 37.

School Sites and Property.

§ 115C-517. Acquisition of sites.

Local boards of education may acquire suitable sites for schoolhouses or other school facilities either within or without the local school administrative unit; but no school may be operated by a local school administrative unit outside its own boundaries, although other school facilities such as repair shops, may be operated outside the boundaries of the local school administrative unit. Whenever any such board is unable to acquire or enlarge a suitable site or right-of-way for a school, school building, school bus garage or for a parking area or access road suitable for school buses or for other school facilities by gift or purchase, condemnation proceedings to acquire same may be instituted by such board under the provisions of Chapter 40A of the General Statutes, and the determination of the local board of education of the land necessary for such purposes shall be conclusive. (1955, c. 1335; c. 1372, art. 15, s. 1; 1957, c. 683; 1969, c. 516; 1971, c. 290; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; c. 1127, s. 78; 1995, c. 199, s. 1.)

§ 115C-518. Disposition of school property; easements and rights-of-way.

(a) When in the opinion of any local board of education the use of any building site or other real property or personal property owned or held by the board is unnecessary or undesirable for public school purposes, the local board of education may dispose of such according to the procedures prescribed in General Statutes, Chapter 160A, Article 12, or any successor provisions thereto. Provided, when any real property to which the board holds title is no longer suitable or necessary for public school purposes, the board of county commissioners for the county in which the property is located shall be afforded the first opportunity to obtain the property. The board of education shall offer the property to the board of commissioners at a fair market price or at a price negotiated between the two boards. If the board of commissioners does not choose to obtain the property as offered, the board of education may dispose of such property according to the procedure as herein provided. Provided that no State or federal regulations would prohibit such action. For the purposes of this section references in Chapter 160A, Article 12, to the "city," the "council," or a specific city official are deemed to refer, respectively, to the school administrative unit, the board of education, and the school administrative official who most nearly performs the same duties performed by the specified city official. A local board of education may also sell any property other than real property through the facilities of the North Carolina Department of Administration. The proceeds of any sale of real property or from any lease for a term of over one year shall be applied to reduce the county's bonded indebtedness for the school administrative unit disposing of such real property or for capital outlay purposes.

(b) In addition to the foregoing, local boards of education are hereby authorized and empowered, in their sound discretion, to grant easements to any public utility, municipality or quasi-municipal corporations to furnish utility services, with or without compensation except the benefits accruing by virtue of the location of the said public utility, and to dedicate portions of any lands owned by such boards as rights-of-way for public streets, roads or sidewalks, with or without compensation except the benefits accruing by virtue of the location or improvement of such public streets, roads or sidewalks.

(c) Any sale, exchange or lease of real or personal property by any local board of education prior to June 18, 1982, and pursuant to the authority of G.S. 115-126 is hereby validated, ratified and confirmed. (1955, c. 1372, art. 15, s. 2; 1959, c. 324; c. 573, s. 11; 1961, c. 395; 1975, c. 264; c.

879, s. 46; 1977, c. 803; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1981 (Reg. Sess., 1982), c. 1216; 1983, c. 731; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 975, s. 22.)

§ 115C-519. Deeds to property.

All deeds to school property shall, after registration, be delivered to the superintendent of the local school administrative unit in which the property is located and he shall provide a safe place for preserving all such deeds. (1955, c. 1372, art. 15, s. 3; 1981, c. 423, s. 1.)

§ 115C-520. Vehicles owned by boards of education.

All school buses, trucks, automobiles and other motor vehicles owned by local boards of education and used for transporting pupils to and from school or used by other school personnel in the performance of their work, shall be exempt from taxation, but all such vehicles shall be duly registered in the Division of Motor Vehicles as provided in G.S. 20-84. (1955, c. 1372, art. 15, s. 4; 1975, c. 716, s. 5; 1981, c. 423, s. 1.)

§ 115C-521. Erection of school buildings.

(a) It shall be the duty of local boards of education to provide classroom facilities adequate to meet the requirements of G.S. 115C-47(10) and 115C-301. Local boards of education shall submit their long-range plans for meeting school facility needs to the State Board of Education by January 1, 1988, and every five years thereafter. In developing these plans, local boards of education shall consider the costs and feasibility of renovating old school buildings instead of replacing them.

(b) It shall be the duty of the local boards of education to make provisions for the public school term by providing adequate school buildings equipped with suitable school furniture and apparatus. The needs and the cost of those buildings, equipment, and apparatus, shall be presented each year when the school budget is submitted to the respective tax-levying authorities. The boards of commissioners shall be given a reasonable time to provide the funds which they, upon investigation, shall find to be necessary for providing their respective units with buildings suitably equipped, and it shall be the duty of the several boards of county commissioners to provide funds for the same.

Upon determination by a local board of education that the existing permanent school building does not have sufficient classrooms to house the pupil enrollment anticipated for the school, the local board of education may acquire and use as temporary classrooms for the operation of the school, relocatable or mobile classroom units, whether built on the lot or not, which units and method of use shall meet the approval of the School Planning Division of the Department of Public Instruction, and which units shall comply with all applicable requirements of the North Carolina State Building Code and of the local building and electrical codes applicable to the area in which the school is located. These units shall also be anchored in a manner required to assure their structural safety in severe weather. The acquisition and installation of these units shall be subject in all respects to the provisions of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes. The provisions of Chapter 87, Article 1, of the General Statutes, shall not apply to persons, firms or corporations engaged in the sale or furnishing to local boards of education and the delivery and installation upon school sites of classroom trailers as a single building unit or of relocatable or mobile classrooms delivered in less than four units or sections.

(c) The building of all new school buildings and the repairing of all old school buildings shall be under the control and direction of, and by contract with, the board of education for which

the building and repairing is done. If a board of education is considering building a new school building to replace an existing school building, the board shall not invest any construction money in the new building unless it submits to the State Superintendent and the State Superintendent submits to the North Carolina Historical Commission an analysis that compares the costs and feasibility of building the new building and of renovating the existing building and that clearly indicates the desirability of building the new building. No board of education shall invest any money in any new building until it has (i) developed plans based upon a consideration of the State Board's facilities guidelines, (ii) submitted these plans to the State Board for its review and comments, and (iii) reviewed the plans based upon a consideration of the comments it receives from the State Board. No local board of education shall contract for more money than is made available for the erection of a new building. However, this subsection shall not be construed so as to prevent boards of education from investing any money in buildings that are being constructed pursuant to a continuing contract of construction as provided for in G.S. 115C-441(c). All contracts for buildings shall be in writing and all buildings shall be inspected, received, and approved by the local superintendent and the architect before full payment is made therefor. Nothing in this subsection shall prohibit boards of education from repairing and altering buildings with the help of janitors and other regular employees of the board.

In the design and construction of new school buildings and in the renovation of existing school buildings that are required to be designed by an architect or engineer under G.S. 133-1.1, the local board of education shall participate in the planning and review process of the Energy Guidelines for School Design and Construction that are developed and maintained by the Department of Public Instruction and shall adopt local energy-use goals for building design and operation that take into account local conditions in an effort to reduce the impact of operation costs on local and State budgets. In the design and construction of new school facilities and in the repair and renovation of existing school facilities, the local board of education shall consider the placement and design of windows to use the climate of North Carolina for both light and ventilation in case of power shortages. A local board shall also consider the installation of solar energy systems in the school facilities whenever practicable.

In the case of any school buildings erected, repaired, or equipped with any money loaned or granted by the State to any local school administrative unit, no board of education shall invest any money until it has (i) developed plans based upon a consideration of the State Board's facilities guidelines, (ii) submitted these plans to the State Board for its review and comments, and (iii) reviewed the plans based upon a consideration of the comments it receives from the State Board.

(c1) No local board of education shall apply for a certificate of occupancy for any new middle or high school building until the plans for the science laboratory areas of the building have been reviewed and approved to meet accepted safety standards for school science laboratories and related preparation rooms and stockrooms. The review and approval of the plans may be done by the State Board of Education or by any other entity that is licensed or authorized by the State Board to do so.

(d) Local boards of education shall make no contract for the erection of any school building unless the site upon which it is located is owned in fee simple by the local board of education and the local board of education has complied with subsection (i) of this section.

(d1) Notwithstanding subsection (d) of this section, the local board of education of a local school administrative unit, with the approval of the board of county commissioners, may appropriate funds to aid in the establishment of a school facility and the operation thereof in an adjoining local school administrative unit when a written agreement between the boards of

education of the administrative units involved has been reached and the same recorded in the minutes of the boards, whereby children from the administrative unit making the appropriations shall be entitled to attend the school so established. The boards of education shall comply with subsection (i) of this section with respect to securing water and sewer to the school facility.

(d2) In all cases where title to property has been vested in the trustees of a special charter district which has been abolished and has not been reorganized, title to the property shall be vested in the local board of education of the county embracing the former special charter district.

(e) The State Board of Education shall establish within the Department of Public Instruction a central clearinghouse for access by local boards of education that may want to use a prototype design in the construction of school facilities. The State Board shall compile necessary publications and a computer database to distribute information on prototype designs to local school administrative units. All architects and engineers registered in North Carolina may submit plans for inclusion in the computer database and these plans may be accessed by any person. The original architect of record or engineer of record shall retain ownership and liability for a prototype design. The State Board may adopt rules it considers necessary to implement this subsection.

(f) A local board of education may use prototype designs from the clearinghouse established under subsection (e) of this section that is a previously approved and constructed project by the School Planning Division of the Department of Public Instruction and other appropriate review agencies. The local board of education may contract with the architect of record to make changes and upgrades as necessary for regulatory approval.

(g) For prototype schools under this section, local boards of education shall be exempt from the designer selection procedure in Article 3D of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes and may enter into an agreement with the original design professional of the prototype to supply design services for future construction of the prototype school.

(h) Each local board of education shall adopt a policy governing change orders to any construction or repair work for which a contract has been awarded in accordance with G.S. 143-128, 143-128.1, 143-128.1A, 143-128.1B, 143-128.1C, or 143-129. The policy shall address, at a minimum, all of the following:

- (1) The process by which a proposed change order is submitted by the contractor for approval, including any request for expedited review.
- (2) The individual or individuals with responsible authority for approving change orders of a particular category of work or amount, or a combination thereof, and the corresponding descriptions and dollar limits.
- (3) The process by which any change order that must be reviewed and approved by the local board is submitted to the local board.
- (4) The process by which the local board is notified of all change orders submitted to the individual or individuals identified with responsible authority to approve those orders, and the resulting actions taken.

(i) Prior to any application for any development approval under Chapter 160D of the General Statutes, the local board of education shall inquire, in writing, of the public water system, public sewer system, or public water and sewer system, currently serving the site or closest to the site as to whether that public system has capacity to serve the proposed school facility. The public system shall respond to the local board of education within a reasonable time, not to exceed 30 days as to whether that public system has capacity to serve the proposed school facility. Unless the public system does not have capacity to serve the proposed school facility or is under a moratorium precluding expansion, the public system shall reserve the necessary capacity for the proposed

school facility for 24 months from the date of the written inquiry from the local board of education. (1955, c. 1372, art. 15, ss. 5-7; 1969, c. 1022, s. 1; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; c. 638, s. 1; 1983, c. 761, s. 93; 1985, c. 783, s. 3; 1987, c. 622, s. 14; 1993, c. 416, s. 1; c. 465, s. 1; 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 775, s. 6; 1995, c. 8, s. 1; 1996, 2nd Ex. Sess., c. 18, ss. 18.17(c), (d); 1997-222, s. 3; 1997-236, s. 1; 2009-59, s. 3; 2013-401, s. 7; 2016-58, s. 1; 2016-126, 4th Ex. Sess., s. 24; 2021-180, s. 7.64(a).)

§ 115C-521.1. Building standards for preschool students.

A public school that voluntarily applies for a child care facility license may use an existing or newly constructed classroom in a public school for three- and four-year-old preschool students without modifications to the classroom or building if the classroom:

- (1) Has at least one toilet and one sink for hand washing;
- (2) Meets kindergarten standards for overhead light fixtures;
- (3) Meets kindergarten standards for floors, walls, and ceilings; and
- (4) Has floors, walls, and ceilings that are free from mold, mildew, and lead hazards.

A public school that voluntarily applies for a child care facility license shall meet all other requirements for child care facility licensure. (2009-123, s. 1.)

§ 115C-521.2: Repealed by Session Laws 2017-4, s. 1, effective March 30, 2017.

§ 115C-522. Provision of equipment for buildings.

(a) It shall be the duty of local boards of education to purchase or exchange all supplies, equipment, and materials, and these purchases shall be made in accordance with Article 8 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes. These purchases may be made from contracts made by the Department of Administration. Title to instructional supplies, office supplies, fuel and janitorial supplies, enumerated in the current expense fund budget and purchased out of State funds, shall be taken in the name of the local board of education which shall be responsible for the custody and replacement: Provided, that no contracts shall be made by any local school administrative unit for purchases unless provision has been made in the budget of the unit to pay for the purchases, unless surplus funds are on hand to pay for the purchases, or unless the contracts are made pursuant to G.S. 115C-47(28) and G.S. 115C-528 and adequate funds are available to pay in the current fiscal year the sums obligated for the current fiscal year. The State Board of Education shall adopt rules regarding equipment standards for supplies, equipment, and materials related to student transportation. The State Board may adopt guidelines for any commodity that needs safety features. If a commodity that needs safety features is available on statewide term contract, any guidelines adopted by the State Board must at a minimum meet the safety standards of the statewide term contract. Compliance with Article 8 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes is not mandatory for the purchase of published books, manuscripts, maps, pamphlets, and periodicals.

- (1) Where competition is available, local school administrative units may utilize the:
 - a. E-Quote service of the NC E-Procurement system as one means of solicitation in seeking informal bids for purchases subject to the bidding requirements of G.S. 143-131; and
 - b. Division of Purchase and Contract's electronic Interactive Purchasing System as one means of advertising formal bids on purchases subject to the bidding requirements of G.S. 143-129 and applicable rules regarding

advertising. This sub-subdivision does not prohibit a local school administrative unit from using other methods of advertising.

- (2) In order to provide an efficient transition of purchasing procedures, the Secretary of the Department of Administration and the local school administrative units shall establish a local school administrative unit purchasing user group. The user group shall be comprised of a proportionate number of representatives from the Department of Administration and local school administrative unit purchasing and finance officers. The user group shall examine any issues that may arise between the Department of Administration and local school administrative units, including the new relationship between the Department and the local school administrative units, the appropriate exchange of information, the continued efficient use of E-Procurement, appropriate bid procedures, and any other technical assistance that may be necessary for the purchase of supplies and materials.

(b) It shall be the duty of the local boards of education to provide suitable school furniture and apparatus, as provided in G.S. 115C-521(b).

(c) It shall be the duty of local boards of education and tax-levying authorities to provide suitable supplies for the school buildings under their jurisdictions. These shall include, in addition to the necessary instructional supplies, proper window shades, blackboards, reference books, library equipment, maps, and equipment for teaching the sciences.

Likewise, it shall be the duty of said boards of education and boards of county commissioners to provide every school with a good supply of water, approved by the Department of Environmental Quality, and where such school cannot be connected to water-carried sewerage facilities, there shall be provided sanitary privies for the boys and for the girls according to specifications of the Commission for Public Health. Such water supply and sanitary privies shall be considered an essential and necessary part of the equipment of each public school and may be paid for in the same manner as desks and other essential equipment of the school are paid for. (1955, c. 1352, art. 5, s. 35; art. 15, s. 8; 1965, c. 840; 1973, c. 476, s. 128; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1985, c. 436, s. 2; 1989, c. 727, s. 219(33); 1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 716, s. 13; 1997-443, s. 11A.51; 1998-194, s. 2; 2003-147, s. 1; 2004-199, s. 29(a); 2004-203, s. 72(b); 2007-182, s. 2; 2015-241, s. 14.30(u).)

§ 115C-522.1: Repealed by Session Laws 2003-147, s. 2, effective for a local school administrative unit when the unit is certified as being E-Procurement compliant, or April 1, 2004, whichever is first.

§ 115C-523. Care of school property.

It shall be the duty of every teacher and principal in charge of school buildings to instruct the children in the proper care of public property, and it is their duty to exercise due care in the protection of school property against damage, either by defacement of the walls and doors or any breakage on the part of the pupils, and if they shall fail to exercise a reasonable care in the protection of property during the day, they may be held financially responsible for all such damage, and if the damage is due to carelessness or negligence on the part of the teachers or principal, the superintendent may hold those in charge of the building responsible for the damage, and if it is not repaired before the close of a term, a sufficient amount may be deducted from their final vouchers to repair the damage for which they are responsible.

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, the parents or legal guardians of any minor are liable for any gross negligence or willful damage or destruction of school property by that minor to the extent of five thousand dollars (\$5,000). The Board of Education shall make written demand upon the parent or legal guardian as a prerequisite to bringing suit.

It shall be the duty of all principals to report immediately to their respective superintendents any unsanitary condition, damage to school property or needed repair. (1955, c. 1372, art. 17, s. 7; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1985, c. 581, s. 4.)

§ 115C-523.1. Duty to insure public school property.

(a) The local board of education of every local school administrative unit in the public school system of this State, in order to safeguard the investment made in public schools, shall:

- (1) Insure and keep insured to the extent of not less than eighty percent (80%) of the current insurable value, as determined by the insurer and the insured, of each of its insurable buildings against the perils embraced in broad form coverage to include fire, lightning, windstorm, hail, explosion, aircraft or vehicles, riot or civil commotion, smoke, vandalism, sprinkler leakage, sinkhole collapse, volcanic action, falling objects, weight of snow, ice or sleet, or water damage.
- (2) Insure and keep insured adequately the equipment and contents of the building.
- (3) Provide to the Commissioner of Insurance a list of all of its insurable buildings, the equipment and contents of the buildings, and their insurable values by October 1 of each year.

(b) The tax-levying authority for each local school administrative unit shall appropriate funds necessary for compliance with the provisions of subsection (a) of this section.

(c) Local boards of education may purchase insurance from companies duly licensed and authorized to sell insurance in this State or may obtain insurance in accordance with the provisions of Article 31A of Chapter 58 of the General Statutes, "State Insurance of Public Education Property." If a local board of education purchases insurance from a company duly licensed and authorized to sell insurance in this State for any insurable building, its equipment, or its contents, the local board of education shall provide the Commissioner with a copy of the policy of insurance. If the policy of insurance is cancelled, terminated, or changed for any reason, the local board of education shall notify the Commissioner within five days of the effective date of the cancellation, termination, or change.

(d) If the Commissioner of Insurance determines that any person has willfully failed to comply with the provisions of subsections (a), (b), and (c) of this section, the Commissioner of Insurance may order, for each separate violation, a civil penalty under the procedures in G.S. 58-2-70(d). Every 24 hours without such insurance constitutes a separate violation. (2019-176, s. 1(a); 2022-46, s. 6(a).)

§ 115C-523.2. Flood insurance.

(a) The local board of education of every local school administrative unit in the public school system of this State, in order to safeguard the investment made in public schools, shall insure and keep insured to the extent of not less than eighty percent (80%) of the current insurable value, as determined by the insurer and the insured, of each of its insurable buildings against flood when that property is located, or becomes located in, an area identified on the latest Flood Insurance Rate Map produced by the Federal Emergency Management Agency as area that will be inundated by the flood event having a one percent (1%) chance of being equaled or exceeded in any

given year. The local board of education shall provide to the Commissioner of Insurance a list of all of its insurable buildings against flood and their insurable values by October 1 of each year.

(b) The tax-levying authority for each local school administrative unit shall appropriate funds necessary for compliance with the provisions of subsection (a) of this section.

(c) Local boards of education may purchase insurance from companies duly licensed and authorized to sell insurance in this State or may obtain insurance in accordance with the provisions of Article 31A of Chapter 58 of the General Statutes, "State Insurance of Public Education Property." If a local board of education purchases insurance from a company duly licensed and authorized to sell insurance in this State for any insurable building against flood, the local board of education shall provide the Commissioner with a copy of the policy of insurance. If the policy of insurance is cancelled, terminated, or changed for any reason, the local board of education shall notify the Commissioner within five days of the effective date of the cancellation, termination, or change.

(d) If the Commissioner of Insurance determines that any person has willfully failed to comply with the provisions of subsections (a), (b), and (c) of this section, the Commissioner of Insurance may order, for each separate violation, a civil penalty under the procedures in G.S. 58-2-70(d). Every 24 hours without such insurance constitutes a separate violation. (2019-176, s. 1(b); 2022-46, s. 6(b).)

§ 115C-524. Repair of school property; use of buildings for other than school purposes.

(a) Repair of school buildings is subject to the provisions of G.S. 115C-521(c) and (d).

(a1) Local boards of education may employ personnel who are licensed to perform maintenance and repairs on school property for plumbing, heating, and fire sprinklers pursuant to Article 2 of Chapter 87 of the General Statutes, or personnel who are licensed as electrical contractors pursuant to Article 4 of Chapter 87 of the General Statutes.

(b) It shall be the duty of local boards of education and tax-levying authorities, in order to safeguard the investment made in public schools, to keep all school buildings in good repair to the end that all public school property shall be taken care of and be at all times in proper condition for use. It shall be the duty of all principals, teachers, and janitors to report to their respective boards of education immediately any unsanitary condition, damage to school property, or needed repair. All principals, teachers, and janitors shall be held responsible for the safekeeping of the buildings during the school session and all breakage and damage shall be repaired by those responsible for same, and where any principal or teacher shall permit damage to the public school buildings by lack of proper discipline of pupils, such principal or teacher shall be held responsible for such damage: Provided, principals and teachers shall not be held responsible for damage that they could not have prevented by reasonable supervision in the performance of their duties.

(c) Notwithstanding the provisions of G.S. 115C-263 and 115C-264, local boards of education may adopt rules and regulations under which they may enter into agreements permitting non-school groups to use school real and personal property, except for school buses, for other than school purposes so long as such use is consistent with the proper preservation and care of the public school property. No liability shall attach to any board of education or to any individual board member for personal injury suffered by reason of the use of such school property pursuant to such agreements.

(d) Local boards of education may make outdoor school property available to the public for recreational purposes, subject to any terms and conditions each board deems appropriate, (i) when not otherwise being used for school purposes and (ii) so long as such use is consistent with the

proper preservation and care of the outdoor school property. No liability shall attach to any board of education or to any individual board member for personal injury suffered by reason of the use of such school property. (1955, c. 1372, art. 15, s. 9; 1957, c. 684; 1963, c. 253; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1985 (Reg. Sess., 1986), c. 975, s. 23; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 900, s. 79(a); 2015-64, s. 1; 2016-105, s. 4; 2019-78, s. 3.)

§ 115C-525. Fire prevention.

(a) **Duty of Principal Regarding Fire Hazards.** – The principal of every public school in the State shall have the following duties regarding fire hazards during periods when he is in control of a school:

- (1) Every principal shall make certain that all corridors, halls, and tower stairways which are used for exits shall always be kept clear and that nothing shall be permitted to be stored or kept in corridors or halls, or in, on or under stairways that could in any way interfere with the orderly exodus of occupants. The principal shall make certain that all doors used for exits shall be kept in good working condition. During the occupancy of the building or any portion thereof by the public or for school purposes, the principal shall make certain that all doors necessary for prompt and orderly exodus of the occupants are kept unlocked.
- (2) Every principal shall make certain that no electrical wiring shall be installed within any school building or structure or upon the premises and that no alteration or addition shall be made in any existing wiring, except with the authorization of the superintendent. Any such work shall be performed by a licensed electrical contractor, or by a maintenance electrician regularly employed by the board of education and approved by the State Fire Marshal.
- (3) Every principal shall make certain that combustible materials necessary to the curriculum and for the operation of the school shall be stored in a safe and orderly manner.
- (4) Every principal shall make certain that all supplies, such as oily rags, mops, etc., which may cause spontaneous combustion, shall be stored in an orderly manner in a well-ventilated place.
- (5) Every principal shall make certain that all trash and rubbish shall be removed from the school building daily. No trash or rubbish shall be permitted to accumulate in a school attic, basement or other place on the premises.
- (6) Every principal shall cooperate in every way with the authorized building inspector, electrical inspector, county fire marshal or other designated person making the inspections required by G.S. 115C-525(b).

It shall further be the duty of the principal to bring to the attention of the local superintendent of schools the failure of the building inspector, electrical inspector, county fire marshal, or other person to make the inspections required by G.S. 115C-525(b). It shall further be the duty of the principal to call to the attention of the superintendent of schools all recommendations growing out of the inspections, in order that the proper authorities can take steps to bring about the necessary corrections.

(b) **Inspection of Schools for Fire Hazards; Removal of Hazards.** – Every public school building in the State shall be inspected a minimum of two times during the year in accordance with

the following plan: Provided, that the periodic inspections herein required shall be at least 120 days apart:

- (1) Each school building shall be inspected to make certain that none of the fire hazards enumerated in G.S. 115C-525(a)(1) through (5) exist, and to ensure that the building and all heating, mechanical, electrical, gas, and other equipment and appliances are properly installed and maintained in a safe and serviceable manner as prescribed by the North Carolina Building Code. Following each inspection, the persons making the inspection shall furnish to the principal of the school a written report of conditions found during inspection, upon forms furnished by the State Fire Marshal, and the persons making the inspection shall also furnish a copy of the report to the superintendent of schools; the superintendent shall keep such copy on file for a period of three years. In addition to the periodic inspections herein required, any alterations or additions to existing school buildings or to school building utilities or appliances shall be inspected immediately following completion.
- (2) The board of county commissioners of each county shall designate the persons to make the inspections and reports required by subdivision (1) of this subsection. The board may designate any city or county building inspector, any city or county fire prevention bureau, any city or county electrical inspector, the county fire marshal, or any other qualified persons, but no person shall make any inspection unless qualified as required by G.S. 160D-1103 and Section 7 of Chapter 531 of the 1977 Session Laws. Nothing in this section shall be construed as prohibiting two or more counties from designating the same persons to make the inspections and reports required by subdivision (1) of this subsection. The board of county commissioners shall compensate or provide for the compensation of the persons designated to make all such inspections and reports. The board of county commissioners may make appropriations in the general fund of the county to meet the costs of such inspections, or in the alternative the board may add appropriations to the school current expense fund to meet the costs thereof: Provided, that if appropriations are added to the school current expense fund, such appropriations shall be in addition to and not in substitution of existing school current expense appropriations.
- (3) It shall be the duty of the State Fire Marshal, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the State Board of Education to prescribe any additional rules and regulations which they may deem necessary in connection with such inspections and reports for the reduction of fire hazards and protection of life and property in public schools.
- (4) It shall be the duty of each principal to make certain that all fire hazards called to his attention in the course of the inspections and reports required by subdivision (1) of this subsection are immediately removed or corrected, if such removal or correction can be accomplished by the principal. If such removal or correction cannot be accomplished by the principal, it shall be the duty of the principal to bring the matter to the attention of the superintendent.
- (5) It shall be the duty of each superintendent of schools to make certain that all fire hazards called to his attention in the course of the inspections and reports required by subdivision (1) of this subsection and not removed or corrected by

the principals as required by subdivision (4) of this subsection are removed or corrected, if such removal or correction can be brought about within the current appropriations available to the superintendent. Where any removal or correction of a hazard will require the expenditure of funds in excess of current appropriations, it shall be the duty of the superintendent to bring the matter to the attention of the appropriate board of education, and the board of education in turn shall bring the same to the attention of the board of county commissioners, in order that immediate steps be taken, within the framework of existing law, to remove or correct the hazard.

(c) Liability for Failure to Perform Duties Imposed by G.S. 115C-288(d) and 115C-525(a) or 115C-525(b). – Any person willfully failing to perform any of the duties imposed by G.S. 115C-288(d), 115C-525(a) or 115C-525(b) shall be guilty of a Class 3 misdemeanor and shall only be fined not more than five hundred dollars (\$500.00) in the discretion of the court. (1957, c. 844; 1959, c. 573, s. 14; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1989, c. 681, s. 12; 1993, c. 539, s. 892; 1994, Ex. Sess., c. 24, s. 14(c); 2009-570, s. 40; 2022-62, s. 14; 2023-151, s. 12.4.)

§ 115C-526. Reward for information leading to arrest of persons damaging school property.

Local boards of education are authorized and empowered to offer and pay rewards in an amount not exceeding three hundred dollars (\$300.00) for information leading to the arrest and conviction of any persons who willfully deface, damage, destroy or commit acts of vandalism or larceny of, the property belonging to the public school system under the jurisdiction of and administered by any local board of education. (1967, c. 369; 1973, c. 1216; 1975, c. 437, s. 7; 1981, c. 423, s. 1.)

§ 115C-527. Use of schools and other public buildings for political meetings.

The governing authority having control over schools or other public buildings which have facilities for group meetings, or where polling places are located, is hereby authorized and directed to permit the use of such buildings without charge, except custodial and utility fees, by political parties, as defined in G.S. 163-96, for the express purpose of annual or biennial precinct meetings and county and district conventions: Provided, that the use of such buildings by political parties shall not be permitted at times when school is in session or which would interfere with normal school activities or functions normally carried on in such school buildings, and such use shall be subject to reasonable rules and regulations of the school boards and other governing authorities. (1975, c. 465; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1983, c. 519, ss. 1, 2; 2017-6, s. 3; 2018-146, ss. 3.1(a), (b), 6.1.)

§ 115C-528. Lease purchase and installment purchase contracts for certain equipment.

(a) Local boards of education may purchase or finance the purchase of automobiles; school buses; mobile classroom units; food service equipment, photocopiers; athletic lighting; and computers, computer hardware, computer software, and related support services by lease purchase contracts and installment purchase contracts as provided in this section. Computers, computer hardware, computer software, and related support services purchased under this section shall meet the technical standards specified in the North Carolina Instructional Technology Plan as developed and approved under G.S. 115C-102.6A and G.S. 115C-102.6B.

(b) A lease purchase contract under this section creates in the local board the right to possess and use the property for a specified period of time in exchange for periodic payments and shall include either an obligation or an option to purchase the property during the term of the

contract. The contract may include an option to upgrade the property during the term. A local board may exercise an option to upgrade without rebidding the contract.

(c) An installment purchase contract under this section creates in the property purchased a security interest to secure payment of the purchase price to the seller or to an individual or entity advancing moneys or supplying financing for the purchase transaction.

(d) The term of a contract entered into under this section shall not exceed the useful life of the property purchased. An option to upgrade shall be considered in determining the useful life of the property.

(e) A contract entered into under this section shall be considered a continuing contract for capital outlay and subject to G.S. 115C-441(c1).

(f) A contract entered into under this section is subject to Article 8 of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes, except for G.S. 159-148(a)(4) and (b)(2). For purposes of determining whether the standards set out in G.S. 159-148(a)(3) have been met, only the five hundred thousand dollar (\$500,000) threshold shall apply.

(g) Subsections (e) and (f) of this section shall not apply to contracts entered into under this section so long as the term of each contract does not exceed three years and the total amount financed during any three-year period is no greater than two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) or is no greater than three times the local board's annual State allocation for classroom materials, equipment, and instructional supplies, whichever is less. The local board shall submit information, including the principal and interest paid and the amount of outstanding obligation, concerning these contracts as part of the annual budget it submits to its board of county commissioners under Article 31 of this Chapter.

(h) No contract entered into under this section may contain a nonsubstitution clause that restricts the right of a local board to:

- (1) Continue to provide a service or activity; or
- (2) Replace or provide a substitute for any property financed or purchased by the contract.

(i) No deficiency judgment may be rendered against any local board of education or any unit of local government, as defined in G.S. 160A-20(h), in any action for breach of a contractual obligation authorized by this section, and the taxing power of a unit of local government is not and may not be pledged directly or indirectly to secure any moneys due under a contract authorized by this section. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 716, s. 14; 1997-236, s. 4; 2007-519, s. 1; 2014-100, s. 8.38.)

§ 115C-529. Useful life guidelines.

The Department of Information Technology shall develop and annually revise guidelines for determining the useful life of computers purchased under G.S. 115C-528. The Division of Purchase and Contract shall develop and periodically revise guidelines for determining the useful life of automobiles, school buses, and photocopiers purchased under G.S. 115C-528. The Local Government Commission shall develop and periodically revise guidelines for determining the useful life of mobile classroom units purchased under G.S. 115C-528. Guidelines for computers and photocopiers shall include provisions for upgrades during the term of the contract. The Department of Information Technology, the Division of Purchase and Contract, and the Local Government Commission shall provide their respective guidelines to the State Board of Education by November 1, 1996. The State Board of Education shall provide the guidelines to local boards of

education by January 1, 1997. (1995 (Reg. Sess., 1996), c. 716, s. 15; 2004-129, s. 34; 2015-241, s. 7A.4(i).)

§ 115C-530. Operational leases of school buildings and school facilities.

(a) Local boards of education may enter into operational leases of real or personal property for use as school buildings or school facilities. Operational leases for terms of less than three years shall not be subject to the approval of the board of county commissioners. Operational leases for terms of three years or longer, including periods that may be added to the original term through the exercise of options to renew or extend, are permitted if all of the following conditions are met:

- (1) The budget resolution includes an appropriation authorizing the current fiscal year's portion of the obligation.
- (2) An unencumbered balance remains in the appropriation sufficient to pay in the current fiscal year the sums obligated by the lease for the current fiscal year.
- (3) The leases are approved by a resolution adopted by the board of county commissioners. If an operational lease is approved by the board of county commissioners, in each year the county commissioners shall appropriate sufficient funds to meet the amounts to be paid during the fiscal year under the lease.
- (4) Any construction, repair, or renovation of the property is in compliance with the requirements of G.S. 115C-521(c) relating to energy guidelines.

For purposes of this section, an operational lease is defined according to generally accepted accounting principles and may be for new or existing buildings.

(b) Local boards of education may enter into contracts for the construction, repair, or renovation of leased property if (i) the budget resolution includes an appropriation authorizing the obligation, (ii) an unencumbered balance remains in the appropriation sufficient to pay in the current fiscal year the sums obligated by the transaction for the current fiscal year, and (iii) the construction, repair, or renovation is in compliance with the requirements of G.S. 115C-521(c) relating to energy guidelines. Construction, repair, or renovation work undertaken or contracted by a private developer is subject to the requirements of Article 8 of Chapter 143 of the General Statutes. Contracts for new construction and renovation that are subject to the bidding requirements of G.S. 143-129(a) and which do not constitute continuing contracts for capital outlay must be approved by the board of county commissioners.

(c) Operational leases and contracts entered into under this section are subject to approval by the Local Government Commission under Article 8 of Chapter 159 of the General Statutes if they meet the standards set out in G.S. 159-148(a)(1), 159-148(a)(2), and 159-148(a)(3). For purposes of determining whether the standards set out in G.S. 159-148(a)(3) have been met, only the five hundred thousand dollar (\$500,000) threshold shall apply. (1997-236, s. 2; 2010-196, s. 3.)

§ 115C-531. Repealed by Session Laws 2006-232, s. 3, as amended by Session Laws 2011-234, s. 1, effective July 1, 2015.

§ 115C-532: Repealed by Session Laws 2006-232, s. 3, as amended by Session Laws 2011-234, s. 1, effective July 1, 2015.