



K-12 Education Coordination Full Council Meeting Minutes

Location: RM 210/212
2nd Floor, State Capitol Building
600 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck, ND 58505
& via Microsoft Teams
November 13, 2025

K-12 Council Members Present:

Chairman Luke Schaefer, Brandt Dick, Jeremy Mehlhoff, Melissa Vollmer, Sarah Ricks, Sara Medalen, Superintendent Kirsten Baesler, Beth Slette, Sonia Meehl, Maria Neset, Nick Archuleta, Rep. David Richter, Senator Ryan Braunberger, Levi Bachmeier

K-12 Council Members Present Virtually:

Angel Lindseth, Justin Fryer, Marc Bluestone Sr, Marc Bluestone

K-12 Council Members Absent: Senator Donald Schaible, Representative Pat Heinert, Amy De Kok,

Others Present: Mark Vollmer (K12 Council Executive Director), Wayde Sick (NDCTE), Ellie Shockley (NDUS)

Others Present Virtually: Shauna Marchus (NDDPI Admin), Dawn Ulmer (Designee for NDCTE),

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Luke Schaefer at 1:00 p.m. Central

Welcome

Chair Schaefer welcomed the group, and spoke about the importance of subcommittee work, especially during this non-legislative year. He announced that breakout sessions will be provided for subcommittee work during full council meetings. He thanked members in advance for their commitment over the next eight to twelve months, highlighting that this period is critical for making substantial progress on their work.

Chair Schaefer mentioned that this is Supt. Baesler's last meeting with the Council. He thanked Supt. Baesler for all of her work and her dedication to the state and students. Supt. Baesler thanked everyone on the Council. She mentioned that she has learned so much from this group, legislators, educators, students and families and she will take the knowledge from her time in North Dakota to her new role in DC. She commended the legislature for their work and dedication to ND education.

Approval of Minutes: September 18, 2025 - Full Council Meeting

Senator Ryan Baumgardner moved to approve the September 18, 2025, Full Council meeting

minutes. Nick Archuleta seconded the motion. No discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

Introducing New Aspirational Math Goal

Chair Schaefer explained that the PK12 Strategic Vision Steering Committee recognized a dip in mathematic scores and decided an additional math goal was necessary. He noted that setting the goal is the job of the PK12 Strategic Vision Steering Committee, but this Council is tasked with setting how to measure the goal and determining the percentage of the goal.

Dr. Ellie Shockley presented a draft dashboard of the new aspirational goal: *Increase students who demonstrate Math Proficiency in the 8th Grade: By the 2029-30 school year, the percentage of 8th grade students who are proficient or advanced on the ND State Summative Assessment will reach 70%.*

Supt. Baesler explained that subcommittee members decided to display the various levels of proficiency which allows tracking progress even if the ultimate goal is not met. The group discussed the proposed proficiency descriptors and agreed that using all four achievement levels is appropriate to give schools, districts, and families clearer insight into student improvement.

There was further discussion about various assessment methods. Stan Schauer cautioned the group about comparing this year's results to past assessment results because of major changes including new standards, a new vendor, and new performance-level setting. Supt. Baesler mentioned that the new 10-year assessment contract will strengthen longitudinal tracking. She explained that by using the full ND A+ balanced assessment system including the state summative test and the ND standards-based interim assessments, districts can better track and demonstrate student growth. It was noted that the ND A+ system's three components (summative assessments, interim assessments and teacher-informative assessments) work together to provide continuous, actionable data for teaching and policy.

Communication Plans

Mark Vollmer mentioned that some members still need to submit their communication plans and encouraged them to reach out for guidance if needed. He noted that these plans outline how members will share council and subcommittee updates with their constituents to ensure clear, consistent communication.

Annual Report Review and Approval

Chair Schaefer reviewed this year's Annual Report and highlighted key components. He noted that Full Council approval for the annual report is required.

Nick Archuleta moved to approve the annual report with the addition of 2026 meeting dates and any necessary provisions. Jeremy Mehlhoff seconded the motion. No further discussion. Motion carried unanimously.

Breakout Session: Subcommittees

Members gathered in breakout sessions with their subcommittees.

2:45 PM – 3:00 PM | Break

Report-Out from Subcommittees

Each subcommittee shared a review of their work, progress, and their next steps.

Statewide Projects, Duplication and Replication Subcommittee:

Brandt Dick reported that this subcommittee is focusing on evaluating the impact of the Science of Reading initiative and working to understand how it has been implemented in schools. He noted that they plan to highlight success stories by meeting with three schools to allow them to share their experiences. They are selecting schools based on ones that have shown notable growth in ELA performance over the past year and those that have high achievement. He explained that the goal is to learn what has contributed to their success and to identify common practices among them in hopes to celebrate their progress and bring back insights on effective approaches that have advanced literacy outcomes since the initiative began.

Support and Innovation

Sarah Ricks reported that this subcommittee is focusing on student and family engagement, and how different learning opportunities can better engage students. They met with Jim Upgren and Ann Ellefson from NDDPI to discuss ways to expand participation in programs that engage students outside of traditional school settings and identify barriers preventing schools from offering credit through these programs. The group plans to speak with schools successfully implementing these approaches, such as Northern Cass for Learn Everywhere and Bismarck Career Academy for its EmpowerED program. She mentioned that they will also meet with Stacy Kilwein from the ND Family Engagement Cabinet to explore examples of schools excelling in family engagement and identify best practices that can be shared statewide.

Legislative Committee

Chair Schaefer reported that this subcommittee's work is focused on the attendance study requested by the legislature. He explained that the primary research question will focus on understanding what gets kids to come to school. It was noted that potential goal outcomes from the study could include legislative funding recommendations, changes to attendance-codes in century code, or identifying next steps for research on attendance and student engagement. The group plans to meet monthly to continue discussions centered on analyzing attendance data to identify patterns among high and low-performing districts and schools, particularly examining correlations with demographics such as low income, homelessness, IEP status, and Native American student populations.

Aspirational Goals

Supt. Baesler reported the following key items that the Aspirational Goals subcommittee is working on:

1. They formally adopted the 70% math goal;
2. Updates to the Insights dashboard will include the four proficiency subcategories and they will be adding an explanation tab.
3. The committee is addressing additional metrics added by the K-12 Strategic Steering Committee, specifically monitoring chronic absenteeism (defined as missing 10% or 18+ days, currently affecting about 22% of students) and general attendance declines among the remaining 78% of students. These will be tracked under "safe and healthy behaviors," with baseline and metrics development supported by Ellie and Dr. Greg Carlson.
4. They are working on how to measure the second clause of the strategic outcome goal 1:
 - a. Part 1: ensuring more children enter kindergarten ready to learn. This is led by the Children's Cabinet and supported by HHS using the Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ESIDS);
 - b. Part 2: ensuring that K12 classrooms, particularly kindergarten classrooms, are

well-resourced, with qualified teachers, supportive environments, and appropriate materials, to meet the needs of every learner. The committee plans to use tools, such as the NDA+ interim assessment, to establish a valid and reliable baseline of kindergarten readiness and measure growth. This data will inform the legislature on resource needs and potential areas for improvement in early education.

5. After the 2025–26 school year, the committee will reset and recalibrate the other long-term goals, with planning in early spring and work beginning July 1, 2026.
6. Levi Bachmeier was elected as the new chair of the Aspirational Goals Committee.

The full group discussed the process for members to request support and data. Members were reminded to communicate any subcommittee needs directly to Mark Vollmer, who can assist with problem-solving and resource coordination. To prevent overlapping or excessive data requests, all requests for information from Dr. Shockley or Stan Schauer should be submitted through the subcommittee chair and shared with Mark Vollmer. This approach will help keep requests specific, refined, and manageable while ensuring clear communication and efficient support. The group also discussed coordinating communication and logistics for upcoming school outreach efforts. It was agreed that subcommittee chairs could directly contact schools, noting that Mark Vollmer and Shauna Marchus are available to assist these efforts.

Report on Think-Pair-Share: Attendance

Mark Vollmer asked the group to report any unique approaches to improving attendance; what was successful - why or why not, and what specifically does not work to improve attendance.

The discussion highlighted several strategies to improve student attendance. National research from the NEA and Attendance Works was identified as a key resource for guiding policy and practice. School-level approaches included high school incentives such as test exemptions and consequences for excessive absences, along with elementary strategies focused on parent engagement through meetings and barrier-identification questionnaires. Multi-tiered supports were emphasized through examples like the Community Connect and BARR programs, where coordinated teams work with families and consider mental-health needs. Participants also noted the importance of in-person learning to counter isolation caused by virtual learning. Additional strategies included increasing student connectedness through extracurricular activities, four-day school weeks showed improvements in attendance, and implementing attendance review boards that bring together school officials, mental-health providers and law enforcement to address root causes. Broader approaches, such as learning from high-performing districts like St. John, expanding CTE centers, and strengthening family engagement statewide, were also identified as promising ways to increase attendance.

The group also discussed that certain approaches do not improve attendance, such as sending letters home by themselves, placing chronically absent students in virtual programs, giving money to families, and offering families transportation stipends instead of busing.

Members were encouraged to send any additional ideas to Mark Vollmer.

Closing & Next Meeting

The discussion covered upcoming full council and subcommittee meeting dates and how they align with legislative timelines.

Key points noted:

- The Executive Committee determined that full council meetings will occur in April, June September, and November 2026. A scheduling poll will be sent out with a list of potential meeting dates to vote on.
- The November 2026 meeting will focus on finalizing ideas and determining what recommendations to move forward that could inform legislation. It was suggested to have a final report to submit to legislative management who also meet in November.
- Subcommittees will use their meetings to develop recommendations that feed into this process, aiming to have proposals ready by September 2026.
- Supt. Baesler highlighted that the Aspirational Goals Committee monitors outcomes in safe and healthy behaviors, including attendance, and in students' career readiness. She noted that the CTE Board has aligned aspirational goals and tracks progress to inform its agendas, and it was suggested that the Council receive reports from the CTE Board to gain a complete view of statewide career preparation and aspirational efforts.
- Maria Neset suggested collaborating with the Children's Cabinet, as they will be leading a statewide initiative on child well-being, including truancy. She noted overlap with early childhood efforts, such as the Lieutenant Governor's work on kindergarten readiness, and recommended that discussions on coordination might be timely for the June meeting.

Action Item Recaps:

1. Chairs of subcommittees inform Mark how he can assist subcommittees meetings
2. School visit follow-ups
3. Scheduling poll for 2026 meeting dates – members requested to answer promptly

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 4:05 pm

Next Full Council Meeting: April 2026

Respectfully submitted,

ATTEST:


Chairman Luke Schaefer

8/11/26
Date

Minutes taken and prepared by Shauna Marchus