

# North Carolina's Virtual Charter School Growth Raises Concerns

*Education leaders question recent approval of more virtual charter schools despite the poor performance of existing virtual schools .*

RALEIGH, NC, UNITED STATES, March 31, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a shift from the days of COVID school shutdowns and remote/virtual learning when public sentiment strongly supported in-person learning, North Carolina's state lawmakers have opened the door to more remote learning in recent years.



A [2023 law included policies](#) to allow charter schools to open regional or statewide remote academies pending approval by the Charter Schools Review Board (CSRB). There are now 21 remote charters approved to open and eight already operating in the state.

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Why are we allowing our students to continue to be exposed to this inadequate form of education that is creating enormous profits or fund balances for outside entities?”

*Alan Duncan, NC State Board of Education Vice Chair*

At their March meeting where members approved four more remote charter schools, CSRB Stephen Gay expressed concerns about the approvals: “We’ve been pontificating about our beliefs on remote schools. So mine is I don’t believe in the remote schools. And let’s just call it what it is. [I see it as a money grab](#) for a lot of schools that are doing it.”

Two statewide virtual charter schools, operating in NC as pilot programs for over 10 years, are two examples of Mr. Gay’s concerns. Both NC Cyber Academy (NCCA) and NC Virtual Academy (NCVA) have been consistently low-performing since they opened.

And both schools have millions in unspent funds. At the end of 2025 NC Cyber Academy had \$9.7 million and NC Virtual Academy had \$16.0 million in leftover funds. (1)

These large fund balances can be traced back to state policy. Stand-alone (not connected to a brick-and-mortar charter school) virtual/remote schools receive the same per-pupil funding as brick-and-mortar schools, but they have far fewer expenses.

Statewide remote charter schools receive the same per-pupil funding as the local district where the main office is located. Both NC Virtual Academy and NC Cyber Academy have main offices in Durham County, but they enroll students from across the state.

Two new stand-alone statewide charter schools are scheduled to open in the fall. NC Connections is also located in Durham, while Dogwood Virtual School (formerly Pine Springs Preparatory Virtual Academy - PSPVA) is located in Wake County, which has one of the highest per-pupil expenditures in the state.

PSPVA has a poor track record from its brief time as a virtual charter school. (2) It earned the lowest possible scores in 2025: an F school performance grade and Not Met growth designation. (3)

State Senator Jay Chaudhuri called the expansion of statewide virtual charter schools "[educational malpractice](#)" during a recent webinar.

The North Carolina State Board of Education is asking lawmakers to change how stand-alone statewide virtual charter schools are funded, proposing to replace county-based payments with a statewide per-pupil rate. (4)

Under current state law, charter schools may contract with for-profit agencies to manage all aspects of the school, including staffing, building leases, facility management, and even school uniform purchases.

NC Virtual Academy (with \$16 million leftover funds) is run by the for-profit company K-12—formerly Stride K-12— which is traded on the NY Stock Exchange. (5)

PSPVA, the "failing" virtual charter school that just got approved to become Dogwood Virtual School, a stand-alone statewide virtual charter, is also managed by K-12, raising concerns that executives are more interested in profit for investors than in student achievement.

In his comments about the statewide virtual charter schools, State Board of Education Vice Chair Alan Duncan asked, "Why are we allowing our students to continue to be exposed to this inadequate form of education that is creating enormous profits or fund balances for outside entities?"

Because lawmakers shifted responsibility for approving charter schools away from the SBE to the CSRB in 2023, Vice Chair Duncan has little direct power to stop the money grab. However, CSRB members have the power, but some may have little incentive to change the current trajectory.

Bruce Friend, the CSRB chair, is also superintendent of PSPVA, the statewide virtual charter managed by K-12 and just approved to become a stand-alone school.

1. Renewals Schools Financial Review, January 2026:

<https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/Meetings/Attachment.aspx?S=10399&AID=458235&MID=17786>

2. Pine Springs Preparatory Virtual Academy: <https://pspva.k12.com/>

3. NC School Report Card:

[https://ncreports.ondemand.sas.com/src/school?school=93N310&year=2025&residing\\_district=920LEA](https://ncreports.ondemand.sas.com/src/school?school=93N310&year=2025&residing_district=920LEA)

4. NC Virtual Schools Face Funding Overhaul: <https://ncnewsline.com/2026/03/06/nc-virtual-schools-face-funding-overhaul-amid-scrutiny-of-25m-in-reserves/>

5. K-12: <https://www.k12.com>

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