

Senate Bill 2254 (SB 2254), signed into law on April 24, 2023, mandates a rigorous and robust intervention process aimed at supporting North Dakota's consistently lowest-performing schools. This bill specifically targets schools previously identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools, providing them with additional oversight and guidance to strengthen performance management and monitoring of school improvement initiatives. The bill's policy provisions are scheduled to go into effect in September 2025. The bill outlines three potential interventions in identified schools, including:

- “Funds to be held in escrow for the school or school district or spent as designated by the superintendent of public instruction.
- Changes to curriculum, training, instruction, assessment, or the school calendar in the school or school district.
- Reassignment or hiring of school or school district staff to fill roles associated with school or school district needs.”

In June of 2023, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) began collecting feedback from public school staff, community members, and other relevant education partners across the state. This consultation process was not required by the legislation itself but helped inform the design of a statewide intervention process to support schools in their second cycle of CSI. The fundamental tenets of NDDPI's proposed intervention process were to ensure that districts with low-performing schools:

- engage in purposeful school renewal processes,
- address school- and district-level systemic improvement, and
- engage multiple stakeholders or “partners” in the school renewal process.

**SB
2254**



The system of support established under SB 2254 to perform these tenets is called **North Dakota Fostering Improvement Results for School Transformation (ND FIRST)**. ND FIRST is positioned within the broader school improvement infrastructure that supports ND public schools. Schools in their second cycle of CSI will enter ND FIRST, through which they receive an additional layer of oversight and guidance not offered to schools under Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) or the first cycle of CSI status. Rather than operating in isolation, ND FIRST builds on the school improvement efforts schools initiated during their TSI or first-cycle CSI designations, providing additional resources to continue and strengthen that progress. Throughout the multi-year process, schools undergo continuous evaluations with the goals of tracking progress, adapting strategies, and eventually exiting ND FIRST based on success metrics co-developed between the school or district and NDDPI.

Theory of Action

IF ND FIRST teams reduce barriers and connect partnership districts to resources



and IF the partnering district commits to the process



THEN every partnership district can achieve identified student outcomes

Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of ND FIRST is to provide a comprehensive system of support for second-cycle CSI schools and to improve outcomes for all students. To accomplish this mission, NDDPI is committed to achieving the following objectives:

Collaborate with ND FIRST schools and districts using best practices and highly customized supports.

Design, deploy, and implement a system for disbursing and evaluating the use of federal funds that support ND FIRST schools and districts.

Develop resources and technical assistance programs, services, and guidance that are utilized by ND FIRST schools and districts.

Develop a multi-faceted evaluation system that will reliably and validly measure the effectiveness of ND FIRST.

Develop and implement methods, tools, and mechanisms for determining district and school-level readiness for implementation of evidence-based practices and research-based policies.

Design, deploy, and implement a leadership coaching contractor pool that builds capacity for ND First schools and districts.

Ensure transparent and appropriate communication and consultation with families.

Recognize and prioritize the local beliefs, values, and behaviors of ND FIRST schools and districts.

January - March 2024

- ND FIRST process is communicated to partner groups
- Public comment period for ND citizens to provide feedback on the process

May - October 2023

- NDDPI engages in consultation and feedback to receive input on the development of policies and procedures around SB 2254

September - December 2024

- ND FIRST Advisory Team reflects and responds to public comments and feedback on the ND FIRST guiding documents

September 2024

- CSI schools are presented with growth and trend data
- NDDPI provides a status update and final public comment period regarding ND FIRST process and procedures

February - September 2025

- ND FIRST Advisory Team continues to refine the project to prepare for the 2025-2026 school year
- Updates and announcements are provided via the BLAST and NDDPI website

January 2025

- NDDPI publicly posts drafts of ND FIRST guiding documents
- NDDPI provides an informational update to current CSI schools

Fall 2025 - September 2028

- NDDPI identifies a new cohort of CSI schools based on accountability data
- CSI schools are presented with data that show their overall growth and trends and will be asked to continue to refine their change practices and improvement plans
- Any CSI school identified in the second consecutive cycle in Fall 2025 moves into ND FIRST Partnership Agreement implementation