

**§ 115C-156.2. Industry certifications and credentials program.**

(a) It is the intent of the State to encourage students to enroll in and successfully complete rigorous coursework and credentialing processes in career and technical education to enable success in the workplace. To attain this goal, to the extent funds are made available for this purpose, students shall be supported to earn State Board of Education approved industry certifications and credentials as follows:

- (1) Students enrolled in public schools and in career and technical education courses shall be exempt from paying any fees for one administration of examinations leading to industry certifications and credentials pursuant to rules adopted by the State Board of Education.
- (2) Each school year, at such time as agreed to by the Department of Commerce and the State Board of Education, the Department of Commerce shall provide the State Board of Education with a list of those occupations in high need of additional skilled employees. If the occupations identified in such list are not substantially the same as those occupations identified in the list from the prior year, reasonable notice of such changes shall be provided to local school administrative units.
- (3) Local school administrative units shall consult with their local industries, employers, business advisory councils, and workforce development boards to identify industry certification and credentials that the local school administrative unit may offer to best meet State and local workforce needs.

(b) The State Board of Education shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee by November 15 of each year on the following information:

- (1) The number of students in career and technical education courses who earned (i) community college credit and (ii) related industry certifications and credentials.
- (2) Implementation of high school diploma endorsements, including adding (i) college, (ii) career, and (iii) college and career endorsements to high school diplomas, through evaluation of at least the following data:
  - a. Impact on the rates of high school graduation, college acceptance and remediation, and post-high school employment.
  - b. The number of students who had to retake a nationally norm-referenced college admissions test to meet the reading benchmark score required by G.S. 115C-83.32(a) to receive a college or career high school diploma endorsement and the number of students who were not awarded a college or career high school diploma endorsement solely because of the inability to meet the benchmark score for reading required by G.S. 115C-83.32(a).
  - c. The number of students receiving any high school diploma endorsement. (2013-360, s. 8.28(b); 2014-115, s. 83; 2017-57, s. 7.23H(e); 2017-102, s. 48(e); 2019-165, s. 3.2(a); 2023-134, s. 7.72(f).)