



North Dakota Community Survey on Education

June 2026

Prepared by the Central Comprehensive Center

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Overview

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) is updating their PK–12 Education Strategic Vision Framework (Framework) to ensure it is comprehensive, coherent, and actionable. To inform revisions to the Framework, Superintendent Bachmeier invited stakeholders across North Dakota to provide information about their priorities for improvements to the K–12 education system via brief, online surveys in November 2025. To complement these needs-sensing activities, the NDDPI asked the Central Comprehensive Center (Central CC) to develop and administer a statewide, representative survey—the North Dakota Community Survey on Education (ND-CSE)—to help the NDDPI understand residents’ perspectives on North Dakota’s public education system.

Questionnaire Development

The Central CC team worked closely with the NDDPI to develop the survey. The NDDPI provided sample items and met with the Central CC team to discuss their priorities for the survey. The Central CC team used this input to develop the questionnaire, which is organized into 10 themes (see Appendix A):

- » Theme 1: Grading the System
- » Theme 2: Connection to North Dakota Schools
- » Theme 3: General Perceptions of North Dakota Schools
- » Theme 4: Challenges
- » Theme 5: Outcomes
- » Theme 6: Strategic Themes
- » Theme 7: Resources
- » Theme 8: Technology
- » Theme 9: Priorities
- » Theme 10: Demographics

The survey was designed as a “closed” survey such that households that received the invitation would enter the web-based survey using an alpha-numeric, 6-character, unique login (personalized identification number, or PIN), assigned to their household. (See the Sample Preparation section for more details about the sample.)

Sample Preparation

The sampling frame for this address-based sample (ABS) is a version of the U.S. Postal Service’s Computerized Delivery Sequence File (CDS) of mailing addresses for North

Dakota. The Central CC used the February 2026 version of the CDS, which was geocoded in its entirety prior to selecting the sample. As part of the geocoding process, the team assigned each address on the CDS to the appropriate census tract.

The Central CC obtained tract level data from the 2020–2024 American Community Survey, including both the total count of households and the total count of households with at least one person under the age of 18. We grouped census tracts according to their quintile rank for the percentage of households with at least one person under 18 and assigned addresses on the CDS frame to their respective quintiles.

We used statistical power calculations to determine that a minimum sample size of 800 completed surveys was necessary for inference on the North Dakota population, including potential comparisons between adults in households with K–12 children and the rest of the adult population in the state. We in turn assumed a conservative yield rate of 5%, meaning we would need to field a total sample of 16,000 addresses. These assumptions are informed by other ABS surveys of similar scope.

Data Collection Procedures

The Central CC team developed a 4-week recruitment protocol (Table 1) that used mail-only contacts to the ABS. The initial survey invitation letter included a prepaid (\$1) incentive for each household to keep regardless of survey participation and was followed by three reminder postcards. Survey completers were eligible for a \$10 post-completion survey incentive.

Table 1. Recruitment Outreach Schedule

Mailing	Mail Date
Survey Invitation Letter (with \$1 cash)	5/7/2026
Follow-Up Postcard #1	5/14/2026
Follow-Up Postcard #2	5/21/2026
Follow-Up Postcard #3 (“Last Chance”)	5/28/2026

The survey was primarily administered online via the Qualtrics platform. On average, respondents took 20 minutes to complete the online survey. The survey invitation also informed recipients that they could call a toll-free line for assistance.

The Central CC included a dedicated email address, toll-free phone number, and project website in all outreach materials mailed so recipients could share questions and concerns. Central CC team members monitored the email inbox and voice mailbox multiple times per day during business hours and responded to all outreach by the following business day. Table 2 includes information about the types of inquiries the Central CC received.

Table 2. Total Emails and Voicemails by Inquiry Type

Inquiry Type	Description	Number of Emails	Number of Calls
PIN or Access Issues	Requests for help accessing the survey, typically respondents had trouble with the PIN or were not sure where to enter the PIN. Often the issue was caused by similar characters such as the letter “O” and the number “0” or the letter “l” and the number “1.”	9	19
Incentive Issues	Inquiries about gift cards. In most cases, the Central CC had already emailed the \$10 gift card code, but technical issues—such as emails being filtered in spam—likely prevented delivery.	12	6
Phone Surveys	Requests to complete the survey by phone. Respondents variously shared that they did not have a computer or smart phone, were not comfortable using technology, or having difficulty accessing the survey online.	1	15
Other	Other inquiries included questions about why respondents continued to receive mailing after completing the survey, requests to be removed from the mailing list,* feedback indicating that the survey was not relevant to them, requests to verify the survey’s legitimacy, messages of thanks for the gift card, and a call in which no question was specified and the individual could not be reached despite multiple returned calls.	8	18
Total		30	58

Note. Data as of June 24, 2026. The Central CC team is still actively monitoring the inbox.

*Individuals who asked to be removed from future mailings were not removed from the mailing list because their requests were made after the final postcard was sent.

Data Weighting Procedures

We used a four-stage process to weight the sample.

- 1) **Construction of base weights:** A household’s base weight is the inverse of its selection probability.
- 2) **Adjustment for nonresponse:** The first adjustment compensates for differences in response across subgroups
- 3) **Adjustment for household size:** The target population is all adults in North Dakota. The unit of sampling, however, is the household. The adult responding to the survey is taken to represent all adults in the household. The adjustment factor was calculated as the average number of adults in North Dakota households as

obtained from the 2020–2024 American Community Public Use Microdata Sample (ACS PUMS). Separate averages were calculated from the ACS PUMS file for households with and without children enrolled in public K–12 schooling, and the adjustment factor for a responding household was assigned accordingly during weighting.

- 4) **Poststratification:** As the final weighting step, weighted estimates are forced to agree with known population totals obtained from the 2020–2024 ACS PUMS file. Poststratification is a commonly used form of weight calibration that can both improve the precision of estimates and reduce estimate bias to differential nonresponse and coverage error. Poststrata are defined by whether a respondent lived in a household with children enrolled in public K–12 schooling, and weights were adjusted to sum to the known total number of adults in the state within each category.

Analysis Procedures

The ND-CSE included open- and closed-ended items. Therefore, we used quantitative and qualitative procedures to identify major themes, response patterns, and differences across relevant respondent groups.

Quantitative Analyses

The ND-CSE included 17 multiple-choice questions and 9 questions that use “select three” or “select all” formats. For multiple-choice items, we report results as weighted percentages. Depending on the question, this may be shown either as the percentage of respondents selecting a specific response option or as the full distribution across all options. These percentages represent estimates for the survey population (adult residents of North Dakota). For “select three” and “select all” questions, we also report results as weighted percentages. For each response option, the reported percentage reflects the proportion of all adult residents expected to select that item. Missing responses are included in the weighting and in the calculation of percentages, but they are not displayed in the reported results.

Qualitative Analyses

The Central CC team used MAXQDA's AI-powered tool, Tailwind, to identify emergent themes and response patterns. Tailwind generated codes with detailed definitions and representative examples directly from participant responses, accelerating our understanding of major themes without requiring manual review of thousands of individual responses. The Central CC team then reviewed and refined the codebook to ensure clarity and appropriate categorization. Following codebook development, we utilized MAXQDA's text search and autocode functions to systematically batch-code

responses sharing similar content, followed by manual review to ensure comprehensive coverage and appropriate categorization of nuanced responses. During project setup, we imported key demographic variables (including whether respondents currently have children enrolled in K–12 public schools) into the analytical framework, allowing us to examine both aggregate results and findings disaggregated by relevant demographic characteristics throughout the analysis process.

Survey Response Rate

Of the 16,000 addresses in the sample, 2,256 respondents fully completed the survey and an additional 190 respondents partially completed the survey. To preserve analytic value, the Central CC team retained 79 of the partial surveys (those who responded to at least 50% of items). The final dataset used for analysis included 2,335 cases.

The Central CC used a mail vendor to print and ship all outreach materials. Before mailing, the vendor compared the ABS against the U. S. Postal Service National Change-of-Address (NCOA) database to identify invalid addresses. After reviewing the full sample of 16,000 addresses, the vendor identified 351 invalid addresses. We also monitored for returned mail, identifying another 740 unique cases with bad addresses. Two individuals communicated their refusal to take the survey. The ND-CSE response outcomes, response rate, and yield rate are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Final Response Outcomes and Survey Response Rate

Response Outcome	Response Category	Cases
Complete surveys	Respondent	2,256
Partial surveys	Respondent	79
Refusals	Nonrespondent – known eligibility	2
Nonrespondents	Nonrespondent – unknown eligibility	12,572
Invalid addresses	Out of scope	1,091
Eligibility rate		100%
Response rate		16%
Yield rate		14%

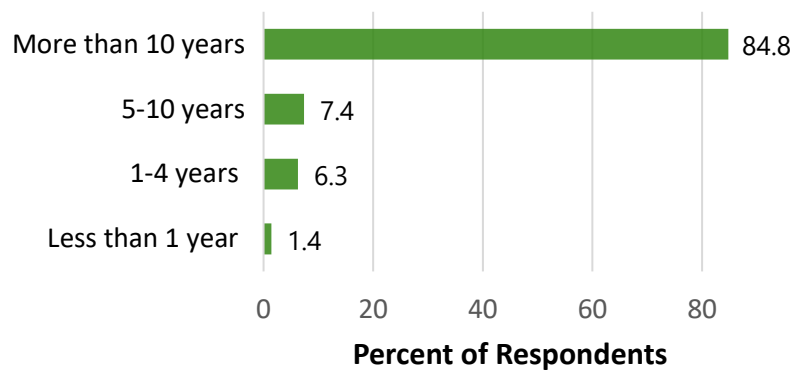
Note. Survey yield versus response rate: These terms are often used interchangeably, but "yield" typically refers to the number of usable surveys (completes and sufficient partials) divided by the total sample size. The response rate is defined as the number of usable surveys divided by the number of valid cases. In address-based sampling the different measures account for the fact that a certain percentage of attempted addresses are either vacant or otherwise invalid and therefore out of scope.

Sample Characteristics

Most respondents indicated that they have direct ties to North Dakota public schools (Figure 1). One-quarter (25%) indicated that a child in the home currently attends a North Dakota K–12 school, while an additional 40% reported that their child attended one in the past. Nearly two-thirds (62%) are themselves alumni of North Dakota public schools, and about one in four (26%) have worked within the system. Frequency tables are provided in Appendix B.

Figure 2 shows that respondents are largely long-term North Dakota residents, with a majority (85%) reporting that they have lived in the state for more than 10 years.

Figure 2: Length of Respondent Residency



Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

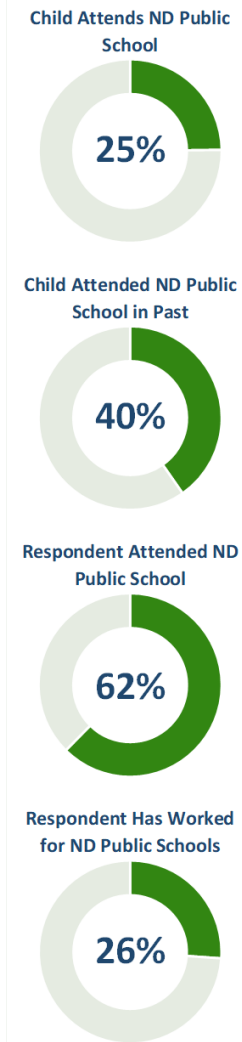
As demonstrated in Table 4, most respondents reported that they are financially comfortable.

Table 4. Household Financial Status of Respondents

Which statement best describes your household's current financial status?	Percent of Respondents
We often struggle to pay for basic needs like food, housing, and utilities	3.0
We can cover basic needs but don't have much extra	12.0
We are comfortable but still need to budget carefully	30.4
We are comfortable and able to save money	42.3
Prefer not to say	10.1

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Figure 1: Respondent Ties to ND Public Schools



ND-CSE respondents are predominantly White, with other racial and ethnic groups represented in smaller proportions (Table 5). When compared to the racial and ethnic characteristics of all North Dakota residents, the sample is somewhat less diverse.

Table 5. Race/Ethnicity of Respondents vs. North Dakota Residents

Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Respondents	Percent of ND Residents
White	85.0	81.7
Hispanic	1.4	4.7
Black	1.3	3.3
Other	2.9	6.3
Two or more races	1.5	4.0
Prefer not to say	6.1	-

Note. Native American, Asian American, and Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander responses were combined to the “Other” category. Population estimates come from American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates 2020–2024. The ACS does not present a “prefer not to say” category.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

The age distribution of survey respondents also differs from that of the North Dakota population, with individuals aged 50–64 and 65 and older disproportionately represented and younger adults, particularly those aged 35–49, disproportionately underrepresented (Table 6).

Table 6. Age of Respondents and North Dakota Residents

Age	Percent of Respondents	Percent of ND Residents
65+	26.5	21.0
50–64	22.7	12.4
35–49	28.1	43.6
18–34	17.7	23.0

Note. Population estimates come from American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates 2020–2024.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

To address these demographic differences and improve representativeness, the results presented in this report use weighted estimates that are designed to reflect the overall North Dakota population.

Findings

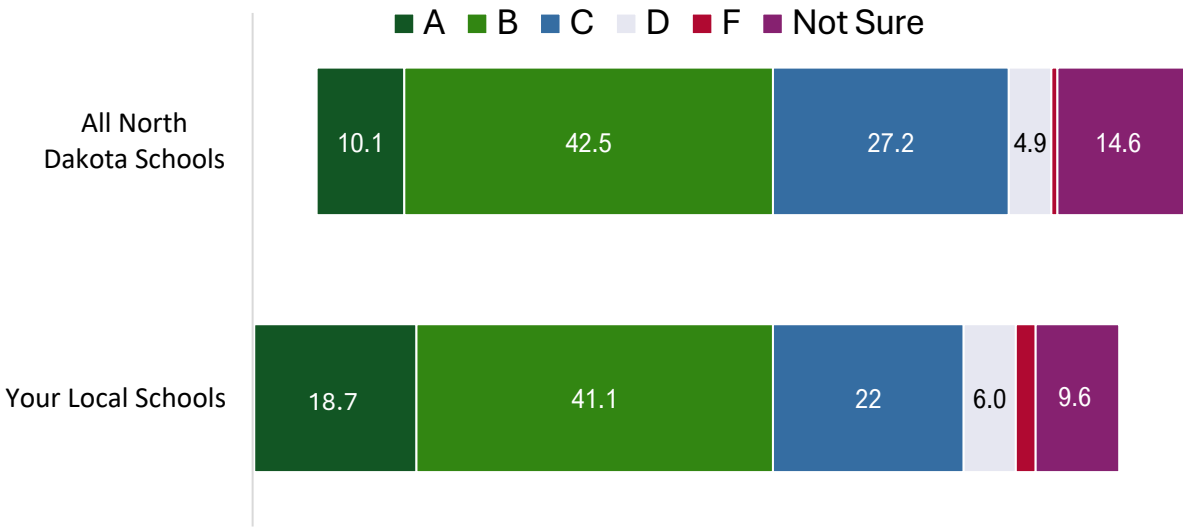
Results from the ND-CSE offer insight into how North Dakotans view their education system and what they believe is needed to strengthen it moving forward.

Grading the North Dakota K–12 Public School System

Local K–12 public schools in North Dakota are generally viewed positively. Overall, most residents assigned schools a grade of “A” or “B,” though they also rated their own local schools more favorably than all North Dakota schools (Figure 3). For example, almost one in five residents (19%) give their local schools an “A,” but about one in ten residents (10%) gave all North Dakota schools an “A.”

Responses were largely consistent between parents of public school children and other residents. The most notable difference was that respondents without children in public schools were more likely to say they are unsure how to grade schools (15% vs. 10%).

Figure 3: Grading Local and Statewide K–12 Public Schools
Percent of North Dakota residents who assigned a grade of...



Note. Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations.
Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Reasons for Attending Non-Public K–12 Schools in North Dakota

Survey respondents who indicated that they currently have or previously had children enrolled in a K–12 school in North Dakota were asked what types of schools their children attended. Those that indicated their children were enrolled in a non-public K–12 school were then asked to share the reason(s) they chose not to enroll their child in a public

school. In total, 255 respondents answered this question.

Respondents provided a variety of reasons for enrolling their children in non-public schools—most commonly, a preference for faith-based education; concerns about the academic rigor in public schools; dissatisfaction with public school class sizes and curricula, including a perception that curricula is misaligned with their values and beliefs; and a negative perception of public school environments. See Appendix C for information about themes by respondent type and additional, less prevalent, themes.

Desire for Faith-Based Education

Respondents most frequently identified a desire for a faith-based education as the reason they chose not to enroll their children in a K–12 public school ($n = 88$). They explained that they wanted their children’s education to be rooted in religious beliefs and values, with some specifically noting a desire for religious curricula and others sharing that they wanted faith and academics to be integrated in their child’s education to foster a religious worldview. Although most respondents expressed a general preference for faith-based education, some indicated that they chose Christian or Catholic schools for their children.

“We wanted to incorporate faith-based learning along with academics for our children.”

— Household with K–12 student

Concerns about Academic Rigor

Concerns about academic quality in public schools emerged as another key reason parents chose a non-public education for their children ($n = 64$). Many respondents expressed a belief that public schools do not provide students with a high-quality educational experience. Several respondents shared specific concerns about public schools, including low test scores, less rigorous curricula, lower expectations for student achievement, teacher quality concerns, an excessive emphasis on sports, and insufficient funding and resources.

“The reading and math scores in public schools are behind. My kids test higher than their peers on state testing, and their public-school friends their age struggle to read.”

— Household with K–12 student

Concerns about Class Sizes

Another common theme was a concern about large class sizes in public schools ($n = 56$). Many respondents indicated that they chose non-public schools because they offer smaller class sizes and lower student-to-teacher ratios, which allows for more personalized learning, encourages student participation, and supports a stronger school community.

“Smaller school and classes that create a better community environment.”

— Household with K–12 student

Curriculum Content and Ideological Alignment

“The public school system morals are not compatible with my beliefs.”

— Household without K–12 student

Another common theme was the desire to avoid perceived political or social agendas in public schools ($n = 51$). For example, some respondents stated that they did not want their children exposed to what they perceived as liberal, left-leaning, or progressive views, particularly related to gender and transgender issues. Others indicated that they preferred an educational environment that reflected more conservative values and perspectives.

Several other respondents emphasized the importance of schools teaching moral or character values aligned with their personal beliefs.

Concerns About Public School Environments

Finally, multiple respondents shared concerns about the public school environment ($n = 49$), most commonly about bullying. Several respondents expressed general concerns about school safety and security, sharing a belief that non-public schools provide a safer environment. A smaller number of respondents identified other concerns, including violence and fights, drug and alcohol use, sexual harassment, poor attendance, inappropriate school attire, and the possibility that peers could have a negative influence on their children.

“Safer environment and more individualized instruction. Less exposure to bullying and drug use, which had been documented in public schools.”

— Household without K–12 student

General Perceptions of North Dakota K–12 Public Schools

The survey included two items that invited respondents to share their general perception of North Dakota K–12 public schools.

First Thought that Comes to Mind about North Dakota Public Schools

A total of 2,180 individuals responded to an open-ended question about the first thing that comes to mind when they think of North Dakota K–12 public schools. Respondents shared a variety of perceptions about North Dakota public schools—most commonly, positive reflections on the quality of K–12 public schools; thoughts on teacher compensation, retention, and quality; remarks about the school environment, safety, and student behavior; comments on school funding and resource management; and thoughts about curriculum, academic standards, and course offerings. See Appendix C for information about themes by respondent type and additional, less prevalent, themes.

Positive Reflections

Most frequently ($n = 392$), respondents shared positive reflections on the quality of North Dakota K–12 public schools using a range of descriptors, such as “good,” “great,” “excellent,” and “amazing.” Many responses did not elaborate beyond these positive descriptors of quality; however, some highlighted a perception that schools effectively prepare students for college, careers, and life, and acknowledged as well as a belief that they operate efficiently with limited resources. Some also noted that North Dakota’s K–12 public schools outperform the national average and are better than public schools in other states.

“Overall, very good. ND has always excelled in national testing. Personally, coming from a very small ND school, my education was excellent and prepared me well for secondary education. I think that is still true today.”

— *Household without K–12 student*

Teacher Compensation, Retention, and Quality

“We have great teachers but so many have burned out and left and it is increasing difficult to recruit talented new teachers because: lack of respect by the students, lack of accountability by parents, lack of support from administrators, low wages for the amount of responsibility and stress involved.”

— *Household without K–12 student*

Positive reflections about teacher dedication and hard work ($n = 352$) emerged as another important theme. Most of these comments portrayed K–12 public school teachers as dedicated, caring, compassionate, motivated, and invested in student success. Many respondents also expressed a belief that teachers are underpaid given their workload, responsibilities, and the stress they deal with on a day-to-day basis. Many respondents linked these factors to challenges in retaining quality teachers and recruiting new talent. A small number of respondents described K–12 public school teachers as low quality. However, several of those respondents attributed inadequate pay, burnout, and insufficient support as the reason why public schools have lower quality teachers.

School Environment, Safety, and Student Behavior

Many respondents commented on the school atmosphere and student conduct, including perceptions of school safety, the prevalence and handling of bullying, the impact of disruptive student behavior, and the sense of community within smaller schools ($n = 296$). This included comments about small and rural school environments and the sense of

“There appears to be a lot of bullying in all school levels that does not get treated appropriately.”

— *Household with K–12 student*

belonging that comes with schools in close-knit communities. Moreover, respondents often described K–12 public schools as safe and secure places to learn.

In contrast, some respondents shared negative opinions about public school environments. Most negative responses described a perception that public school students are disruptive, engage in bullying, and use drugs—and that staff are unable to properly discipline students due to policy restrictions or resource constraints.

School Funding and Resource Management

Another common theme was concerns about school funding and resource management ($n = 233$). Most respondents noted recent budget cuts and several shared a perception that public schools lack the proper resources to provide students with a high-quality, well-rounded education. Some expressed disappointment that arts and music courses had been eliminated, and others shared a perception that small rural schools are particularly

“In my district, the school spends too much money on having the nicest, newest facilities. I would rather they tax payers [sic] dollars go towards education curriculum, training, or paying staff.”

— *Household without K–12 student*

struggling with the lack of funding. Many respondents noted the relationship between inadequate funding and teacher shortages, with several of these also commenting that administrators that are paid too much or are not effectively managing schools. Similarly, several respondents felt that a lot of their taxpayer dollars are funding schools, yet there is general mismanagement of those funds and resources.

Curriculum, Academic Standards, and Course Offerings

“Sports take precedence over education. Education is not taken seriously enough, and expectations are way too low.” — *Household without K–12 student*

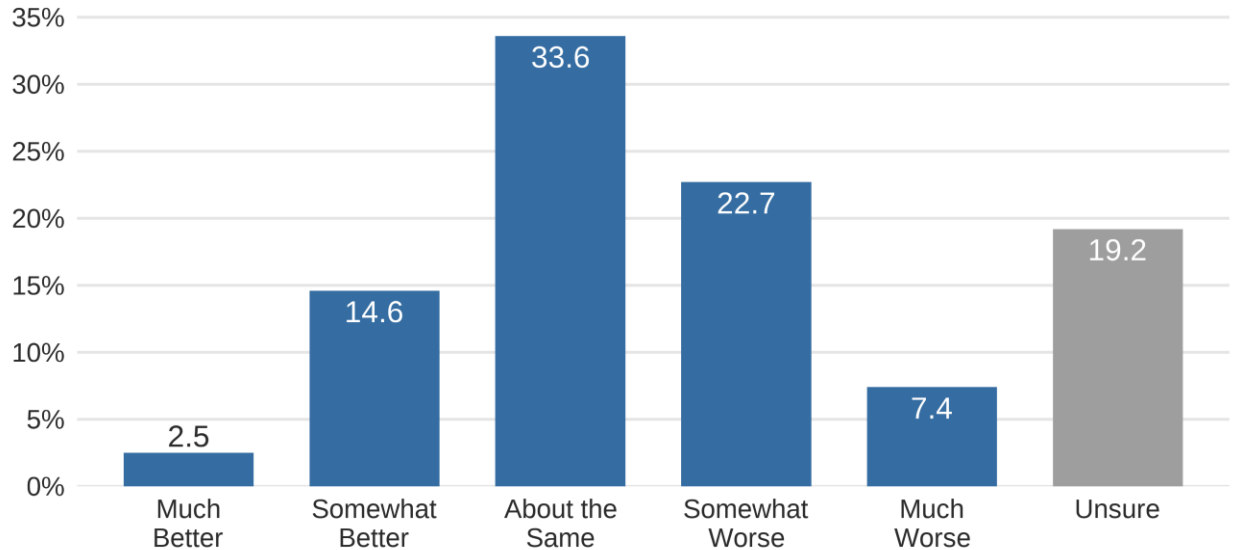
Finally, many respondents shared a perception that public schools are not rigorous enough or have low expectations ($n = 173$). Some respondents attributed this to an overemphasis on sports or an excessive use of technology. However, a smaller number of respondents expressed appreciation for the variety of courses offered in K–12 public schools, with some respondents commenting positively on arts and music courses.

Changes in Quality of North Dakota Schools

Respondents who indicated they have resided in North Dakota for more than 10 years were asked their views on how the quality of K–12 public schools has changed over the past five years. Most commonly (34%), respondents rated the quality of North Dakota schools as about the same as it was five years ago.

Figure 4: Change in Quality in K–12 Public Schools over Past Five Years

Thinking about the last five years, how has the quality of education in North Dakota K–12 public schools changed?



Note. Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations. This question was only given to North Dakota residents who have lived in the state for more than 10 years.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Challenges to North Dakota Public Schools

The survey included two items that invited respondents to share their perception of challenges facing North Dakota K–12 public schools.

Biggest Challenge Facing North Dakota Public Schools

A total of 2,211 individuals responded to an open-ended question about the biggest challenge currently facing North Dakota public schools. The most common themes included challenges related to the teacher workforce, school funding and resource allocation concerns, student behavior and discipline issues, the growing influence of digital technology, and external political and ideological pressures. Across these themes respondents expressed a concern that limited resources, policy decisions, and societal changes are placing increasing demands on educators and creating barriers to student learning and success. See Appendix C for information about themes by respondent type and additional, less prevalent, themes.

Maintaining a Robust Teacher Workforce

Most commonly, respondents identified challenges associated with the teacher workforce, particularly issues related to recruitment, retention, and compensation ($n = 485$). Many respondents reported a shortage of qualified teachers, especially in rural communities, and expressed concern about the impact of staffing shortages on educational quality. Another common theme was low teacher pay, which was associated with challenges in attracting new educators and retaining experienced ones, with some noting that teachers often leave the profession or relocate to other states in search of better compensation.

“Finding experienced and highly skilled teachers and providing a valuable education to all students. Lowering the bar to entry in the field of education should not be the solution to teacher shortages. The profession needs the best and brightest teacher candidates, not bodies to fill the vacancies.”

— *Household without K-12 student*

Respondents also described how workforce challenges contribute to educator burnout. Many indicated that teachers are expected to manage growing workloads, larger class sizes, diverse learning needs, student behavioral issues, and special education requirements, often without sufficient support or resources. Overall, respondents expressed concern that teacher compensation and working conditions do not adequately reflect the importance and complexity of the profession. As a result, many believe that fewer individuals are choosing to enter teaching while experienced educators are increasingly leaving the field, further exacerbating workforce shortages.

Student Funding Adequacy and Allocation

Another predominant concern among respondents was the adequacy of school funding ($n = 433$). Many described current funding levels as insufficient to support high-quality educational experiences, frequently connecting funding challenges to teacher compensation, noting that many educators are underpaid and undervalued, with some working multiple jobs or purchasing classroom supplies with their own money. In their view, these conditions contribute to teacher turnover and negatively affect educational quality.

Some respondents attributed funding challenges to broader structural factors, including state and federal budget constraints, declining enrollment in rural communities, and the diversion of public funds to private school options such as voucher programs. Others expressed concern about how existing resources are allocated, suggesting that funds may be directed toward administrative costs or extracurricular activities at the expense of academic programs, arts education, and other instructional priorities. School meals also emerged as a recurring topic, with some respondents advocating for free meals for all students and explaining the importance of providing basic supports to all students so they are ready to learn.

“FUNDING! When schools are bursting at the seams with students, yet cannot find the funds to add on, or build, is ridiculous. There needs to be a revamp of the formula to make sure schools are still getting the funding to make sure each student receives a quality education. Right now, at the school I work at, we have students who need services or require minutes of SPED or Title services that are receiving this minutes [sic] in busy hallways, entryways, and closets. This is not okay.”

— Household with K–12 student

Student Discipline and Behavioral Issues

“Kids have so many behavioral issues, teachers do not have enough support or resources, and there are little consequences.” — Household with K–12 student

Another common theme was challenges related to student discipline and behavior ($n = 308$). Many respondents linked these concerns to a perceived decline in respect for teachers, school staff, and other authority figures. Bullying—particularly cyberbullying—was frequently mentioned as a significant issue, with some respondents expressing concern that consequences for inappropriate behavior are not consistent or severe enough to deter future incidents.

Disruptive classroom behavior was another commonly cited concern, with respondents noting that it can interfere with instruction and negatively affect the learning experiences of other students. Many also pointed to insufficient parental involvement or support in addressing behavioral issues, suggesting that schools and teachers are often expected to manage these challenges without adequate support from families. Some respondents further indicated that teachers may feel limited in their ability to address misconduct because of administrative policies or concerns about potential repercussions.

Additional concerns included student drug use and a perceived lack of student engagement and motivation toward academics. Overall, respondents frequently emphasized the need for additional support, clearer expectations, and greater accountability to create learning environments that are safe, respectful, and conducive to student success.

Impact of Digital Technology on Students

Many respondents identified the pervasive impact of digital technologies—such as social media, smartphones, and artificial intelligence (AI)—as a challenge ($n = 139$). They further shared a belief that excessive screen time, particularly from laptops, tablets, and Chromebooks, is detrimental and can lead to decreased attention spans and social skills, foster a reliance on AI or the internet for completing assignments, and impede the development of critical thinking skills. While some acknowledged the need to adapt to modern technology and integrate AI, a few recommended that schools revert to more traditional methods like books, handwriting, and in-person instruction. Most recognized the embrace of technological advancements while maintaining a strong focus on personal instruction, foundational academic skills, critical thinking, and responsible technology use.

“It is difficult to compete in a digital world where students' attention is being pulled in so many directions. Students seem to be more distracted and less concerned with doing well in school. They tend to rely more on AI or the internet completing the work or solving the problems for them. The challenge public schools face is finding a way to create students who are critical thinkers and problem solvers.”

— *Household with K–12 student*

External Influences on Public Education

“Pandering to social ideologies rather than actually focusing on pragmatic life preparation.” — *Household with K–12 student*

Finally, multiple respondents expressed concern that political issues and cultural conflicts are increasingly affecting teaching and learning ($n = 135$). Respondents frequently referenced disagreements related to social values, gender issues, and the role of schools in

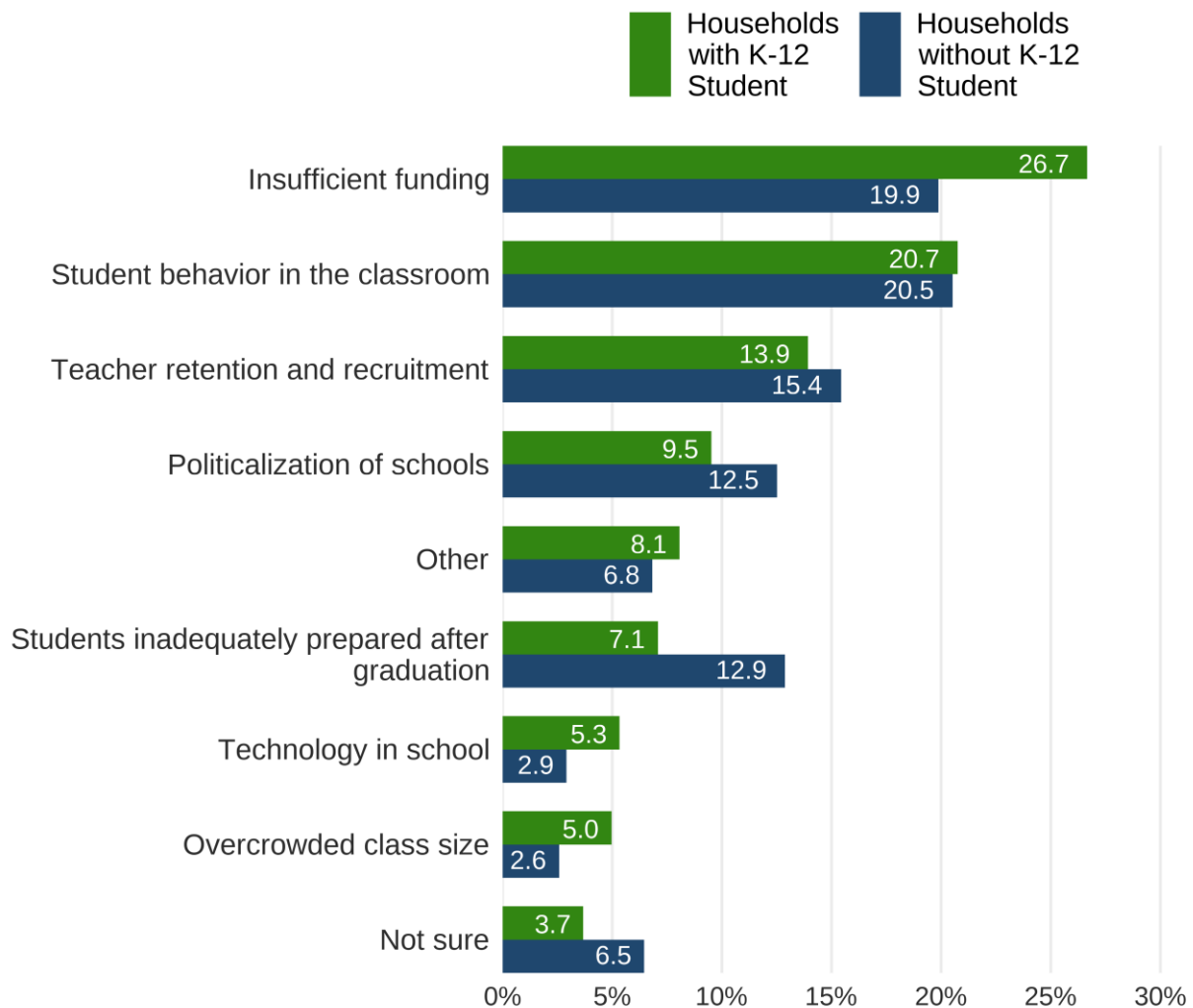
addressing contemporary social topics, with some arguing that these issues detract from schools' core educational mission. Many also expressed frustration with what they perceived as interference in education from elected officials, advocacy groups, and other external stakeholders. A common theme was the desire to reduce political influence in schools and place greater focus on academic instruction and student learning. Some respondents mentioned concerns about federal guidance, teacher unions, activist parents and community groups, and the expansion of private or charter school options.

The Biggest Issue Facing K–12 Education Today

Survey results suggest that many residents identify insufficient funding and student behavior in the classroom as the most pressing challenges facing K–12 education today (Figure 5). While perspectives were similar for households with and without K–12 students, differences were significant for several issues: insufficient funding (27% vs. 20%), students inadequately prepared after graduation (7% vs. 13%), the use of technology in schools (5% vs. 3%), and overcrowded class sizes (5% vs. 3%).

Figure 5: The Biggest Issue Facing K–12 Education Today

From this list, which is the biggest issue facing K–12 education today?



Note. Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Other Issues and Perspectives Provided

Of respondents who selected “Other,” 167 provided a written response. Many explained that they selected this option because they believe a combination of factors contribute to the challenges facing K–12 public schools, rather than a single problem. These issues included teacher retention challenges, which were often linked to inadequate teacher pay and professional support. Another common theme was a concern that public schools mismanage funds, including a perception that schools have adequate financial resources but do not allocate them efficiently. Student behavior also emerged as a concern in the written responses, with many describing a perceived sense of entitlement among students

and a perception that bullying is not adequately addressed by educators and school administrators.

A final theme in the written responses was the shift from traditional learning methods—paper, pencils, and physical books—to digital devices like iPads and computers, and concerns that this change might inadequately prepare students for post-graduation life and employment. Some specifically called for an increased emphasis on financial literacy (taxes, budgeting, loans, and banking), professional readiness (resume writing and workplace conduct), and practical application over memorizing academic content like historical speeches.

Outcomes that Define Educational Excellence in North Dakota

This section explores how North Dakota residents define educational excellence and the student outcomes they believe should be prioritized to achieve it.

Defining Excellence

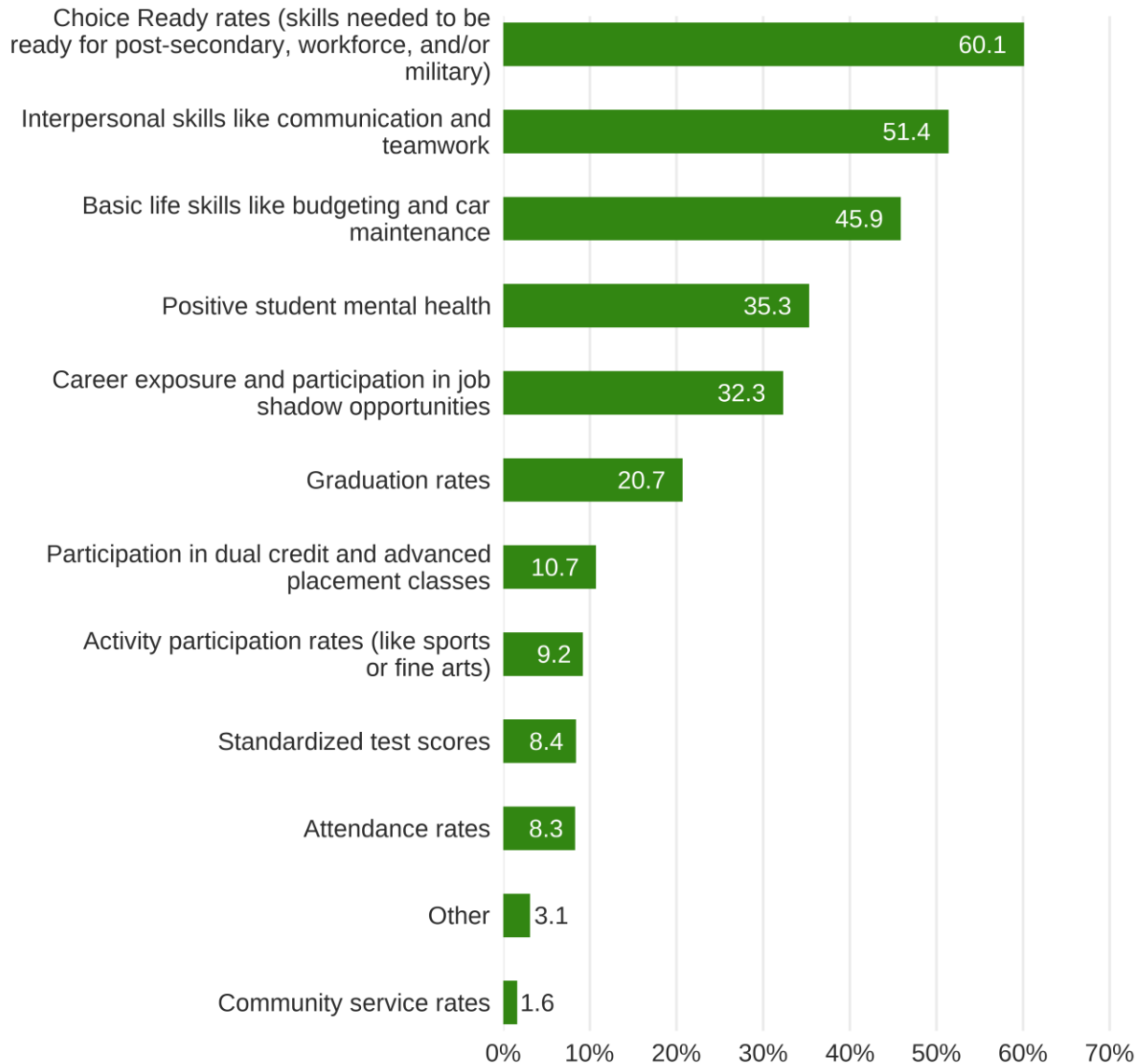
Figure 6 highlights the student outcomes most frequently associated with “an excellent education” in North Dakota. The results suggest that there is less emphasis on traditional or compliance-based metrics and more on holistic, skills-based outcomes that prepare students for life beyond school.

Most residents (61%) identified Choice Ready rates as a top three outcome, underscoring the importance they place on ensuring students graduate with the skills needed to succeed after high school. In addition, more than half of respondents (51%) emphasized interpersonal skills, such as communication and teamwork, reflecting a strong belief that success extends beyond academic knowledge to include the ability to collaborate and interact effectively. Basic life skills, including financial literacy and practical competencies like car maintenance, were also highly valued (46%). Beyond these top three priorities, respondents placed considerable importance on broader aspects of student well-being and real-world preparation, including positive student mental health (35%) and career exposure and participation in job shadowing opportunities (32%).

In contrast, traditional academic indicators were selected less often as measures of educational success. For example, 21% of respondents identified graduation rates as a top outcome, and 11% identified participation in dual credit or advanced placement courses. Similarly, metrics that have historically been central to accountability systems—such as standardized test scores (9%) and attendance rates (8%)—were among the least frequently selected outcomes.

Figure 6: Most Important Student Outcomes that Define “an Excellent Education” in North Dakota

Of the following choices, what do you think are the three most important student outcomes that define “an excellent education” in North Dakota? (Select up to three.)



Note. Percentages are weighted calculation of the number of respondents who reported each item as one of their top three choices divided by the number of respondents. Respondents chose an average of 2.9 items. Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Other Student Outcomes that Define an Excellent Education

Eighty survey respondents selected “Other” and provided a written response when asked which three student outcomes they believe are most important for defining an excellent education in North Dakota. Many of these respondents explained that they selected this

option because they believe that educational excellence is defined by a combination of factors and that multiple outcomes must work together to support student success.

Most frequently, responses described the importance of practical life skills, including financial literacy, cooking, and time management, as well as certification programs, trade skills, and career exposure. However, some emphasized the need to balance these opportunities with college preparation, with some respondents indicating that advanced placement (AP) and work-ready skills are both important. Many also mentioned the importance of fundamental academic skills, particularly reading, writing, and arithmetic, with many emphasizing the need for students to achieve grade-level proficiency in these areas. Several highlighted the importance of civic education, including an understanding of the U.S. and North Dakota constitutions and world history, and some mentioned the importance of critical thinking, encompassing the ability to reason, solve problems, and analyze information.

Strategic Themes

This section presents responses to questions about the most important priorities for different aspects of education in North Dakota.

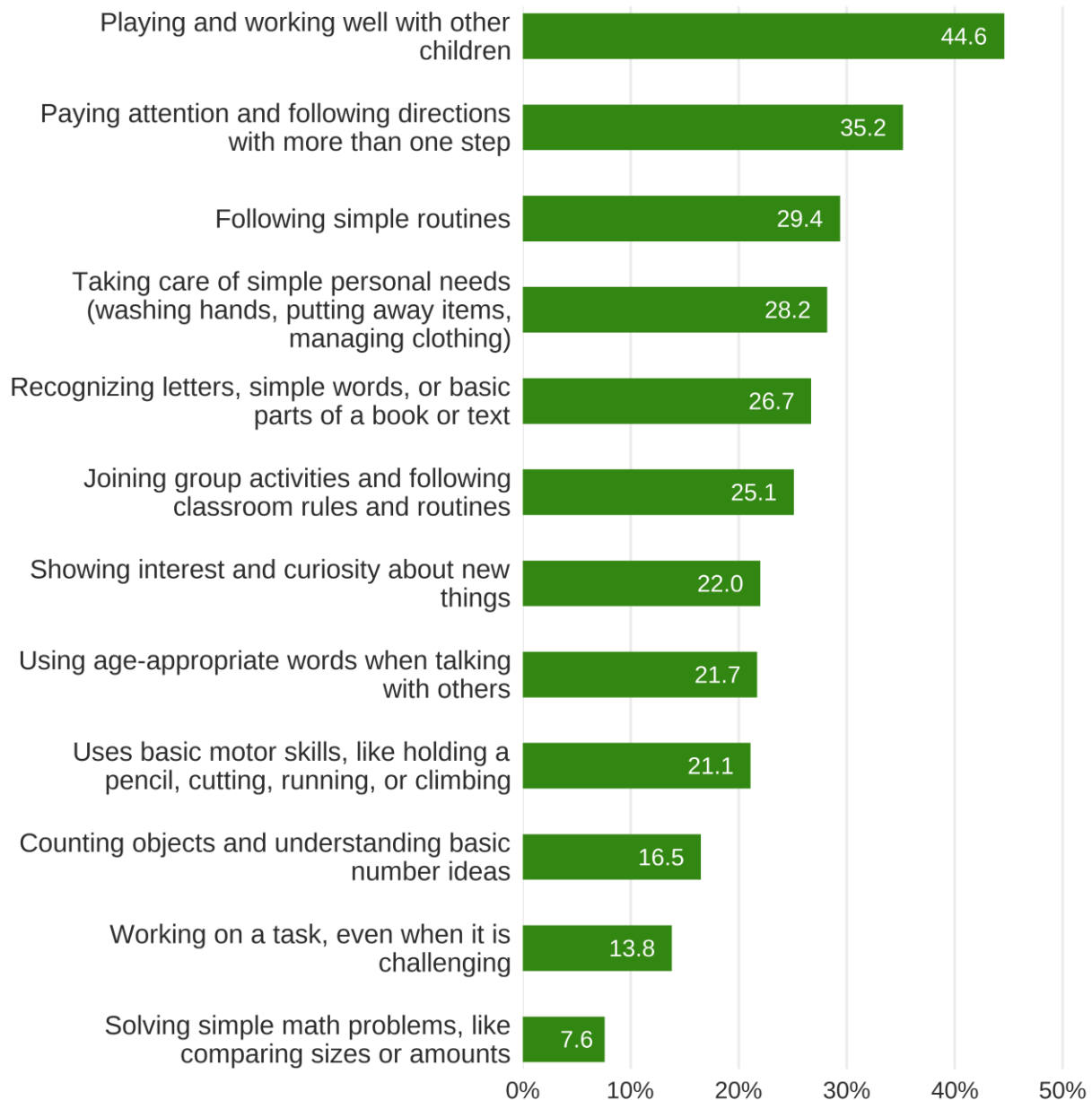
Preparing Young Children for Kindergarten

When asked to identify the most important skills that show children are ready to begin kindergarten, residents emphasized the importance of social and behavioral readiness (Figure 7). The top-ranked skill was playing and working well with other children (45%), followed by paying attention and following multi-step directions (35%) and following simple routines (29%).

Academic readiness skills, alternatively, were selected less frequently. Approximately 27% of respondents identified literacy skills or “recognizing letters, simple words, or parts of a book” as a key readiness indicator; 17% identified counting objects and understanding basic number concepts; and 7% identified solving simple math problems. Overall, results suggest that North Dakota residents view kindergarten readiness primarily in terms of when children can participate socially, attentively, and independently in the classroom.

Figure 7: Top Skills for Kindergarten Readiness

What do you think are the three most important skills that show that young children in North Dakota are ready for kindergarten? (Select up to three.)



Note. Percentages are weighted calculation of the number of respondents who reported each item as one of their top three choices divided by the number of respondents. Respondents chose an average of 2.9 items. Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

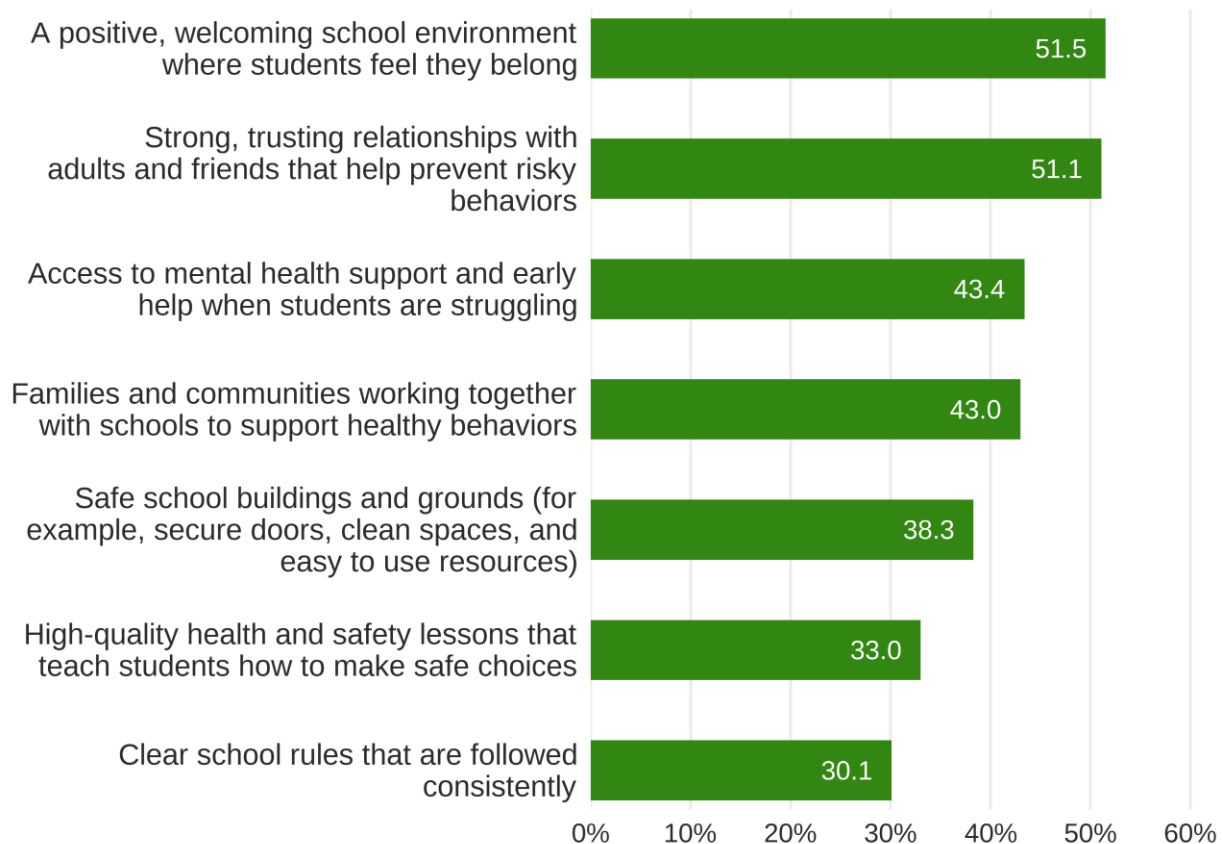
Student Health and Safety

Survey results suggest that many residents agree that a positive school environment and

strong, trusting relationships are important for K–12 student health and safety (Figure 8). Together, 79% view one of these two aspects of safety as a top three in importance. Several respondents identified more concrete support as important, including mental health resources (43%) and collaboration between schools and family or community (43%). Respondents selected an average of 2.9 strategies. Taken together, the results point to a comprehensive view of student safety and health that balances behavioral concerns with the need for supportive relationships, inclusive school climates, and well-managed learning environments.

Figure 8: Top Priorities for Keeping K–12 Students Safe and Healthy

Of the following choices, which three things do you think are most important for helping K–12 students in North Dakota stay safe and healthy? (Select up to three.)



Note. Percentages are weighted calculation of the number of respondents who reported each item as one of their top three choices divided by the number of respondents. Respondents chose an average of 2.9 items. Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations.

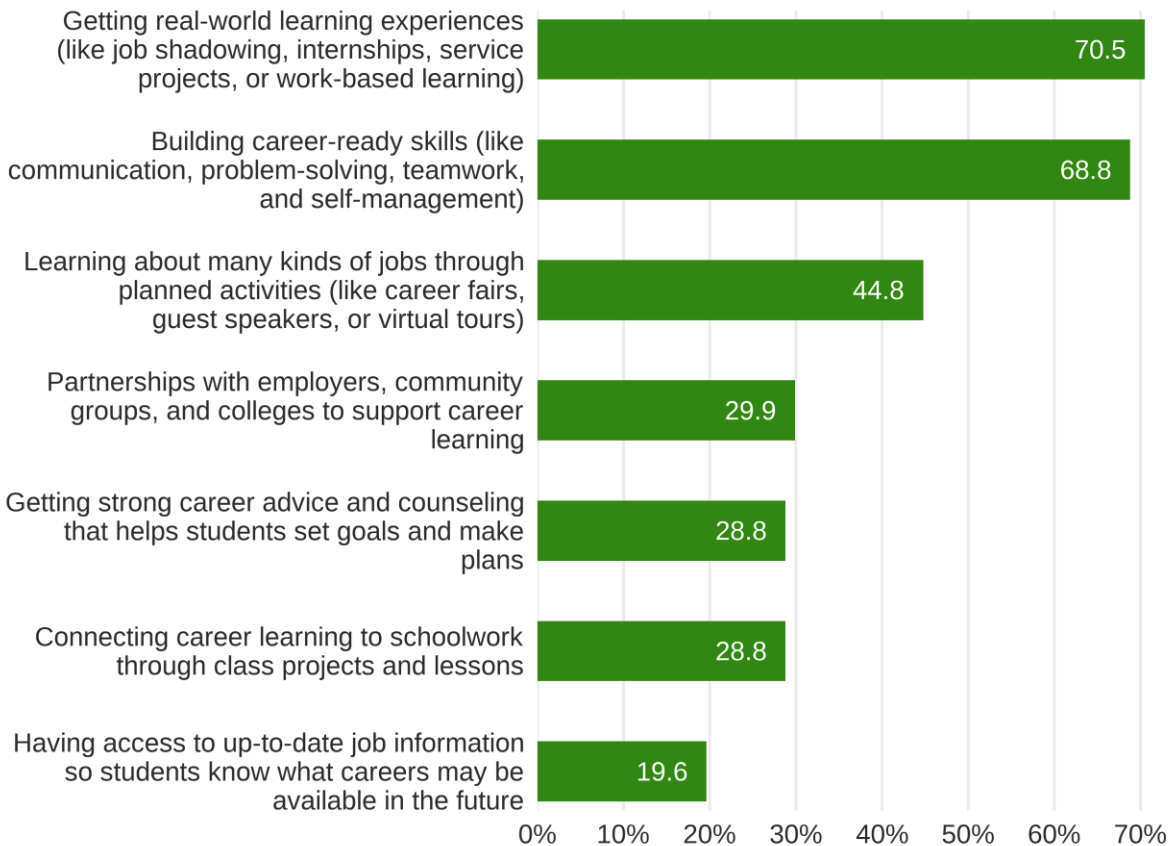
Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Preparing Students for Future Careers

Figure 9 suggests general agreement that North Dakota K–12 schools prepare students for careers most effectively when providing students with career-specific experiences and

skills. Approximately 71% identified real-world learning experiences such as job shadowing, internships, service projects, and work-based learning as an effective way of helping K–12 students learn about and prepare for a range of careers. This was closely followed by building students’ career-ready skills, such as communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and self-management (69%). This pattern suggests that respondents value active, applied learning, where students develop competencies through application.

Figure 9: Top Priorities for K–12 Students Learn About and Prepare for Different Careers
Of the following choices, which three things do you think are most important for helping K–12 students in North Dakota learn about and prepare for different careers? (Select up to three.)



Note. Percentages are weighted calculation of the number of respondents who reported each item as one of their top three choices divided by the number of respondents. Respondents chose an average of 2.9 items. Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

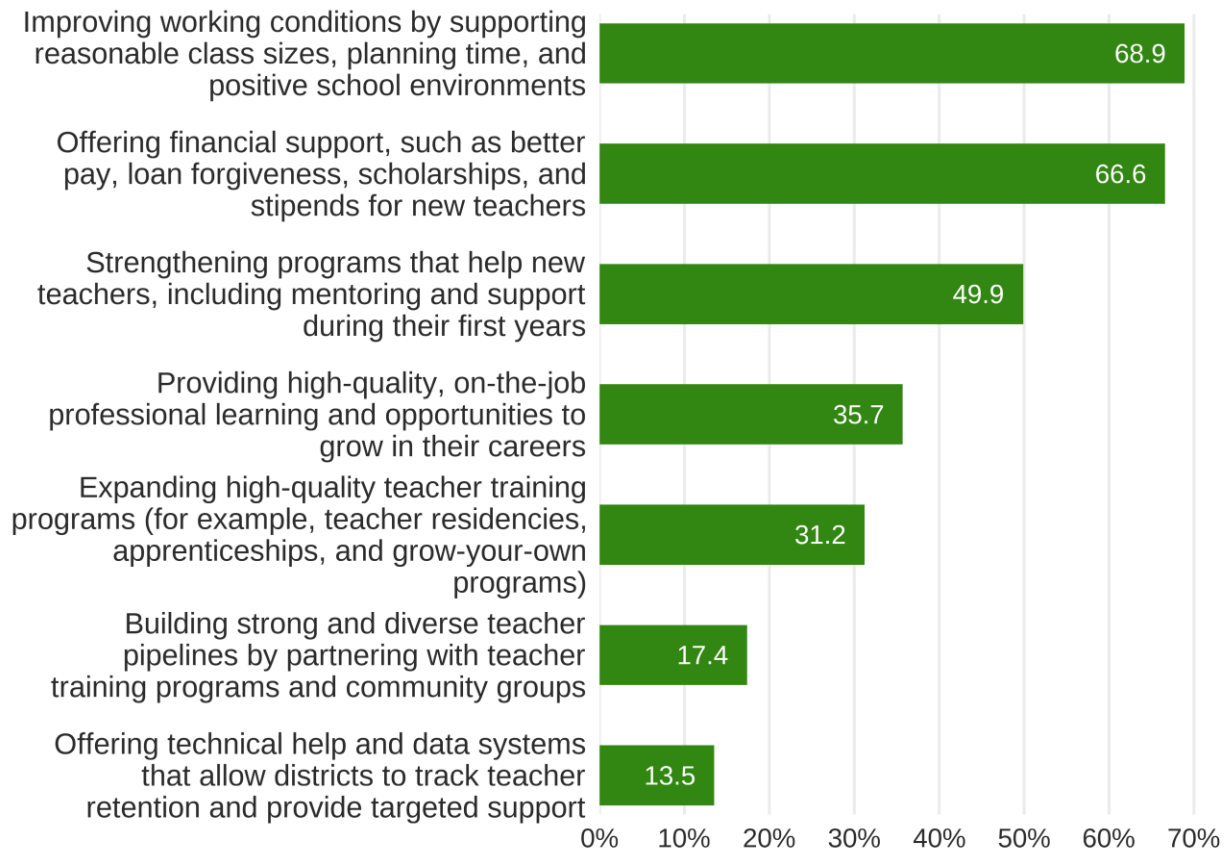
Recruiting and Retaining High-Quality Teachers and Staff

When asked to prioritize strategies for finding and keeping high-quality teachers and staff (Figure 10), residents most often identified improving teachers’ day-to-day working conditions (69%) and financial support strategies (67%). Half selected strengthening mentoring programs for new teachers, suggesting that support during early career stages is

also widely viewed as important. Smaller—but still notable—shares of respondents endorsed providing high-quality, on-the-job professional learning opportunities (36%) and expanding teacher preparation pathways, such as residencies and grow-your-own programs (31%).

Relatively few respondents selected strategies focused on longer-term system capacity building. For example, 17% prioritized building stronger and more diverse teacher pipelines through partnerships, and 14% chose offering technical assistance and data systems to track and inform teacher retention. Respondents selected an average of 2.3 strategies, indicating that most individuals see a combination of approaches as necessary, though with clear emphasis on a few key priorities.

Figure 10: Top Priorities for Finding and Keeping High-Quality Teachers and Staff
Which three strategies do you think North Dakota should focus on to help K–12 school districts find and keep high-quality teachers and staff? (Select up to three.)



Note. Percentages are weighted calculation of the number of respondents who reported each item as one of their top three choices divided by the number of respondents. Respondents chose an average of 2.3 items. Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations.

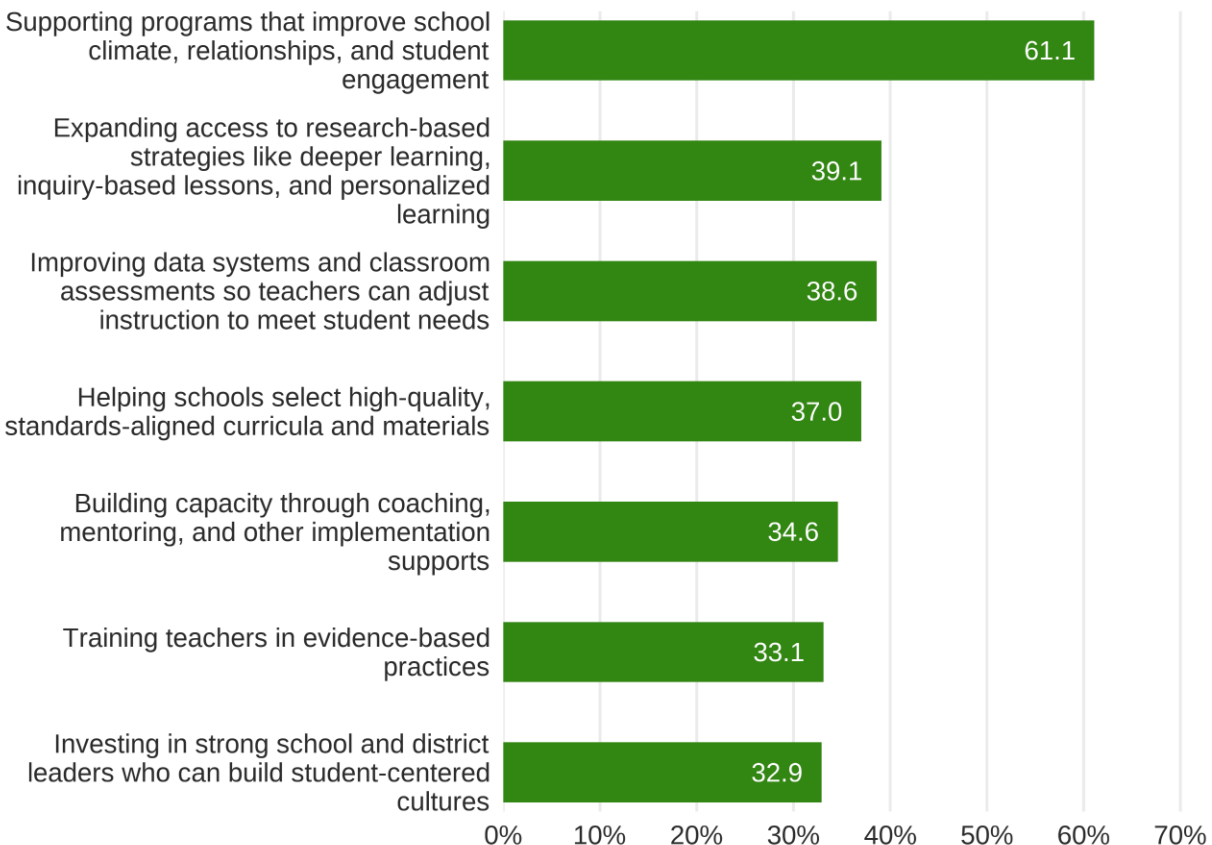
Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Strategies for High-Quality, Student-Centered Instruction

Figure 11 highlights the strategies respondents prioritized for supporting high-quality, student-centered instruction in North Dakota K–12 schools. Most frequently, respondents selected identified programs that improve school climate, relationships, and student engagement (61%), suggesting that respondents view positive learning environments as foundational to effective teaching and learning. A second group of priorities connects to evidence-based approaches, including personalized learning (39%), data systems and classroom assessments (39%), and helping schools adopt high-quality, standards-aligned instructional materials (37%). Respondents were less likely to select items that build educator capacity, such as providing coaching and mentoring (35%), training teachers in evidence-based instructional practices (33%), and investing in strong school and district leadership (33%).

Figure 11: Top Strategies to Support High-Quality, Student-Centered Instruction

Of the following choices, which three strategies do you think North Dakota should focus on to best support high-quality, student-centered instruction in K–12 schools? (Select up to three.)



Note. Percentages are weighted calculation of the number of respondents who reported each item as one of their top three choices divided by the number of respondents. Respondents chose an average of 2.8 items.

Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

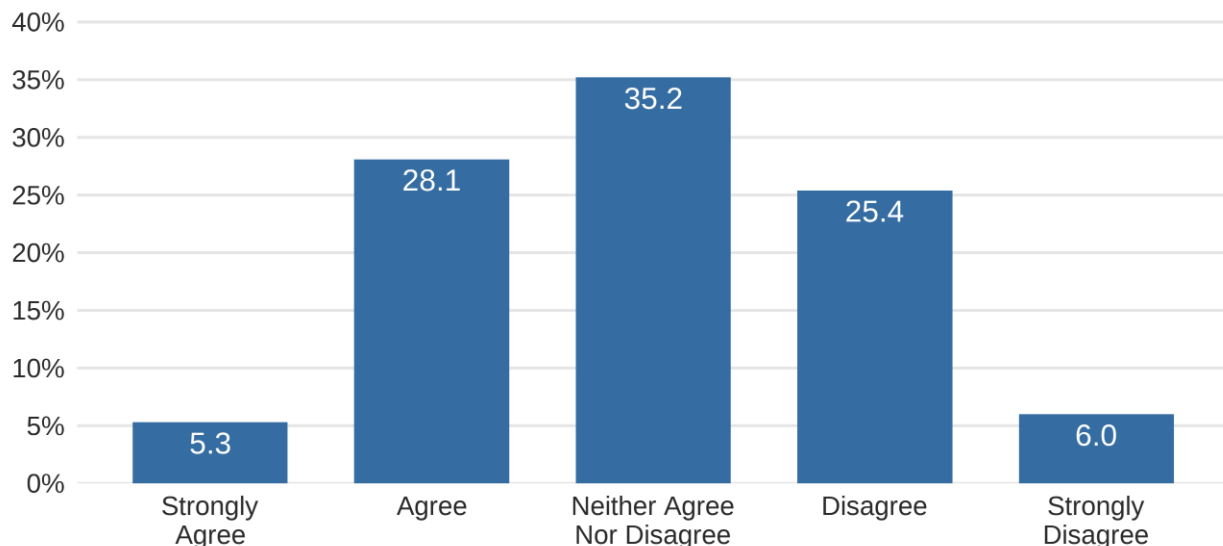
Educational Resources in North Dakota

There is strong agreement that equitable access is important, with 88% of residents indicating that state efforts and funding should focus on ensuring all students have access to a quality school (as opposed to some students having access to multiple quality schools).

Locating Information About North Dakota's Education Priorities

Survey results suggest that many residents are not confident in their knowledge about where to find information about North Dakota's education priorities. Approximately one-third of respondents agreed that they know where to find information about North Dakota's education priorities while another third disagreed (Figure 12). The remaining third indicated that they "neither agree nor disagree," suggesting an awareness gap rather than an indifferent position. This relatively even distribution of responses suggests that many residents may feel only partially informed—or not informed at all—about state education priorities. The findings point to an opportunity for state and local education leaders to improve communication, transparency, and public access to information about educational goals and initiatives.

Figure 12: Awareness of Where to Find Information on North Dakota's Education Priorities
For the following question, please think about how much you agree or disagree with the statement provided. I know where to find information about North Dakota's education priorities.



Note. Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations.

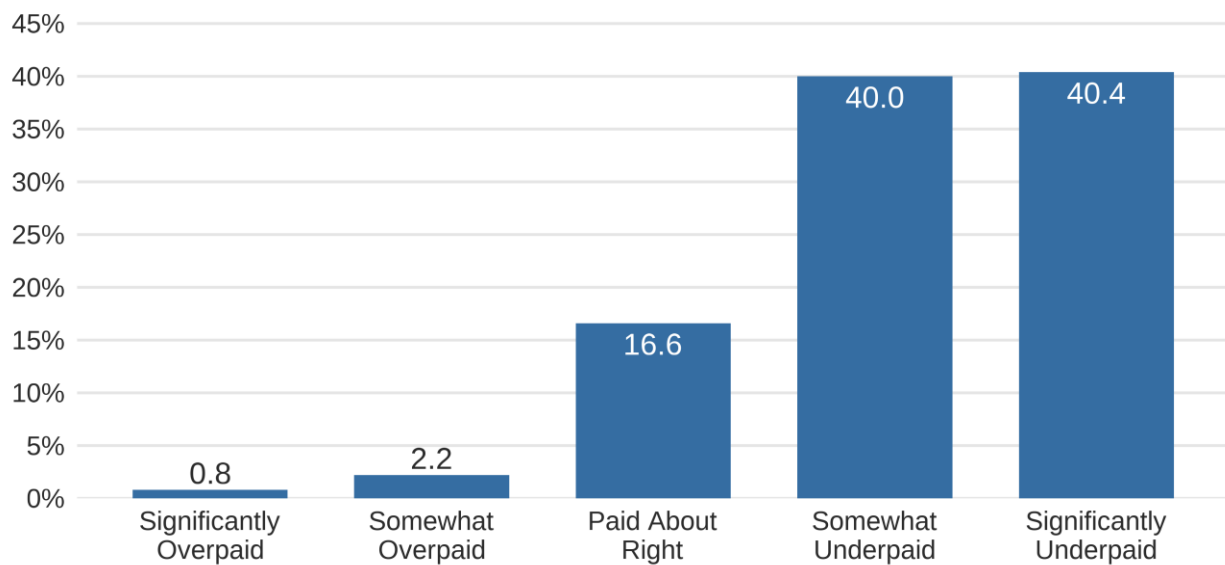
Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026

Teacher Pay

Figure 13 shows that most residents feel that teachers in North Dakota are underpaid. A large majority report that teachers are either somewhat underpaid (40%) or significantly underpaid (40%), totaling over 80% of North Dakota residents. In contrast, 17% say that teachers are paid about the right amount. Overall, the findings suggest a strong consensus that teacher compensation in North Dakota is insufficient for recruiting and retaining teachers.

Figure 13: Opinions on Teacher Pay

What best describes your thoughts on teacher pay in North Dakota? Teachers are...



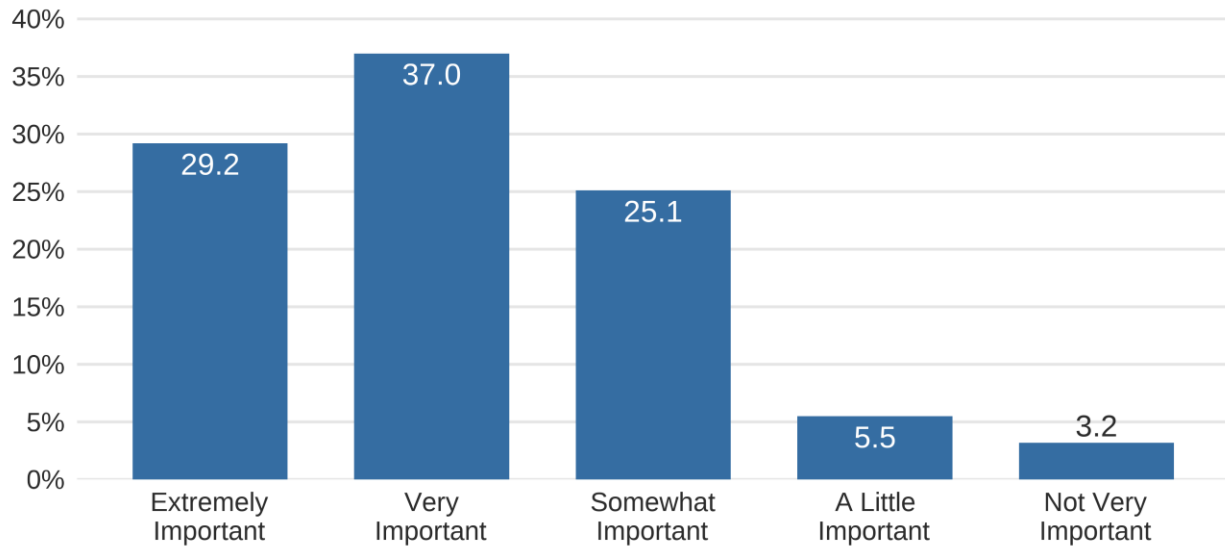
Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Technology in North Dakota K–12 Schools

This section presents findings regarding North Dakota residents' views on the importance of technology in schools, timing of introducing devices, challenges, and strategies for improving technology literacy.

Importance of Technology to Teaching and Learning

Respondents overwhelmingly view technology as important in K–12 schools—two-thirds of respondents say technology access is either extremely important or very important for supporting teaching and learning (Figure 14).

Figure 14: The Importance of Technology Access*How important is technology access in supporting teaching and learning?*

Note. Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Dedicated Technology Devices

Most also support schools issuing dedicated devices assigned to students. The preference for when students should receive a device varies. There is stronger support for introducing dedicated technology devices in middle school (43%) and high school (26%) than in earlier grades (Table 7).

Table 7. Timing for Introducing Dedicated Technology Devices

Response Category	Percent of North Dakota Respondents
As soon as they start school	5.4
Middle of elementary school (about third grade)	12.8
Start of junior high or middle school	43.1
Start of high school	26.0
Never	12.7

Note. Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations.

Question. When do you think students should get a dedicated technology device (like a tablet or laptop) from their school that they can bring home?

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

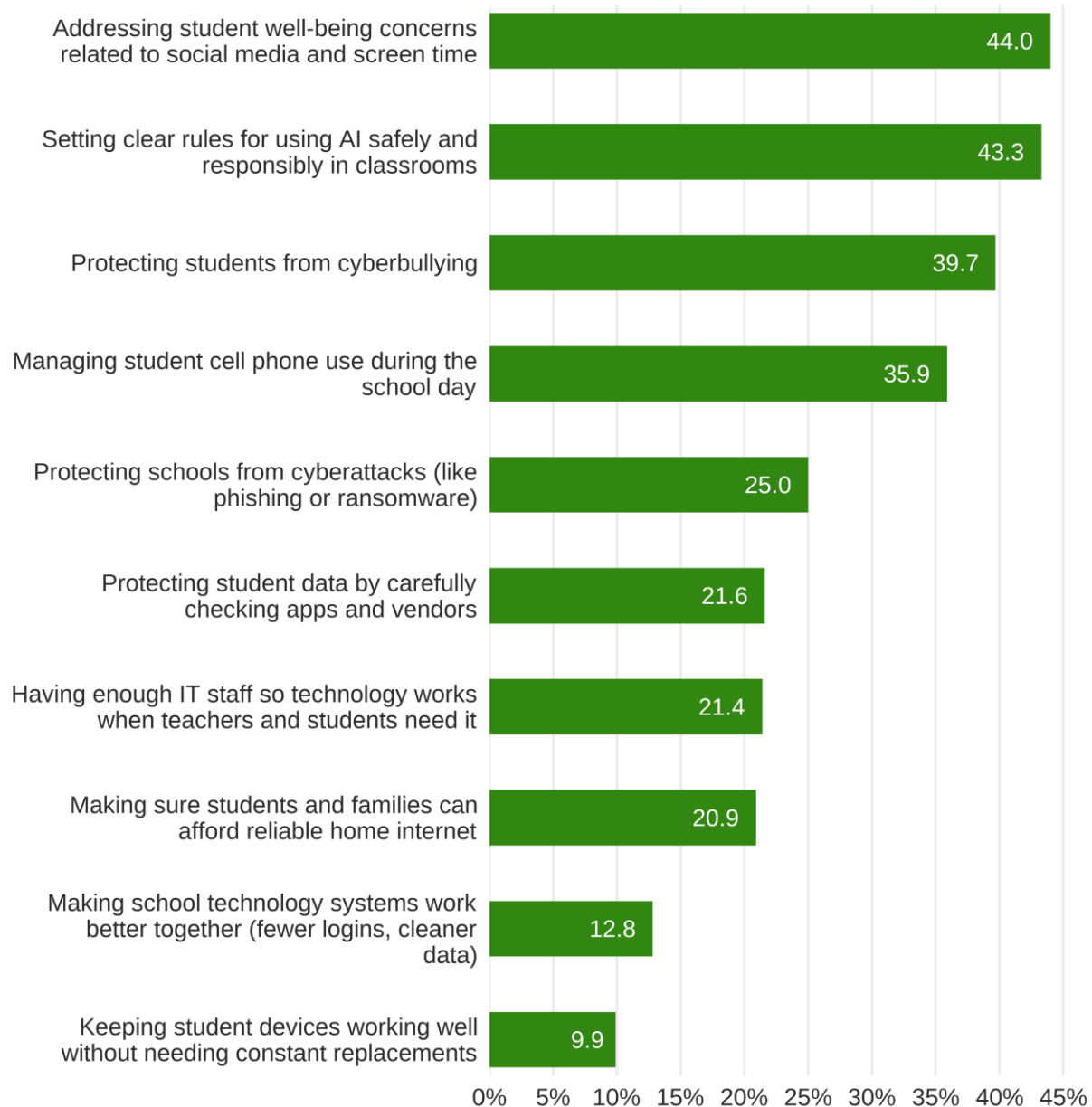
Technology Challenges

Residents identified several technology-related challenges that K–12 currently face (Figure 15). For example, 44% identified concerns related to social media and screen time as a primary issue, 40% indicated a need to protect children from cyberbullying, and 36% reported a need to manage student cell phone use. A related concern was the safe and responsible use of AI (43%). These findings place AI alongside broader concerns about student well-being and responsible technology use, rather than as a purely technical issue.

Operational and infrastructure-related concerns, such as protecting schools from cyberattacks (25%) and protecting student data (22%) were selected less frequently than student-facing issues.

Figure 15: Technology Challenges Facing K–12 Schools

*What are the biggest technology challenges for K–12 in North Dakota schools right now?
(Select up to three.)*



Note. Percentages are weighted calculation of the number of respondents who reported each item as one of their top three choices divided by the number of respondents. Respondents chose an average of 2.8 items. Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Improving Digital Literacy

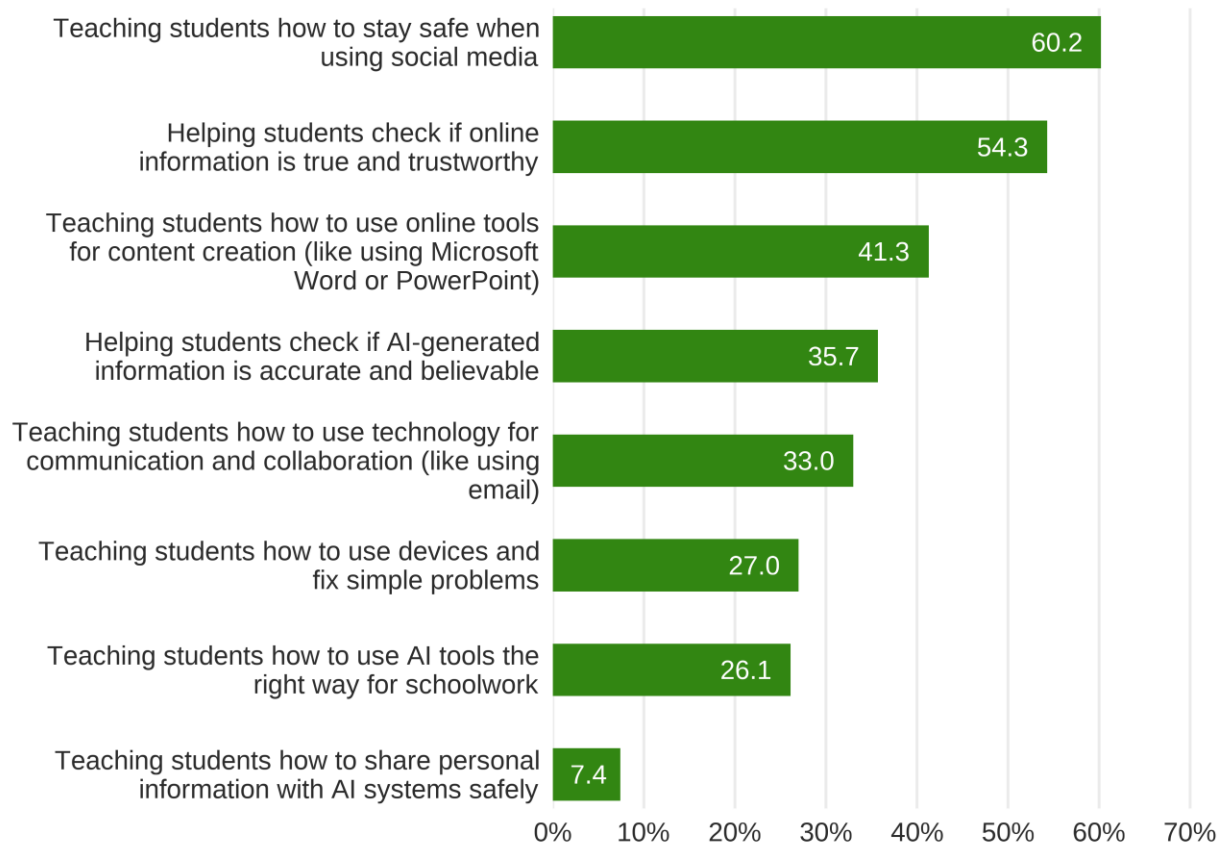
A related question asked respondents to prioritize ways to improve digital literacy in K–12

schools (Figure 16). They placed most emphasis on helping students navigate online environments, prioritizing teaching students how to stay safe on social media (60%), how to evaluate the trustworthiness of online information (54%), and how to evaluate AI-generated information (36%).

Technical skills were also a key focus, including using online tools for content creation (41%) and using AI tools appropriately for schoolwork (26%).

Figure 16: Improving Digital Literacy in K–12 Schools

Of the following choices, which three things do you think North Dakota should focus on to improve digital literacy in K–12 schools? (Select up to three.)



Note. Percentages are weighted calculation of the number of respondents who reported each item as one of their top three choices divided by the number of respondents. Respondents chose an average of 2.9 items. Those who did not respond to the question are excluded from calculations.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Priorities for North Dakota Schools in Next Five Years

The final item invited perspectives on what the top priority for North Dakota K–12 public schools should be over the next five years. In total, 2,021 respondents answered this question.

Respondents suggested various priorities, most commonly emphasizing the need to strengthen the educator workforce through improved recruitment, retention, compensation, and support. Other key priorities included better preparing students for life beyond high school, establishing effective policies and practices to guide the use of AI and technology, strengthening instruction in foundational skills, and ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently to meet student and school needs. See Appendix C for information about themes by respondent type and additional, less prevalent, themes.

Teacher Recruitment, Training, Retention, Compensation, and Support

The teacher workforce was the most frequently mentioned priority area ($n = 553$). This theme encompasses a range of issues related to the financial, professional, and personal well-being of educators. Respondents frequently called for increased teacher pay, stronger recruitment and retention efforts, improved benefits, and greater access to professional development opportunities. They also expressed concerns about teacher burnout, heavy workloads, and the need for stronger administrative support to help teachers succeed.

“Making sure teachers are taken care of financially and more emotionally. Teachers are burning out quicker due to lack of discipline and poor leadership. Teaching isn’t treated as a professional occupation anymore.”

—Household with K–12 student

Life Skills and Vocational Training

Another important priority was ensuring schools teach students practical, real-world skills so that they are better prepared for life after graduation ($n = 371$). Specific skills and topics they suggested included financial literacy, budgeting, home economics, career and technical education, and trade-related training. Respondents emphasized the importance of equipping students with the knowledge and skills needed to navigate adulthood successfully, whether they pursue college, enter the workforce, or join the military.

“Train students how to communicate well, work with others, and engage in critical thinking and problem-solving...skills that are valuable in any job or environment.”

—Household with K–12 student

Impact and Regulation of AI and Technology in Education

“Expand on how to use AI to help aid in learning curriculum and make everyday life easier while noticing when AI is incorrect. AI is in its infancy but will play a huge role in our children's lives, so may as well embrace it rather than reject it.”

—Household with K-12 student

Many respondents commented on the complex and evolving use of AI and technology in the educational setting ($n = 361$). Responses emphasized the need to teach students how to use AI, digital tools, and the internet safely, effectively, and responsibly. Many also expressed concerns about the potential negative effects of AI and technology, including its impact on learning, academic integrity, and critical thinking. Responses often mentioned the need for AI and technology governance policies, as well as teaching students to critically evaluate information and distinguish credible sources from misinformation. While some respondents shared a preference for embracing AI and preparing students for a technology-driven future, others shared concerns about excessive screen time, advocating for schools to return to more traditional instructional approaches, particularly for younger students.

Student Safety

Many responses identified student safety, well-being and security as a priority ($n = 296$). Respondents expressed concerns about physical safety in schools, including the need for updated facilities and enhanced security measures. Online safety also emerged as a top concern, with respondents highlighting the importance of protecting students' personal information, mitigating the negative effects of social media, addressing cyberbullying, and promoting the safe and responsible use of new technologies such as AI. Bullying was consistently identified as a major issue, with many respondents calling for stronger prevention efforts, dedicated anti-bullying programs, and clear consequences for harmful behavior, including zero-tolerance policies, particularly at the elementary level.

“Safety in all areas....buildings, AI, technology, private use, bullying.”

—Household without K-12 student

Academics and Foundational Skills

Another common theme was a suggestion to focus on instruction, in particular a renewed emphasis on core academic subjects such as reading, writing, and mathematics ($n = 262$). Respondents frequently linked these recommendations to concerns about excessive technology use and screen time, particularly in the elementary grades. Comments also mentioned standardized testing, with some respondents calling for greater emphasis on test-based accountability and others advocating for reducing the role of test scores in education. Additional suggestions included adopting more student-centered approaches, returning to basics (e.g., cursive writing), increasing the use of evidence-based instructional practices, and ensuring learning experiences keep all students engaged.

“Focus energies on achieving excellence in core subjects (e.g., English language arts and Math) and promoting healthy student socialization apart from technology.”

—Household with K–12 student

Funding and Resource Allocation

“Make sure funding is there for schools to keep their buildings and facilities working smoothly and secure.” —Household with K–12 student

Finally, multiple respondents identified a need to prioritize school funding and resource allocation ($n = 208$). They emphasized the importance of adequate and sustainable funding for schools, as well as the importance of allocating resources effectively within and across districts. Many also called for increased investments to meet state learning goals for learning, including funding for educators and staff, school facilities, instructional materials, arts programs, and free meal programs. Respondents also highlighted the need to modernize facilities, update technology, reduce overcrowding, and ensure students have the tools and resources they need to learn.

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Appendix A. Questionnaire

North Dakota Community Survey on Education (ND-CSE)

COLOR KEY

- Green text:** Programming instructions (notes for programming purposes)
- Blue text:** Variable Names (will not appear in the administered survey)

RESERVE CODES

[Blank]	Logical skip
-99	Seen but unanswered question
0	Seen but unanswered for multi-value fields (i.e., questions where more than one response can be selected)
77	Unsure
88	Prefer not to say

LANDING PAGE FOR LOGIN



Thank you for your interest in participating in the North Dakota Community Survey on Education (ND-CSE)!

Please have the household member **18 years of age or older that most recently had a birthday** complete the survey.

To access the survey, please enter your unique 6-character alpha-numeric PIN that was provided in the survey invitation letter.

Enter your PIN:



HEADER: NDDPI + Central CC logos

FOOTER: If you experience technical issues, please contact ND-CSE@norc.org or 877-267-7915 for assistance.

HEADER AND FOOTER APPEAR ON ALL SURVEY PAGES

IF ENTERED PIN DOES NOT MATCH ANY PIN IN CONTACT LIST AND MAXIMUM LOGIN ATTEMPTS (10) HAVE NOT YET BEEN REACHED, DISPLAY THE FOLLOWING ERROR TEXT:

Incorrect PIN. Please enter your 6-character alpha-numeric PIN exactly as it appears in the survey invitation letter.

IF TOO MANY FAILED ATTEMPTS (>10), DISPLAY THE FOLLOWING ERROR TEXT:

Too many failed log in attempts. For help accessing the survey, contact us at ND-CSE@norc.org or 877-267-7915. Click next to continue.

UPON CLICKING NEXT ARROW, GO TO END OF SURVEY “THANK YOU” SCREEN.

CONSENT: Welcome to the North Dakota Community Survey on Education (ND-CSE)!

What is the purpose of this survey?

The purpose of this survey is to better understand your thoughts on the public education system in North Dakota and to use data to inform policy decisions in North Dakota.

Who is conducting this survey?

The Central Comprehensive Center at NORC at the University of Chicago, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is working with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. The **North Dakota Department of Public Instruction** wants to hear directly from the people they serve about your priorities for the education of North Dakota students.

Why should I complete this survey?

Your responses will help inform the priorities for North Dakota students. In thanks to you for considering participation, **\$1** was included in the letter to your household about this survey. You may keep this \$1 even if you decide not to participate. If you complete the survey, you will receive an **additional \$10 in the form of an electronic gift card**. Instructions for receiving the \$10 will be provided at the end of the survey.

Will my responses be kept confidential?

We will not share your individual responses with anyone outside the Central Comprehensive Center team. Data and reports will be presented in summary form only and identifying information such as individual names and email addresses will not be included in any summary reports.

How much time will this take?

This survey will take approximately **10 minutes to complete**. Your participation is voluntary. You may skip any question you prefer not to answer, and you may choose to stop the survey at any time.

If you have questions about the study, please contact the research team at ND-CSE@norc.org or toll-free at 877-267-7915. If you have questions about your rights as a participant, please call the NORC IRB Manager toll-free at 1-866-309-0542.

By clicking the arrow below to go to the next page, you are confirming that you are at least 18 years old and that you agree to participate in this study.

START: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this survey.

SURVEY NAVIGATION INSTRUCTIONS

- Use the blue arrow buttons at the bottom of each screen to move forward or backward one question at a time.
- Please DO NOT use your browser's Back or Forward buttons to navigate the survey.
- On some screens, you may need to scroll down to see the blue arrow buttons.

STOPPING THE SURVEY

- If you need to exit the survey before completing it, simply close the survey window in your browser. Your responses will be securely stored, and you can finish the survey later.
- To finish the survey, you will need your PIN again. After entering your PIN, you will be directed to the screen where you left off previously.

[Theme 1: Grading the System]

Theme 1_INTRO:

These first questions ask you to grade the quality of North Dakota public schools.

Q1a_GRADE:

Using a scale from A to F, what grade would you give all North Dakota K–12 public schools?

- A (1)
- B (2)
- C (3)
- D (4)
- F (5)
- Unsure (77)

Q1b_LOCGRADE:

Using a scale from A to F, what grade would you give your local K–12 public schools?

- A (1)
- B (2)
- C (3)
- D (4)
- F (5)
- Unsure (77)

[Theme 2: Connection to North Dakota Schools]

Theme 2_INTRO:

The next set of questions asks about your personal experiences with the K–12 education system in North Dakota.

Q2_CURRENTCHILD:

Are there school-aged children (K–12) living in your home?

- Yes (1) → SKIP to 3b
- No (2)
- Prefer not to say (88)

Q3a_PREVCHILD:

IF Q2 NO or Prefer not to say: Have you ever had children in a K–12 North Dakota school?

Yes (1)
No (2) → SKIP to 4
Prefer not to say (88) → **SKIP to 4**

Q3b_SCHOOLTYPE:

IF Q2 or Q3a YES: What type(s) of K–12 school(s) do/did they attend? (Select all that apply.)

Public school (1) → **SKIP TO 4 IF ONLY OPTION SELECTED**
Parochial or private school (2)
Home school (3)
Bureau of Indian Education school (4)
EXCLUSIVE ANSWER: Prefer not to say (88) → SKIP to 4

Q3c_NONPUBLIC:

IF Q3b NOT PUBLIC: What are the main reasons you chose **not** to enroll your child in a public school?

Q4_SCHOOLEMPLOYEE:

Have you ever worked, or are you now working, in a North Dakota K–12 public school or district?

Yes (1)
No (2)
Prefer not to say (88)

Q5_NDSTUDENT:

Did you attend a North Dakota K–12 public school?

Yes (1)
No (2)
Prefer not to say (88)

Q6_RESIDETIME:

How long have you lived in North Dakota?

- Less than 1 year (1)
- 1-4 years (2)
- 5-10 years (3)
- More than 10 years (4)

[Theme 3: General Perceptions of North Dakota schools]

Theme 3_INTRO:

The next questions ask more about your general perceptions of North Dakota K–12 public schools.

Q7_IMPRESSION:

When you think of North Dakota K–12 public schools, what is the first thought that comes to mind?

Q8_QUALITYCHANGE:

IF Q6 5-10 YEARS OR MORE THAN 10 YEARS: Thinking about the **last five years**, how has the quality of education in North Dakota K–12 public schools changed:

- Much better (1)
- Somewhat better (2)
- About the same (3)
- Somewhat worse (4)
- Much worse (5)
- Unsure (77)

[Theme 4: Challenges]

Theme 4_INTRO:

The following questions ask for your opinions on current challenges in education.

Q9_EDUCHALLENGE:

In your opinion, what is the **biggest challenge** North Dakota public schools are facing **right now**?

Q10_MAINISSUE:

From this list, which is the biggest issue facing K–12 education today?

- Insufficient funding (1)
- Technology in school (2)
- Overcrowded class size (3)
- Students inadequately prepared after graduation (4)
- Teacher retention and recruitment (5)
- Student behavior in the classroom (6)
- Politicalization of schools (7)
- Other (please specify): _____ (8)
IF SELECTED, RESPONSE REQUIRED IN COMMENT BOX.
- Unsure (77)

[Theme 5: Outcomes]

Theme 5_INTRO:

The next question asks about your thoughts on what student outcomes contribute to a quality education.

Q11_TOPOUTCOMES:

Of the following choices, what do you think are the **three most important student outcomes** that define “an excellent education” in North Dakota? (Select up to three.)

SELECTION RANGE: MINIMUM = 0 AND MAXIMUM = 3

- Graduation rates (1)
- Choice Ready rates (skills needed to be ready for post-secondary, workforce, and/or military) (2)
- Activity participation rates (like sports or fine arts) (3)
- Standardized test scores (4)
- Interpersonal skills like communication and teamwork (5)
- Participation in dual credit and advanced placement classes (6)
- Career exposure and participation in job shadow opportunities (7)
- Positive student mental health (8)
- Community service rates (9)
- Basic life skills like budgeting and car maintenance (10)
- Attendance rates (11)
- Other (please specify): _____ (12)

IF SELECTED, RESPONSE REQUIRED IN COMMENT BOX.

[Theme 6: Strategic Themes]

Theme 6_INTRO:

The next set of questions asks what you think are the most important priorities for different aspects of education in North Dakota.

Q12_KINDERSKILLS:

Of the following choices, what do you think are the **three most important skills** that show that young children in North Dakota are ready for kindergarten? (Select up to three.)

SELECTION RANGE: MINIMUM = 0 AND MAXIMUM = 3

- Using age-appropriate words when talking with others (1)
- Recognizing letters, simple words, or basic parts of a book or text (2)
- Counting objects and understanding basic number ideas (3)
- Solving simple math problems, like comparing sizes or amounts (4)
- Following simple routines (5)
- Playing and working well with other children (6)
- Paying attention and following directions with more than one step (7)
- Showing interest and curiosity about new things (8)
- Working on a task, even when it is challenging (9)
- Uses basic motor skills, like holding a pencil, cutting, running, or climbing (10)
- Taking care of simple personal needs (washing hands, putting away items, managing clothing) (11)
- Joining group activities and following classroom rules and routines (12)

Q13_SAFEHEALTH:

Of the following choices, **which three things** do you think are **most important** for helping K–12 students in North Dakota stay safe and healthy? (Select up to three.)

SELECTION RANGE: MINIMUM = 0 AND MAXIMUM = 3

- High-quality health and safety lessons that teach students how to make safe choices (1)
- Strong, trusting relationships with adults and friends that help prevent risky behaviors (2)
- Clear school rules that are followed consistently (3)
- A positive, welcoming school environment where students feel they belong (4)
- Access to mental health support and early help when students are struggling (5)
- Families and communities working together with schools to support healthy behaviors (6)
- Safe school buildings and grounds (for example, secure doors, clean spaces, and easy to use resources) (7)

Q14_CAREERPREP:

Of the following choices, **which three things** do you think are most important for helping K–12 students in North Dakota learn about and prepare for different careers? (Select up to three.)

SELECTION RANGE: MINIMUM = 0 AND MAXIMUM = 3

- Learning about many kinds of jobs through planned activities (like career fairs, guest speakers, or virtual tours) (1)
- Getting real-world learning experiences (like job shadowing, internships, service projects, or work-based learning) (2)
- Getting strong career advice and counseling that helps students set goals and make plans (3)
- Connecting career learning to schoolwork through class projects and lessons (4)
- Having access to up-to-date job information so students know what careers may be available in the future (5)
- Partnerships with employers, community groups, and colleges to support career learning (6)
- Building career-ready skills (like communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and self-management) (7)

Q15_STAFFRETENTION:

Of the following choices, **which three strategies** do you think North Dakota should focus on to help K–12 school districts find and keep high-quality teachers and staff? (Select up to three.)

SELECTION RANGE: MINIMUM = 0 AND MAXIMUM = 3

- Expanding high-quality teacher training programs (for example, teacher residencies, apprenticeships, and grow-your-own programs) (1)
- Offering financial support, such as better pay, loan forgiveness, scholarships, and stipends for new teachers (2)
- Strengthening programs that help new teachers, including mentoring and support during their first years (3)
- Improving working conditions by supporting reasonable class sizes, planning time, and positive school environments (4)
- Building strong and diverse teacher pipelines by partnering with teacher training programs and community groups (5)
- Providing high-quality, on-the-job professional learning and opportunities to grow in their careers (6)
- Offering technical help and data systems that allow districts to track teacher retention and provide targeted support (7)

Q16_EDUQUALITY:

Of the following choices, **which three strategies** do you think North Dakota should focus on to best support high-quality, student-centered instruction in K–12 schools? (Select up to three.)

SELECTION RANGE: MINIMUM = 0 AND MAXIMUM = 3

- Training teachers in evidence-based practices (1)
- Helping schools select high-quality, standards-aligned curricula and materials (2)
- Improving data systems and classroom assessments so teachers can adjust instruction to meet student needs (3)
- Investing in strong school and district leaders who can build student-centered cultures (4)
- Expanding access to research-based strategies like deeper learning, inquiry-based lessons, and personalized learning (5)
- Supporting programs that improve school climate, relationships, and student engagement (6)
- Building capacity through coaching, mentoring, and other implementation supports (7)

[Theme 7: Resources]

Theme 7_INTRO:

The next few questions ask about educational resources in North Dakota.

Q17_KNOWPRIORITIES:

For the following question, please think about how much you **agree** or **disagree** with the statement provided.

I know where to find information about North Dakota's education priorities.

- Strongly agree (1)
- Agree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Disagree (4)
- Strongly disagree (5)

Q18_SCHOOLACCESS:

Which statement do you agree with more?

When it comes to prioritizing state effort and funding, the state should focus on ensuring...

- All students have access to a quality school (1)
- Some students have access to multiple quality schools (2)

Q19_TEACHERPAY:

What best describes your thoughts on teacher pay in North Dakota?

Teachers are...

- Significantly overpaid (1)
- Somewhat overpaid (2)
- Paid about right (3)
- Somewhat underpaid (4)
- Significantly underpaid (5)

[Theme 8: Technology]

Theme 8_INTRO:

In the following questions, please provide your thoughts on the use of technology in education.

Q20_TECHIMPORTANCE:

How important is technology access in supporting teaching and learning?

- Extremely important (1)
- Very important (2)
- Somewhat important (3)
- A little important (4)
- Not very important (5)

Q21_DIGITALLITERACY:

Of the following choices, **which three things** do you think North Dakota should focus on to improve digital literacy in K–12 schools? (Select up to three.)

SELECTION RANGE: MINIMUM = 0 AND MAXIMUM = 3

- Teaching students how to use devices and fix simple problems (1)
- Helping students check if online information is true and trustworthy (2)
- Helping students check if AI-generated information is accurate and believable (3)
- Teaching students how to use AI tools the right way for schoolwork (4)
- Teaching students how to share personal information with AI systems safely (5)
- Teaching students how to stay safe when using social media (6)
- Teaching students how to use technology for communication and collaboration (like using email) (7)
- Teaching students how to use online tools for content creation (like using Microsoft Word or PowerPoint) (8)

Q22_TECHCHALLENGES:

What are the **biggest technology challenges** for K–12 in North Dakota schools right now? (Select up to three.)

SELECTION RANGE: MINIMUM = 0 AND MAXIMUM = 3

- Protecting schools from cyberattacks (like phishing or ransomware) (1)
- Making sure students and families can afford reliable home internet (2)
- Setting clear rules for using AI safely and responsibly in classrooms (3)
- Protecting student data by carefully checking apps and vendors (4)
- Keeping student devices working well without needing constant replacements (5)
- Making school technology systems work better together (fewer logins, cleaner data) (6)

- Having enough IT staff so technology works when teachers and students need it (7)
- Addressing student well-being concerns related to social media and screen time (8)
- Protecting students from cyberbullying (9)
- Managing student cell phone use during the school day (10)

Q23_TECHAGE:

When do you think students should get a **dedicated technology device** (like a tablet or laptop) from their school that they can bring home?

- Never (1)
- Start of high school (2)
- Start of junior high/middle school (3)
- Middle of elementary school (about third grade) (4)
- As soon as they start school (5)

[Theme 9: Priorities]

Theme 9_INTRO:

Please provide your final thoughts by answering the following question.

Q24_TOPPRIORITY:

In your opinion, what should be the **top priority** of North Dakota K–12 public schools over the next five years?

[Theme 10: Demographics]

Theme 10_INTRO:

Now, we would like to know a little more about your personal background.

Q25_AGE:

How old are you?

- 18-34 years old (1)
- 35-49 years old (2)
- 50-64 years old (3)
- 65 years or older (4)
- Prefer not to say (88)

Q26_RACEETH:

Which race best describes you?

- White (1)
- Native American (2)
- Asian American (3)
- Hispanic (4)
- Black (5)
- Two or more races (6)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (7)
- Prefer not to say (88)

Q27_FINANCES:

Which statement best describes your household's current financial status?

- We often struggle to pay for basic needs like food, housing, and utilities (1)
- We can cover basic needs but don't have much extra (2)
- We are comfortable but still need to budget carefully (3)
- We are comfortable and able to save money (4)
- Prefer not to say (88)

Finally, please provide your full name and email address so that we can provide you with an **electronic gift card in the amount of \$10**. You will receive this e-gift code via email from ND-CSE@norc.org within 7-10 business days after submitting your completed survey. Please check your spam folder if you cannot find your e-gift code email.

Please note that the name and email address you provide below will only be used by the Central Comprehensive Center team to provide you with an e-gift card. Your survey responses will remain anonymous. Data and reports will be presented in summary form only and will not include any identifying information.

First Name: _____ **Q28a_FName**

Last Name: _____ **Q28b_LName**

Email Address: _____@_____ **Q28c_EmailAddress**

QUALTRICS VALIDATION FOR Q28c: VALID EMAIL ADDRESS REQUIRED

Confirm Email Address:

_____ **Q28d_ConfirmEmail**

QUALTRICS VALIDATION FOR Q28d: ENTRY MUST MATCH Q28c. IF IT DOES NOT MATCH, DISPLAY ERROR TEXT: The email address you entered does not match. Please correct them.

IF SKIPPED, DISPLAY “REQUEST RESPONSE” POP-UP MESSAGE.

Q29_FUTURECONTACT:

It is possible that the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction may wish to seek additional information about your responses. May we share your name, email address, and phone number with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

IF SKIPPED, DISPLAY REQUEST RESPONSE POP-UP MESSAGE.

DISPLAY IF Q29 = YES

Please provide the best contact information that we may use to reach you in the future:

Email: _____ **Q30a_EMAIL**

Cell Phone Number: _____ **Q30b_CELLPHONE**

Land Line Phone Number: _____ **Q30c_LANDPHONE**

CLOSE:

Please click the right arrow below to submit your survey responses.

END OF SURVEY “THANK YOU” SCREEN:

We thank you for your time spent taking the North Dakota Community Survey on Education.
Your response has been recorded. You may close your browser.

Appendix B. Survey Item Frequency Tables

Table B1. Q1a_GRADE: Using a scale from A to F, what grade would you give all North Dakota K–12 public schools?

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
A	240	160	76
B	991	687	295
C	635	403	205
D	112	57	45
F	18	4	12
Unsure	339	268	60
Total	2,335	1,579	693

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B2. Q1b_LOCGRADE: Using a scale from A to F, what grade would you give your local K–12 public schools?

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
A	467	298	164
B	952	661	280
C	504	331	150
D	148	85	55
F	49	18	25
Unsure	211	182	19
No Response	4	4	0
Total	2,335	1,579	693

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B3. Q2_CURRENTCHILD: Are there school-aged children (K–12) living in your home?

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		Yes	No
Yes	693	693	0
No	1,579	0	1,579
Prefer not to say	63		
Total	2,335	693	1,579

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B4. Q3a_PREVCHILD: Have you ever had children in a K–12 North Dakota school?
IF Q2 NO or Prefer not to say

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Yes	964	941	0
No	635	623	0
Prefer not to say	42	14	0
No response	1	1	0
Total	1,642	1,579	0

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B5. Q3b_SCHOOLTYPE: What type(s) of K–12 school(s) do/did they attend? (Select all that apply.)

IF Q2 or Q3a YES

Response	Number of Selections	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Public school	1,552	920	610
Parochial or private school	197	112	81
Home school	73	20	51
Bureau of Indian Education school	7	3	3
Prefer not to say	4	0	3
Total	1,833	1,055	748

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B6. Q4_SCHOOLEMPLOYEE: Have you ever worked, or are you now working, in a North Dakota K–12 public school or district?

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Yes	578	415	158
No	1,727	1,156	527
Prefer not to say	28	6	8
No response	2	2	0
Total	2,335	1,579	693

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B7. Q5_NDSTUDENT: Did you attend a North Dakota K–12 public school?

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Yes	1,456	1,014	411
No	849	552	275
Prefer not to say	19	5	5
No response	11	8	2
Total	2,335	1,579	693

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B8. Q6_RESIDETIME: How long have you lived in North Dakota?

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		Yes	No
Less than 1 year	32	5	25
1-4 years	148	40	98
5-10 years	172	66	96
More than 10 years	1,981	580	1,360
No response	2	2	0
Total	2,335	693	1,579

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B9. Q8_QUALITYCHANGE: Thinking about the **last five years**, how has the quality of education in North Dakota K–12 public schools changed:
IF Q6 5-10 YEARS OR MORE THAN 10 YEARS

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Much better	60	34	25
Somewhat better	336	219	113
About the same	707	465	231
Somewhat worse	493	338	143
Much worse	164	91	60
Unsure	391	307	74
No response	2	2	0
Total	2,153	1,456	646

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B10. Q10_MAINISSUE: From this list, which is the biggest issue facing K–12 education today?

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Student behavior in the classroom	501	335	154
Insufficient funding	483	322	151
Teacher retention and recruitment	342	241	95
Politicalization of schools	284	192	82
Students inadequately prepared after graduation	247	186	53
Other	167	106	54
Technology in school	90	52	38
Overcrowded class size	85	44	38
Unsure	133	99	27
No response	3	2	1
Total	2,335	1,579	693

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B11. Q11_TOPOUTCOMES: Of the following choices, what do you think are the **three most important student outcomes** that define “an excellent education” in North Dakota? (Select up to three.)

Response	Number of Selections	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Choice Ready rates (skills needed to be ready for post-secondary, workforce, and/or military)	1,409	1,023	354
Interpersonal skills like communication and teamwork	1,215	813	378
Basic life skills like budgeting and car maintenance	1,072	700	338
Positive student mental health	810	523	265
Career exposure and participation in job shadow opportunities	726	482	225
Graduation rates	477	322	145
Participation in dual credit and advanced placement classes	260	166	88
Activity participation rates (like sports or fine arts)	214	134	77
Standardized test scores	209	148	54
Attendance rates	192	130	58
Other	80	55	18
Community service rates	36	22	11
Total	6,700	4,518	2,011

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B12. Q12_KINDERSKILLS: Of the following choices, what do you think are the **three most important skills** that show that young children in North Dakota are ready for kindergarten? (Select up to three.)

Response	Number of Selections	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Playing and working well with other children	1,033	732	280
Paying attention and following directions with more than one step	835	589	229
Following simple routines	682	417	247
Taking care of simple personal needs (washing hands, putting away items, managing clothing)	674	448	214
Recognizing letters, simple words, or basic parts of a book or text	638	422	198
Joining group activities and following classroom rules and routines	584	414	160
Showing interest and curiosity about new things	510	362	129
Uses basic motor skills, like holding a pencil, cutting, running, or climbing	508	326	173
Using age-appropriate words when talking with others	482	323	145
Counting objects and understanding basic number ideas	385	255	114
Working on a task, even when it is challenging	309	210	87
Solving simple math problems, like comparing sizes or amounts	173	111	51
Total	6,813	4,609	2,027

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B13. Q13_SAFEHEALTH: Of the following choices, **which three things** do you think are **most important** for helping K–12 students in North Dakota stay safe and healthy? (Select up to three.)

Response	Number of Selections	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
A positive, welcoming school environment where students feel they belong	1,213	827	365
Strong, trusting relationships with adults and friends that help prevent risky behaviors	1,190	774	387
Families and communities working together with schools to support healthy behaviors	1,040	718	297
Access to mental health support and early help when students are struggling	999	693	280
Safe school buildings and grounds (for example, secure doors, clean spaces, and easy to use resources)	903	583	295
High-quality health and safety lessons that teach students how to make safe choices	748	522	202
Clear school rules that are followed consistently	700	467	216
Total	6,793	4,584	2,042

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B14. Q14_CAREERPREP: Of the following choices, **which three things** do you think are most important for helping K–12 students in North Dakota learn about and prepare for different careers? (Select up to three.)

Response	Number of Selections	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Getting real-world learning experiences (like job shadowing, internships, service projects, or work-based learning)	1,647	1,071	531
Building career-ready skills (like communication, problem-solving, teamwork, and self-management)	1,604	1,116	445
Learning about many kinds of jobs through planned activities (like career fairs, guest speakers, or virtual tours)	1,025	692	311
Partnerships with employers, community groups, and colleges to support career learning	715	482	213
Connecting career learning to schoolwork through class projects and lessons	693	448	233
Getting strong career advice and counseling that helps students set goals and make plans	659	448	196
Having access to up-to-date job information so students know what careers may be available in the future	447	322	112
Total	6,790	4,579	2,041

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B15. Q15_STAFFRETENTION: Of the following choices, **which three strategies** do you think North Dakota should focus on to help K–12 school districts find and keep high-quality teachers and staff? (Select up to three.)

Response	Number of Selections	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Improving working conditions by supporting reasonable class sizes, planning time, and positive school environments	1,624	1,099	485
Offering financial support, such as better pay, loan forgiveness, scholarships, and stipends for new teachers	1,560	1,037	489
Strengthening programs that help new teachers, including mentoring and support during their first years	1,166	824	315
Providing high-quality, on-the-job professional learning and opportunities to grow in their careers	811	566	223
Expanding high-quality teacher training programs (for example, teacher residencies, apprenticeships, and grow-your-own programs)	730	458	250
Building strong and diverse teacher pipelines by partnering with teacher training programs and community groups	399	274	120
Offering technical help and data systems that allow districts to track teacher retention and provide targeted support	291	200	80
Total	6,581	4,458	1,962

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B16. Q16_EDUQUALITY: Of the following choices, which three strategies do you think North Dakota should focus on to best support high-quality, student-centered instruction in K–12 schools? (Select up to three.)

Response	Number of Selections	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Supporting programs that improve school climate, relationships, and student engagement	1,402	941	436
Expanding access to research-based strategies like deeper learning, inquiry-based lessons, and personalized learning	910	608	273
Helping schools select high-quality, standards-aligned curricula and materials	895	629	241
Improving data systems and classroom assessments so teachers can adjust instruction to meet student needs	890	617	250
Building capacity through coaching, mentoring, and other implementation supports	788	544	227
Training teachers in evidence-based practices	783	523	243
Investing in strong school and district leaders who can build student-centered cultures	766	498	248
Total	6,434	4,360	1,918

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B17. Q17_KNOWPRIORITIES: For the following question, please think about how much you agree or disagree with the statement provided. I know where to find information about North Dakota’s education priorities.

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Strongly agree	137	85	48
Agree	647	429	207
Neither agree nor disagree	804	580	200
Disagree	588	386	191
Strongly disagree	143	90	41
No response	4	2	1
Total	2,323	1,572	688

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B18. Q18_SCHOOLACCESS: Which statement do you agree with more? When it comes to prioritizing state effort and funding, the state should focus on ensuring...

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Some students have access to multiple quality schools	258	154	87
All students have access to a quality school	2,035	1,402	589
No response	28	15	11
Total	2,321	1,571	687

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B19. Q19_TEACHERPAY: What best describes your thoughts on teacher pay in North Dakota?

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Significantly overpaid	23	14	7
Somewhat overpaid	48	29	15
Paid about right	406	274	120
Somewhat underpaid	902	608	274
Significantly underpaid	919	630	265
No response	22	15	6
Total	2,320	1,570	687

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B20. Q20_TECHIMPORTANCE: How important is technology access in supporting teaching and learning?

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Extremely important	645	475	155
Very important	867	624	226
Somewhat important	594	365	209
A little important	133	71	57
Not very important	73	29	38
No response	7	5	2
Total	2,319	1,569	687

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B21. Q21_DIGITALLITERACY: Of the following choices, which three things do you think North Dakota should focus on to improve digital literacy in K–12 schools? (Select up to three.)

Response	Number of Selections	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Teaching students how to stay safe when using social media	1,372	946	396
Helping students check if online information is true and trustworthy	1,248	863	350
Teaching students how to use online tools for content creation (like using Microsoft Word or PowerPoint)	964	630	308
Helping students check if AI-generated information is accurate and believable	813	596	195
Teaching students how to use technology for communication and collaboration (like using email)	790	463	311
Teaching students how to use devices and fix simple problems	634	430	177
Teaching students how to use AI tools the right way for schoolwork	622	440	172
Teaching students how to share personal information with AI systems safely	153	103	43
Total	6,596	4,471	1,952

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B22. Q22_TechChallenges: What are the **biggest technology challenges** for K–12 in North Dakota schools right now? (Select up to three.)

Response	Number of Selections	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Setting clear rules for using AI safely and responsibly in classrooms	1,032	713	296
Addressing student well-being concerns related to social media and screen time	1,024	639	365
Protecting students from cyberbullying	909	594	294
Managing student cell phone use during the school day	847	628	202
Protecting schools from cyberattacks (like phishing or ransomware)	573	395	165
Protecting student data by carefully checking apps and vendors	518	332	166
Having enough IT staff so technology works when teachers and students need it	468	357	99
Making sure students and families can afford reliable home internet	461	326	116
Making school technology systems work better together (fewer logins, cleaner data)	299	190	100
Keeping student devices working well without needing constant replacements	221	132	85
Total	6,352	4,306	1,888

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B23. Q23_TECHAGE: When do you think students should get a **dedicated technology device (like a tablet or laptop) from their school that they can bring home?**

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
Never	285	182	88
Start of high school	610	393	205
Start of junior high/middle school	980	678	279
Middle of elementary school (about third grade)	300	218	76
As soon as they start school	118	77	35
No response	13	12	1
Total	2,306	1,560	684

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B24. Q25_AGE: How old are you?

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
18-34 years old	414	283	109
35-49 years old	656	186	452
50-64 years old	530	423	98
65 years or older	619	605	11
Prefer not to say	79	59	10
No response	3	1	2
Total	2,301	1,557	682

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B25. Q26_RACEETH: Which race best describes you?

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
White	1,984	1,394	566
Native American	41	16	20
Hispanic	33	18	13
Black	30	14	13
Asian American	26	14	9
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	0	1
Two or more races	36	14	20
Prefer not to say	143	84	36
No response	4	2	2
Total	2,298	1,556	680

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Table B26. Q27_FINANCES: Which statement best describes your household’s current financial status?

Response	Number of Respondents	Respondent has school-aged child	
		No	Yes
We are comfortable and able to save money	987	711	261
We are comfortable but still need to budget carefully	710	451	243
We can cover basic needs but don’t have much extra	280	170	102
We often struggle to pay for basic needs like food, housing, and utilities	70	38	27
Prefer not to say	237	175	44
No response	13	10	3
Total	2,297	1,555	680

Note. Those who answered “Prefer not to say” for whether they have school-aged children at home ($n = 63$) are omitted from the school-aged children breakout columns.

Source. North Dakota Community Survey on Education, 2026.

Appendix C. Additional Themes from Open-Ended Survey Responses

Table C1. Initial Thoughts Regarding K–12 Public Schools, Primary Themes by Respondent Group

Theme	Households with K–12 Students	Households without K–12 Students*
Positive Reflections	✓	✓
Teacher Compensation, Retention, and Quality	✓	✓
School Environment, Safety, and Student Behavior	✓	✓
School Funding and Resource Management	✓	✓
Curriculum, Academic Standards, and Course Offerings		✓

*This group includes those that responded “No” or “Prefer not to answer” to the question, “Are there school-aged children (K–12) living in your home?”

Table C2. Initial Thoughts Regarding K–12 Public Schools, Additional Themes

Theme	Description	Illustrative Quotation
Overall Perception of K–12 School Quality is Negative ($n = 113$)	Many responses note a decline in quality and academic rigor over time. This negative perception is underpinned by concerns about lower education standards, lack of proficiency, low test scores in math and reading, and a perceived lack of challenge for students. Some responses specify that North Dakota is academically behind compared to other states.	<i>“Quality is slipping. [...] There’s more emphasis on allowing students to retake low or failing tests in order to get them higher grades versus making them accountable for learning how to study better and putting the responsibility on the student.”</i> — Household with K–12 student
Political and Ideological Influences in Schools ($n = 91$)	External influences on education, including concerns about political involvement in schools and the teaching of specific ideologies, such as “woke,” liberal, or progressive gender ideologies. A small number of responses express that North Dakota K–12 public education is too conservative. Another recurring subtheme is the concern about indoctrination through political or religious agendas.	<i>“Please stop indoctrinating the students by keeping personal politics out of the school systems.”</i> — Household without K–12 student
Other Proposed Improvements and Solutions for Schools ($n = 71$)	Other suggestions and recommendations for enhancing the public education system that are not encompassed in other codes. This includes overcrowding of schools and the need for smaller class sizes, the need to teach more real world or career-related skills, and the need for individualized learning.	<i>“Overcrowded, not enough teachers giving appropriate time to all students.”</i> — Household without K–12 student <i>“More real life studies [need to be] put back into the curriculum, i.e., teaching them about finances, money handling, etc.”</i> — Household without K–12 student <i>“Not tailored enough to each child’s individual needs.”</i> — Household with K–12 student
Overall Perception of K–12 School Quality is Average ($n =$	Responses that describe the overall quality of North Dakota K–12 public	<i>“Average, not exceptional.”</i> — Household without K–12

64)	education as average or decent, with some noting that it could be improved. Responses describe public schools as “just okay,” “fine,” “adequate,” “basic,” etc.	student <i>“Could be better.”</i> — Household without K–12 student
Community Role in Education (n = 63)	The importance of public schools as a cornerstone of communities (especially rural ones) and the significant role they play in providing a sense of belonging and a close-knit, local feel.	<i>“Small town community feel, like a second family.”</i> — Household with K–12 student
Accountability in Education (n = 23)	Concerns about a lack of accountability for students and parents in the educational process. Responses call for parents to be more involved in their children’s education and students to take initiative in their learning and responsibility for their behaviors.	<i>“Too many parents that don't take responsibility for their kids' behavior.”</i> — Household with K–12 student <i>“Lots of work to be done: 1. Parents work WITH teachers involving studying and behavior of the child/young adult.”</i> — Household without K–12 student
Support for Students with Special Needs (n = 23)	The importance of services and accommodations for students requiring additional assistance, including perceptions that support is inadequate for students with special needs. A small number of responses state that there are good programs in specific schools or areas for children with special needs.	<i>“Special education needs a lot of work.”</i> — Household with K–12 student <i>“The special education programs with Bismarck public schools is very good.”</i> — Household without K–12 student

Table C3. Reasons for Choosing a Non-Public School, Primary Themes by Respondent Group

Theme	Households with Current K–12 Students	Households with Former K–12 Students*
Desire for Faith-Based Education	✓	✓
Concerns about Academic Rigor	✓	✓
Concerns about Class Sizes	✓	✓
Curriculum Content and Ideological Alignment	✓	✓

Concerns About Public School Environments	✓	
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*This group includes those that responded “No” or “Prefer not to answer” to the question, “Are there school-aged children (K–12) living in your home?”

Table C4. Reasons for Choosing Non-Public School, Additional Themes

Theme	Description	Illustrative Quotation
Concerns About Public School Discipline and Student Supervision (<i>n</i> = 48)	The perceived inability of teachers and administrators to properly discipline students and provide adequate supervision, including the inability to effectively manage those with special needs and concerns about how this disrupts learning.	<i>“Teachers not having support from administration/adequate resources to deal with students with behavioral/emotional/learning issues, which distracted from classroom instruction.”</i> — Household with K–12 student
Desire for Personalized Learning (<i>n</i> = 31)	The desire to provide students with education that is tailored to their academic level or learning style. Respondents often emphasize that public schools teach to the average student while more advanced students are not challenged enough and those needing more support fall behind.	<i>“Personal attention for each of our children allows them to flourish and not get bogged down in the mass ‘middle’ of the current public school system.”</i> — Household with K–12 student
Logistical Needs (<i>n</i> = 23)	This theme comprises various practical reasons for choosing non-public education, including convenient locations and proximity to home, enrolling the child in the same school parents work at, other logistical needs related to parents’ career choices, access to before or after school childcare at the school, and flexibility in school schedule.	<i>“We initially enrolled our kids in private school because my spouse work for that school and we received discounted tuitions.”</i> — Household without K–12 student <i>“Freedom of schedule: no snow days/missed school days to worry about.”</i> — Household with K–12 student <i>“The parochial high school was the closest school to our home.”</i> — Household without K–12 student

Table C5. Challenges Facing North Dakota Public Schools, Primary Themes by Respondent Group

Theme	Households with K–12 Students	Households without K–12 Students
Maintaining a Robust Teacher Workforce	✓	✓
Student Funding Adequacy and Allocation	✓	✓
Student Discipline and Behavioral Issues	✓	✓
Impact of Digital Technology on Students	✓	✓
External Influences on Public Education	✓	

*This group includes those that responded “No” or “Prefer not to answer” to the question, “Are there school-aged children (K–12) living in your home?”

Table C6. Challenges Facing North Dakota Public Schools, Additional Themes

Theme	Description	Illustrative Quotation
School Infrastructure and Overcrowding (<i>n</i> = 118)	Respondents highlight challenges related to rapid student growth, particularly in areas like Fargo and West Fargo, leading to overcrowded schools and classrooms. They also mention concerns about staffing, aging infrastructure in rural schools and the need for new facilities in growing areas, alongside a desire for more equitable opportunities for students in smaller schools.	<i>“I think student to teacher ratios are becoming less favorable to students. Meaning class sizes are growing and students may be unable to get more one on one attention, guidance, or teaching they need.”</i> — Household with K–12 student
Curriculum and Academic Standards (<i>n</i> = 91)	A perceived lack of focus on fundamental academic subjects such as reading, writing, STEM, and history, with some suggesting that schools are “not teaching kids” and should “get back to the basics.” Several individuals express worry about a “literacy crisis,” noting that some students advance without adequate foundational skills.	<i>“Literacy crisis. Students are being pushed through the system with nowhere near adequate reading, writing, and arithmetic skills, only to fail when graduation comes around. It is unacceptable how uneducated the average graduate is in this state.”</i> — Household with K–12 student
Parental Involvement and Influence (<i>n</i> = 54)	The critical role of parents in education, including calls for increased parental involvement, support for schools and teachers,	<i>“The biggest challenge is parents and families. The move to no cell phone has made an improvement, but</i>

	and improved communication between schools and parents. Conversely, some comments highlighted negative parental behaviors, such as complaining about teachers, a lack of involvement at home, or even "bad parenting," which is seen as a significant challenge.	<i>there's a long ways to go regarding parent education for raising responsible and respectful children."</i> —Household with K–12 student
Student Mental Health and Well-Being (<i>n</i> = 16)	Comments about student mental health, with reports of an epidemic of harassment and bullying leading to suicidal ideation or attempts. There is also a perceived lack of neurodivergent supports and services, alongside a complete absence of mental health support and education for teachers. The excessive use of electronic devices and artificial intelligence is highlighted as a contributing factor to mental health challenges.	<i>"You have an epidemic of students who are harassed and bullied to the point of suicidal ideation or attempts. You have superintendents and administrators who are unwilling to give out appropriate consequences or disciplinary actions to offending students. I see this not only as a parent, but as a therapist who sees mostly children, ages 10-17, who attend schools in several counties, who have either been in psychiatric in-patient this year or are struggling with peers and their behaviors."</i> — Household with K–12 student
Student Needs and Outcomes (<i>n</i> = 14)	The diverse academic, behavioral, and mental health needs of students, particularly those who are neurodivergent or have special needs. This includes addressing learning gaps among same-age students and providing individualized instruction. Despite these challenges, there is a recognized value in diversity, including supporting English language learners, and an expressed joy in meeting the unique needs of all students.	<i>"The biggest challenge facing North Dakota public schools right now is meeting the diverse academic, behavioral, and mental health needs of students while dealing with staffing shortages and limited resources. Schools are being asked to provide more support than ever, but many districts struggle to recruit and retain teachers, special education staff, paraprofessionals, and mental health professionals. This makes it difficult to</i>

		<i>provide individualized instruction and interventions for students who need additional support. Ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education, regardless of location or background, remains a significant challenge.” — Household with K–12 student</i>
Teacher and Administration Quality and Support (n = 13)	Staffing shortages and limited resources. Schools are increasingly expected to provide more support, yet struggle to recruit and retain essential personnel such as teachers, special education staff, paraprofessionals, and mental health professionals. This shortage hinders the provision of individualized instruction and interventions for students requiring additional support.	<i>“I think it has been and still is, today a lack of teacher knowledge in identifying and handling children with special needs. When I went to college to be a teacher, we were not trained how to identify and how to manage behavioral and learning problems and the like. I believe it’s critical in these areas for better teacher training.” — Household without K–12 student</i>

Table C7. Priorities for North Dakota K–12 Schools Over Next 5 Years, Primary Themes by Respondent Group

Priorities (Theme)	Households with K–12 Students	Households without K–12 Students*
Teacher Recruitment, Training, Retention, Compensation, and Support	✓	✓
Impact and Regulation of AI and Technology in Education	✓	✓
Life Skills and Vocational Training	✓	✓
Student Safety	✓	✓
Academics and Foundational Skills	✓	✓
Funding and Resource Allocation	✓	✓

*This group includes those that responded “No” or “Prefer not to answer” to the question, “Are there school-aged children (K–12) living in your home?”

Table C8. Priorities for North Dakota K–12 Schools Over Next 5 Years, Additional Themes

Theme	Description	Illustrative Quotation
Student Behavior and Discipline (<i>n</i> = 100)	Respondents stress the need for stronger and consistently enforced discipline policies, greater accountability for student behavior, and more support for teachers to manage disruptive classrooms.	<i>“Holding students and parents accountable for disruptive behaviors. So much learning is lost because of teachers having to manage behaviors.”</i> — Household with K–12 student
Student Mental Health and Well-Being (<i>n</i> = 83)	Respondents emphasize the growing importance of supporting students’ mental health and overall well-being, through increased resources, reduced stressors, and attention to social, emotional, and physical needs.	<i>“The top priority should be student well-being. We have an epidemic of suicide and depression that’s only getting worst.”</i> — Household without K–12 student
Overall Quality of Education (<i>n</i> = 82)	Comments are broadly about prioritizing quality education and student learning, often in general terms without specifying particular strategies or reforms.	<i>“Making sure the students get the best education possible.”</i> — Household with K–12 student
Equity and Individualized Learning (<i>n</i> = 79)	Respondents highlight ensuring all students—regardless of ability, location, or background—receive equitable access to resources, individualized support, and appropriate learning opportunities.	<i>“Improving student learning by increasing expectations of students’ work. Less concern on “no student left behind” and more concern on getting students to perform at each of their peaks.”</i> — Household with K–12 student
Politicalization (<i>n</i> = 74)	Many respondents call for removing political, ideological, or religious influence from schools, with some suggesting reinforcing certain values.	<i>“Focus on the basics and prepare the students for life after graduation. Keep personal political views out of the school system!”</i> — Household without K–12 student
Class Size and Student–Teacher Ratios	Responses emphasize reducing class sizes to enable	<i>“Smaller classroom sizes so kids can learn in a less chaotic</i>

(n = 42)	more individualized attention, improve classroom management, and support teacher retention and student outcomes.	<i>environment and teachers will want to stay.” — Household with K–12 student</i>
School–Parent and Community Relationships (n = 40)	Responses focus on improving collaboration, communication, and shared accountability between schools, parents, and communities to better support student success.	<i>“Improving collaboration between school (teachers & administration) and parents and community.” — Household without K–12 student</i>
School Leadership and Administration (n = 30)	Respondents frequently call for stronger accountability, effectiveness, and support from school and district leadership, particularly in backing teachers and addressing systemic issues.	<i>“Developing administrators that stand up for their staff and are committed to the education of our students. There are many good teachers who leave the field because the schools side with the parents, and there are many more teachers just doing what they need to get by. Administrators aren’t willing to do the hard things and hold those teachers accountable.” — Household with K–12 student</i>
Academic Standards and Expectations (n = 24)	Comments emphasize the importance of consistent, rigorous academic and behavioral standards, including aligning with or competing against broader national or global benchmarks.	<i>“Hold everyone to the same standards.” — Household without K–12 student</i>
Student Outcomes and Accountability Metrics (n = 20)	Responses focus on improving measurable outcomes such as attendance, graduation rates, academic performance, and student retention, often tied to accountability.	<i>“Attendance at the schools every single day, none of this virtual learning at home.” — Household without K–12 student</i>