

North Dakota Choice Ready Guidance

An exciting element to the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) State Plan is the innovative focus on a broad, comprehensive set of indicators that truly embraces the ESSA philosophy of “well-rounded” education and state-specific measurements. In a shift from No Child Left Behind (NCLB), North Dakota stakeholders have adopted the framework of Choice Ready as an indicator to measure school growth in high schools. This concept focuses on the culmination of academic growth and gains, in combination with specific indicators of school success for post-secondary, workforce, and military readiness. The positive messaging behind the Choice Ready framework is inclusive of all students and helps students identify career clusters and related skills which will prepare and enhance success in any or multiple areas beyond high school.

The Choice Ready indicator supports the NDDPI mission: All students will graduate Choice Ready with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be successful.

School Growth Versus State Growth

As a component in the North Dakota accountability system, Choice Ready will measure whether our high schools prepare students that are ready for success upon graduation. The metrics outlined within the Choice Ready initiative are intended to measure growth for North Dakota high schools as indicated by student readiness.

The growth model for grades K-8 is student-based; however, the Choice Ready initiative, which is our growth model at the high school level, will measure school growth rather than student growth. The 2017-2018 school year was the baseline data for this initiative. The expectation is for schools to increase the percentage of students graduating Choice Ready each year, so the Choice Ready percentage matches the graduation rate.

Choice Ready vs. Alternate Choice Ready

What does Choice Ready mean for the students with the most significant cognitive disabilities? Students with the most significant cognitive disabilities who take the NDAA, based on alternate academic achievement standards, **WILL NOT** be exempt from the Choice Ready measure; instead, these students will have alternate Choice Ready Criteria for each pathway. Alternate Choice Ready guidance can be accessed [here](#).

Alignment to North Dakota State Scholarship

The North Dakota Scholarship was created by SB 2289 of the 2021 Legislative Assembly and aligns our state scholarship requirements to Choice Ready. Students in the classes of 2023 and 2024 can qualify for the scholarship using either the old Academic/CTE requirements OR the new [ND Scholarship Requirements](#). Starting with the Class of 2025, students will ONLY be able to use the new North Dakota Scholarship requirements.

Just as in Choice Ready, the North Dakota Scholarship Requirements include Essential Skills, Post-Secondary Ready, Workforce Ready, and Military Ready components. And just like Choice Ready, students must meet the Essentials Skills section and then two of the three components on the bottom of the chart (Post-Secondary Ready, Workforce Ready, and Military Ready). Please note that the North Dakota Scholarship requirements are NOT the same as the requirements to be Choice Ready; they are aligned to Choice Ready but are written to be above and beyond the requirements for Choice Ready. In other words, every student that earns the scholarship would also be considered Choice Ready, but not every student that is Choice Ready would qualify for the scholarship.

Choice Ready Elements

In order to showcase the elements within the Choice Ready initiative, a visual [Choice Ready chart](#) was created. The main purpose of this guidance is to provide detail and clarification of all included elements within the Choice Ready framework.

Essential Skills

Essential Skills are defined as those skills needed for work and life and can be critical in helping students to be successful in whatever they choose to do in their life. ESSA places a strong focus on providing students with a well-rounded education that offers numerous experiences and skills needed to become critical thinkers and productive members of society.

The Essential Skills section begins with the overarching goal of having all students earn a North Dakota high school diploma and meets the three key requirements for all graduates as required in the North Dakota Century Code (NDCC):

- ✓ Complete a 9-week course on Exploring Career Decisions ([Course Code 20005](#)) or individual counseling with each student (NDCC 15.1-21-18) sometime during grades 7 or 8 for the purposes of:
 - Discussing the results of the student's [career interest inventory](#)
 - Selecting high school courses appropriate to their educational pursuits and career interests
 - Developing individual high school education plans

- ✓ Financial Literacy (NDCC 15.1-21-21). This requirement can be met by incorporating the concepts listed in 15.1-21-21 into the curriculum for any of these courses: Economics (15060), AP Macroeconomics (15580), AP Microeconomics (15581), Problems of Democracy (15201), or Financial Literacy (14095).
- ✓ Pass ND Civics Test (NDCC 15.1-21-27)
- ✓ Computer Science/Cybersecurity Requirement (NDCC 15.1-21-02.2). Complete CS or Cybersecurity Course or Completed CS/Cybersecurity Integration Plan.

These items are required within NDCC for all North Dakota students, the ESSA planning committee felt it was important to include them within this Choice Ready element to demonstrate to our community, parents, and others across the nation our expectations for North Dakota graduates.

Students are then able to select - anytime between grades nine and twelve - four or more from the following list of eight indicators:

- **25 Hours of Community Service**

Having students participate in community service has many advantages, including teaching responsibility and servanthood. Simply stated, community service can be any work that benefits others. There are numerous ways to participate in community service depending on a student's skills and interests. Students can elect to use 25 hours of community service as one of their indicators to meet the Essential Skills component of Choice Ready. Most districts use the same criteria they have for the National Honor Society. Students can count community service hours that are not required for a class, and for which they are not getting paid.

- **95% Attendance (not counting school-related absences)**

During the 2019 Legislative Session, the way North Dakota schools measured their calendars was changed from 175 days of instruction per year to 962.5 hours of instruction at the elementary school level and 1,050 hours of instruction at the high school level. This change was made to help schools schedule professional development sessions and to make adjustments due to weather-related closures. For the purposes of Choice Ready, schools should calculate attendance based on the traditional days based on that school's school calendar.

Attendance rate is defined as the aggregate days of attendance in a school divided by the aggregate days of enrollment. Attendance data is collected through the state's pupil membership reporting system.

The attendance rate is inclusive of grades nine to twelve and should reflect the official attendance as reported to parents on the student report card.

- **Career Exploration Experience**

Career exploration experiences are a wide variety of opportunities that are intended to build a foundation of essential skills students need as they pursue their chosen careers. Career exploration experiences focus on providing career exploration opportunities. Career exploration experiences are not limited to but can include the following:

Examples of Career Exploration Experiences

<u>Industry Presentations</u>	<u>Career Fairs</u>	<u>Informational Interviews</u>
Sax Electric	Futurepalooza	Job shadows
HESS	Blue Collar Day	
JET program	Career expos	
Lynnes Welding	Scrubs Camp	
Manufacturing day	Career forums	
Hands-on day	Work simulations	
Guest speakers		
Industry tours		
Field trips		

- **Two or More Years in Organized Co-Curricular Activities**

Co-curricular activities often complement learning experiences and typically take place during the school day. Examples of co-curricular activities include but are not limited to:

Examples of Co-Curricular Activities

FFA	FCCLA	DECA
Science Olympiad	Acalympics	Band
Choir	School newspaper	Yearbook
Student Council	FBLA	Orchestra
Robotics	Spanish/German/French Clubs	

- **Two or More Years in Organized Extra-Curricular Activities**

Extra-curricular activities are coordinated by the school, but typically are not connected to academic learning and take place outside of the school day. Examples of extra-curricular activities would include all North Dakota High School Activities Association sponsored activities as well as:

Examples of Extracurricular Activities

Drama	Debate	STEM/Science
Engineering Clubs	Athletics	Peer Tutoring
Spelling Bee/History	Archery	Boy/Girl Scouts
Web Design/Computer Clubs	Speech	Dance/Drill Teams
Church Youth Groups	Fine Arts	Sports United (formally Special Olympics)

- **Successfully Complete a Capstone Project**

The Glossary of Education Reform defines a capstone project as a “multifaceted assignment that serves as a culminating academic and intellectual experience for students, typically during their final year of high school, or at the end of an academic program or learning-pathway experience.” The Glossary of Education Reform further states that “capstone projects are generally designed to encourage students to think critically, solve challenging problems, and develop skills such as oral communication, public speaking, research skills, media literacy, teamwork, planning, self-sufficiency, or goal setting - i.e., skills that will help prepare them for college, modern careers, and adult life.”

- **Successfully Complete an On-Line Learning Course**

Schools work tirelessly to develop life-long learners. Technological developments allow students to access information at any time and complement what they’re learning in school, at work, or in life. Online learning can be a successful experience if properly supported and intentionally developed. Students may take any online course to use this element as one of their four choices.

- **Demonstrate Competency in 21st Century Skills**

The four Cs of 21st Century learning include critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity. These are considered key skills for all students to possess to succeed in the 21st Century. Demonstrating competency in 21st Century Skills is one of eight indicators students can select to meet the essential skills component of the Choice Ready initiative.

There are multiple ways districts can demonstrate student competency in 21st Century Skills. Some districts are working with an outside vendor to implement the four Cs throughout their teaching and learning. The National Education Association (NEA) has an excellent guide on the four Cs and preparing students for the 21st Century, which can be accessed on their [website](#).

A student cannot be Choice Ready without having met at least four of the eight criteria for Essential Skills. One of the least checked criteria under Essential Skills is Demonstrating Competency in 21st Century Skills (4 Cs). When the NDDPI inquired as to the reason in a survey, respondents overwhelmingly stated it was because they didn't have documentation to demonstrate how students met this element. Therefore, the NDDPI collaborated with the CTE to create a 4 Cs rubric adapted from the CTE Career Ready Practices. This rubric is a tool to document 4 Cs proficiency with the Essential Skills element of the Choice Ready Framework.

Providing North Dakota students with the skills to succeed in life is critical, and providing 21st-century learning opportunities will assist our students in acquiring these critical skills and meeting our vision to ensure they graduate with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be successful.

▪ **Multicultural Awareness**

Multicultural awareness allows students to become more familiar with the role of culture in our society. This can include learning about the cultures of other people or developing a deeper understanding of one's own culture. Methods for students to demonstrate multicultural awareness include (but are not limited) to the following:

- Completing a study about the [North Dakota Native American Essential Understandings](#). This must be above and beyond the instruction of Native American History that is required in US History by NDCC [15.1-21-02.2\(d\)\(1\)](#), as adopted by SB 2304 of the 67th Legislative Assembly.
- Attending or participating in a cultural-related event or festival
- Participation in school clubs related to culture
- Participate as a foreign exchange student
- Participate in hosting a foreign exchange student
- Learning another language
- Completing a Seal of Biliteracy
- Completing any of the following courses:
 - Tribal History (06815)
 - Tribal Studies (06817)
 - Tribal Culture (06818)
 - Exploratory Foreign Language (20045)
 - World and Indigenous Language courses
- Other experiences that the school deems appropriate to demonstrate multicultural awareness.

Choice Ready Pathways
Post-Secondary Ready
Workforce Ready
Military Ready

Post-Secondary Ready

Schools support higher education and academia-bound students who have demonstrated high academic proficiency and meet the additional criteria that support the rigor of post-secondary clusters and provide a solid transition to college. Like the other two pathways, the Post-Secondary Ready component begins with the students completing a four-year rolling plan.

The [rolling four-year plan](#) outlines the various steps a student will take throughout secondary school in preparation for life after graduation. It focuses on academics, college, career, military readiness, and more. The plan begins when students are still in middle school and continues one grade at a time going through the first year after high school graduation. The four-year plan is intended to serve as a guide for students and parents to navigate high school and beyond. Use this guide to complete items that apply to you and visit with your school counselor or principal should you have any questions. The rolling four-year plan will allow students to plan four years into the future in terms of their educational career. Each year, students will meet with a staff member who is familiar with Choice Ready and best suited to discuss the student's needs to complete an updated plan, including plans for after high school.

Students must earn a 2.8 GPA or greater and then complete one of the two academic indicator sets:

ACT or SAT Minimum Subsection Scores

ACT		SAT
ACT English – 18		Reading/Writing – 480
ACT Reading – 22	Or	SAT Math – 530
ACT Math – 21		
ACT Science - 23		

North Dakota University System (NDUS) policy 402.1.2 establishes placement pathways for students in the various content areas based on a variety of assessments.

Or

Students must meet two or more of the following academic indicators:

- **Advanced Placement Course (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)**
An [AP](#) course is a high school course with a curriculum approved by the College Board and taught by a high school teacher who receives specific AP professional development. Students may choose to take a standardized AP

exam at the end of the course. The course appears on the high school transcript. Postsecondary credit may be awarded by a college or university based on the final AP exam score.

- **Dual Credit Course (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)**

An early entry/[dual credit course](#) is a college course with college curriculum taught by a high school or college instructor who meets the qualifications to teach for the college offering the course. In all cases, college credit is awarded upon successful completion of the course and is recorded on the college transcript. The high school determines whether the early entry/dual credit college course fulfills high school requirements in consultation with the student and, if so, is recorded on the high school transcript.

- **Algebra II (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)**

Algebra II is a critical course to take for students interested in pursuing post-secondary education. A passing grade of (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2) is needed in order for students to select this as one of their indicators.

- **Advanced Placement Exam (3+)**

AP exams are given each year in May. A score of 3 or higher on an AP exam can typically mean students earn college credit and/or placement into advanced courses in college. It is important to note that AP exams may be taken without enrolling in an AP course.

- **International Baccalaureate Exam (4+)**

International Baccalaureate (IB) students are immersed in rigorous coursework that prepares them for university studies. The [IB program](#) aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable, and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect through the development of challenging programs of international education and rigorous assessment. The IB profile is the IB mission statement translated into a set of learning outcomes for the 21st century. Oftentimes, students who attend school on a military base will have taken the International Baccalaureate exam.

- **3.0 GPA in core course requirements for NDUS admission**

There are certain core course requirements for NDUS research university admission, which serve as an indicator of student preparedness to enroll in college coursework and take credit-bearing courses.

College preparatory core course completion requirements for NDUS research university admission:

- 4 units of English

- 3 units of Math (Algebra I or above)
- 3 units of Lab Science
- 3 units of Social Science

Students that obtain a 3.0 GPA in these core courses can use this element to be deemed Post-Secondary Ready.

▪ **CREAM**

College Ready English and Math ([CREAM](#)) provides an opportunity for remedial coursework to be completed by students who would be required to take such courses upon entering college. High school seniors are given the opportunity to successfully complete the self-paced online course through Pearson's My Foundations Lab in either English, math, or both. Successful completion is defined as 70% or higher completion per subject area, as outlined in NDUS policy 402.1.2.

For reporting purposes, this is an auto-filled item that will prefill if a student passes any CREAM course (either English or math).

▪ **Fine Arts Courses**

Providing North Dakota students with opportunities to participate in fine arts courses enables them to attain skills that will allow them to become well-rounded individuals. Students taking fine arts courses show a greater capacity for higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing and problem-solving. Completion of three courses is needed to fulfill this option.

Workforce Ready

Schools support students who desire to secure employment directly after high school graduation. In addition to academic standards, criteria are identified which promote the transition to the workforce. The breadth of criteria broadens the opportunities for students who seek employment to include vocational or technical programs.

As with the other two pathways, the Workforce Ready component begins with students completing a four-year rolling career plan.

The rolling four-year plan outlines the various steps a student will take throughout secondary school in preparation for life after graduation. It focuses on academics, college, career, military readiness, and more. The plan begins when students are still in middle school and continues one grade at a time going through the first year after high school graduation. The four-year plan is intended to serve as a guide for students and parents to navigate high school and beyond. Use this guide to complete items that apply to you and visit with your school counselor or principal should you have any questions.

The rolling four-year plan will allow students to plan for their educational careers four years into the future. Each year, students will meet with a staff member who is familiar with Choice Ready and best suited to discuss the student's needs to complete an updated plan, including plans for after high school.

Students need to complete two or more from the following list of indicators:

- **Complete Three CTE Courses or More (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)**
Students have opportunities to take various CTE courses throughout their high school experience. To meet this indicator, students can complete three CTE courses with a final grade of (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2).
- **Complete Career Ready Practices (3.0)**
The Career Ready Practices developed by CTE provide a framework of twelve areas for the developmental skills necessary to becoming Career Ready, skills that can be practiced using many different approaches in various settings. The definition and outline of Career Ready Practices (CRP) were established under the Common Career and Technical Core (CCTC), as released in 2012, by Advance CTE (the National Association of State Directors of Career and Technical Education). These Practices, as well as the CCTC itself, were developed with help from national educators, administrators, and business experts and were derived from the earlier Career Clusters/Pathways Framework model.

The framework [guidelines](#) include a set of rubrics. Students refine these practices, and once they meet the competencies, they are deemed career ready with the necessary skills to be successful at finding, gaining, and keeping employment over a lifetime.

- **Dual Credit Course (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)**
An early entry/dual credit course is a college course with a college curriculum taught by a high school or college instructor who meets the qualifications to teach for the college offering the course. In all cases, college credit is awarded upon successful course completion and is recorded on the college transcript. The high school determines whether or not the early entry/dual credit college course fulfills high school requirements in consultation with the student and, if so, is recorded on the high school transcript.
- **WorkKeys (Gold or Silver)**
The [ACT National Career Readiness Certificate](#) (NCRC) is based on ACT [WorkKeys](#) research-based work skills assessments. To earn an ACT NCRC, a student must successfully complete three ACT WorkKeys assessments: Applied Math, Graphic Literacy, and Workplace Documents.
 - Gold: Scores of Level 5 or higher on all three exams

- Silver: Scores of Level 4 or higher on all three exams

- **Technical Assessment/Industry Credential**

Technical skill assessments are aligned with industry-recognized standards to measure technical achievement. Earning an industry credential allows students to learn about a particular skill set or job and demonstrate mastery of skills. CTE programs that lead to industry-recognized credentials can help students find skilled positions and allow them to return to school for a higher degree later. A complete list of approved industry credentials is currently being developed.

- **Workplace Learning Experience (40 hours)**

Workplace Learning provides extended learning opportunities by connecting students with real-life work experiences where they can apply academic and technical skills and also develop employability skills. Workplace Learning Experiences focus on providing skill application with the outcome of creating a skilled pool of future employees. Workplace Learning Experiences are not limited to but can include the following:

Career Seminar (MISO3 20076)	Cooperative Work Experience	CTE Classroom Activities
Teacher Assistant	CNA	Repairing cars for community (autobody)
Custodial assistant	Apprenticeships	Building bleachers, homes (construction trades)
Kitchen helper		Office assistant (business education)
Student coach		School store (marketing)
Internships		Part-time/summer employment

- **Work-Based Learning Experience (Perkins V) (40 hours)**

The term, “Work-Based Learning” means (for the purposes of Perkins V funding) one of the two definitions below:

- ✓ **Sustained interactions with industry** or community professionals in real workplace settings, to the extent practicable;
- ✓ **Simulated environments at an educational institution** that foster in-depth, firsthand engagement with the tasks required in a given career field that are aligned to curriculum and instruction.

For practical application and data collection, this means that hours can be accumulated by the student throughout his/her enrollment in a program of study in one of two options:

Option 1: **Sustained interaction (e.g., Cooperative Work Experiences)** should strive for a minimum of 40 hours of one supervised experience on the worksite. Although the student may spend more than 40 hours on the worksite, 40 hours should be the minimum.

Option 2: **Simulated environments in an educational setting (which means any CTE-funded course)** should strive for a minimum of 40 hours throughout a series of in-class projects/lab work, with each project/lab taking no less than one week or five successive hours of class time to complete. The entire series of projects/labs should have a goal of equaling forty hours or more during enrollment in the program.

As **simulated environments** can need clearer definitions at times, the following list is provided for ideas as to allowable projects/labs. These projects/labs can include, but are not limited to, the following:

Allowable Projects/Labs

AgriScience Research	Concept-Design-Final Product for 3-D Printing
Business Plan Development	CNC Machining; Laser Engraving
Stock-Market Simulation	SAE Projects
School Store/School-Based Business	Pre-School Business Simulation
Recycle, Redesign Projects	Occupational Building Trades, Auto Technology, Welding Technology
Food Truck Business Model	Welding Technology
Children's Sleep Deprivation Research	CTSO Projects

- **NDSA (Reading/Math) Level 3 or Greater (ACT for Accountability: English 19/Mathematics 22)**
Historically, students have taken the NDSA annually, which includes grade eleven in high school. North Dakota uses a four-point rubric to report student achievement results. A level three in either reading or math indicates that a student demonstrates adequate understanding of and ability to apply the knowledge and skills associated with college-content readiness. Therefore, this could be used as one indicator to demonstrate workforce readiness.
- **Complete Three World Language Courses**
To meet this element, students must take at least three world language courses, which may include American Sign Language or Native American languages. The advantages of taking a world language include the ability to

engage with other cultures, connect with the world, and improve communication skills. Completion of three courses is needed to fulfill this option.

Military Ready

Schools support students who wish to enlist in one of the many military branches. Students are Military Ready if they have met the indicators and have participated in additional identified criteria. The goal is to support a career plan which best meets the student's needs and desires. As with the other two pathways, the Military Ready component begins with students completing a Four-Year Rolling Career Plan.

The rolling four-year plan outlines the various steps a student will take throughout secondary school in preparation for life after graduation. It focuses on academics, college, career, military readiness, and more. The plan begins when students are still in middle school and continues one grade at a time going through the first year after high school graduation. The four-year plan is intended to guide students and parents to navigate high school and beyond. Use this guide to complete items that apply to you and visit with your school counselor or principal should you have any questions. The rolling four-year plan will allow students to plan for their educational careers four years into the future. Each year, students will meet with a staff member who is familiar with Choice Ready and best suited to discuss the student's needs to complete an updated plan, including plans for after high school.

In addition, the following elements are required:

- ASVAB Score of 31 or greater or acceptance into the military
- Quality Citizenship – Students meet the quality citizenship element if they have no expulsions or suspensions
- Physically Fit – Students who have successfully completed required PE courses (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)

and

- Complete **two or more** additional indicators from the **Post-Secondary** or **Workforce** options.

or

- Complete two credits of JROTC or Civil Air Patrol.

Reporting on Choice Ready

The NDDPI worked with ITD to create a Choice Ready report at the student level using a data interface via the SLDS portal. Each district decides who completes the Choice Ready report (i.e., high school principal, counselor, etc.). The report is due by June 30 each year and will be completed for all North Dakota public high school seniors. The report includes check boxes showing which elements are used to demonstrate readiness.

Schools should complete a report on each senior, even if only partial data is available. Students may be able to demonstrate readiness in one pathway, even if they don't meet the requirement for accountability purposes to demonstrate readiness in two of the three pathways. A Choice Ready graduate is defined as having evidence of meeting the criteria in at least two of the three categories of Post-Secondary, Workforce, and Military Ready. Student-level data on Choice Ready will be available on the internal site for schools' personnel to review. This data will be rolled up to the school level to report growth for accountability on the dashboard.

All students originally in the Choice Ready report remain there for historical purposes. When Choice Ready reports are run, those that don't apply will be removed. Therefore, students need to be coded correctly in PowerSchool. For example, dropouts are coded a two, and foreign exchange students are coded an eight. If they are coded correctly, the NDDPI knows to remove certain students school reports are run.

Following the enactment of the Every Student Succeeds Act, the NDDPI, in collaboration with the ITD, OTIS Ed, and the NDUS, created an interactive dashboard that provides an opportunity for state educational agencies to report to parents, communities, and the public, measures of quality for all public schools. The NDDPI proudly released the first iteration of the interactive dashboard in November 2017. The dashboard allows schools and districts to showcase and highlight strengths in their buildings while providing transparency to the public. The dashboard is frequently updated to ensure the accuracy and relevancy of the data about North Dakota's K-12 system.

Questions

Specific questions about Choose Ready can be directed to the following staff:

Laurie Matzke
Assistant Superintendent
North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
lmatzke@nd.gov
(701) 328-2284

Wayde Sick
Director
Career and Technical Education
wasick@nd.gov
(701) 328-2259

Ross Roemmich

Jane Hovda

MIS Director
North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
rkroemmich@nd.gov
(701) 328-2189

Student Information System Specialist
Information Technology Department
jhovda@nd.gov
(701) 793-5619