



**K-12 Education Coordination Full Council Meeting Minutes
Microsoft Teams Only
Tuesday, February 27, 2024**

K-12 Council Members Present Virtually:

Chairman Luke Schaefer, Brandt Dick, Maria Neset, Justin Fryer, Jeremy Mehlhoff, Jennifer Weber, Representative Pat D. Heinert, Senator Ryan Braunberger, Jared Bollom, Senator Don Schaible, Melissa Vollmer, Sara Medalen, Alexis Baxley, Nick Archuleta, Sarah Ricks, Superintendent Kirsten Baesler, Sonia Meehl, Representative Cynthia Schreiber-Beck, Marc Bluestone, Beth Slette

Others Present Virtually:

Kayla Effertz Kleven (K12 Coordination Council Executive Director), Wayde Sick (NDCTE), Aimee Copas (NDCEL), Shauna Marchus (NDDPI Admin), Donna Fishbeck (NDDPI Chief of Staff), Ellie Shockley (NDUS), Dawn Ulmer (NDCTE), Robert LaFavor (NDDPI)

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

1. Approval of Meeting Previous Minutes: September 19, 2023

Jeremy Mehlhoff moved to approve the minutes from the November 15, 2023, Full Council meeting. Brandt Dick seconded the motion. No discussion. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Interim Legislative Committee Update

Senator Schaible provided an update on the School Funding Task Force. He reported that the task force met last week and revisited previous topics, with the addition of accountability. He noted that they explored what metrics to measure, how to measure them, and how to gauge it all with funding. Additionally, he reported that they discussed school funding without property taxes and discussed school construction needs, including how the school construction loan is working. He explained a two-tiered system of infusions of money to make the loan accessible to more school districts. He added that there were conversations on transportation funding formulas and integrating them into the overall school funding model. He stated that future meetings will involve adjusting factors and possibly incorporating transportation into the K12 funding model. He added that construction funding will also be a continued focus, exploring legislative solutions to ease the burden on public schools. He mentioned that low-interest loans or grants are being considered, as well as addressing the state's role in funding construction projects. The next meeting is tentatively set for late April or May.

Representative Heinert reported that the Judiciary Committee has a meeting next Thursday which will include a presentation from Representative Koppelman regarding firearms and dangerous weapons. He explained that this presentation will discuss the possession of firearms in publicly owned or operated buildings and potential changes to the definition. He noted that this issue is of concern to higher education institutions and high schools due to the broad scope of publicly owned buildings throughout the state.

3. Governor's Task Force on Teacher Retention and Recruitment

Maria Neset directed people to the governor's website for easier navigation and access to task force meeting agendas, recordings, and other resources. She shared an issue brief from a recent task force meeting: [Neset, Maria O.: https://youtu.be/m4ld-rBR3zw Governor and Marc Andreessen discuss...](https://youtu.be/m4ld-rBR3zw) She highlighted discussions on identifying solutions and potential recommendations by the task force to address challenges in teacher recruitment and retention. She provided this link of the ND Educator Workforce and Pipeline from the Hunt Institute: [Issue-Brief-Meeting-1 -North-Dakota-Teacher-Landscape.pdf \(hunt-institute.org\)](https://www.hunt-institute.org/files/Issue-Brief-Meeting-1-North-Dakota-Teacher-Landscape.pdf). She emphasized the need for collaboration and data analysis, with plans for summarizing discussions and preparing for the next meeting scheduled for April 3rd. Neset encouraged feedback and input from the K12 Coordination Council and concluded by expressing satisfaction with the energy, feedback, and solution-focused approach of the task force.

Chair Schaefer raised the question of whether the K12 Coordination Council should provide input to the legislature regarding Vital Network, a company working with teachers in the schools. He suggested that the Council's diverse perspectives could be valuable in informing legislative decisions. Maria Neset clarified the role of Vital Network, emphasizing its partnership with teacher mentorship and teacher support systems rather than it being in competition with them. She described Vital Network as helping teachers work with administrations to create strong workplace cultures, while teacher support systems focus on instructional coaching and support for new teachers. She stated that these initiatives are different, but both are connected to the overall mission of promoting a healthy workplace.

4. Committee Recommendations and Reports

a) Executive Committee, RFP Update

Chair Schaefer reported that the main focus of the Executive Committee has been preparing a request for proposal (RFP) for a new Executive Director as the current contract is ending. He noted that the new RFP will be released on March 1st. He stated that they used some sections from the first RFP that worked well, identified some areas that needed adjustment, and made the necessary updates. He explained that the Executive Committee will review the applications over the next several weeks. Chair Schaefer sought input on whether the Full Council should vote on the selection of the new Executive Director, or delegate it to the Executive Committee to make the selection. He opened the floor for discussion on this matter, highlighting the need for a potential special meeting if a Full Council vote is required.

Marc Bluestone stated that he was good with the Executive Committee making the decision.

Maria Neset stated that she can support either way, but she thinks getting the final approval from the Full Council would be good, so that everyone feels they do have input from their representation.

No other comments. Chair Schaefer asked for consensus to have the Executive Committee move all the way through the RFP selection process. The group nodded in agreement, and Chair Schaefer noted that the Executive Committee will do the RFP search, review and selection of the next Executive Director.

b) Aspirational Goals Subcommittee

Superintendent Baesler provided an overview of the PK12 Education Strategic Vision Framework explaining the vision, the six long-term outcomes, and five strategic themes. She shared the history behind the framework's development, which involved a diverse

group of stakeholders analyzing data and identifying priority goals that were officially adopted in 2017 and codified by the North Dakota legislature in 2019 and provided to the K12 Education Coordination Council to develop SMART goals. Superintendent Baesler noted changes that have happened including goal #1 evolving to focus on kindergarten readiness and quip and resource classrooms to meet the needs of any learner, and an update to goal #6, which included a revision to include students with disabilities. She directed members to a link providing details on each aspirational goal. [ND PK-12 Education Strategic Vision Framework | North Dakota Department of Public Instruction.](#)

Supt. Baesler then updated the Council on the progress of the Aspirational Goals Subcommittee work. She explained that the subcommittee recognized the importance of sharing progress on aspirational goals with the public, and efforts are underway to develop a dashboard displaying this information and the progress of the goals on the state's website. She noted the dashboard's development was delayed but is expected to be operational by mid-March for user evaluation, aiming for its full implementation on the website by fall 2024. She noted that this subcommittee and the Full Council's task is to monitor and assess the progress of each goal from the previous year. She mentioned that it is important to show three years of trending data going into the 2025 legislative session so it can guide the Council's policy and funding recommendations to legislators. She stated that this dashboard should be a tool that legislators can use to prioritize their work and their decisions as it relates to helping the K12 education community achieve statewide goals.

Superintendent Baesler reported that there are no changes proposed to the subcommittee's scope of work, but updating deadline dates is a consideration.

She gave a brief update on the status of each aspirational goal:

- 1) Goal #1: Kindergarten Readiness: She explained there was previously a lack of statewide measures to assess students entering Kindergarten, but now the Department of Health and Human Services is building an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) which will monitor early childhood experiences, and the assessments for K- 2nd grade will start this year, which will set a baseline and allow measurement.
- 2) Goal #2: Reading Proficiency by 3rd Grade: She noted that due to the disruption the pandemic caused, making up the 8% loss may not be attainable. She noted that the subcommittee emphasized the collaborative efforts needed to meet that goal.
- 3) Goal #3: Learning Gains: She noted that we are on track with this goal with less discrepancy and that this goal is ambitious but attainable.
- 4) Goal #4: Student Engagement: She noted we are on track with this goal.

Superintendent Baesler explained that the K12 Council asked the subcommittee to reevaluate goals 3 & 4 over time, so the subcommittee reassessed them recently and collectively chose not to revise these goals.

- 5) Goal 5: Choice Ready Graduation Rate: She reported that we are doing really well and have exceeded what was expected.
- 6) Goal 6: Disparities: She reported there has been movement in the right direction on closing disparities, but the target goals are ambitious. She mentioned that the special needs students were impacted significantly during the pandemic, but the Native American group is rebounding strongly.

Subcommittee Recommendations:

Supt. Baesler reported that the subcommittee recommended the following for consideration:

- Training for legislators on aspirational goals and how to use the Insights dashboard.
- For the K12 Council to communicate the value and utility of the new assessment system (NDA+) to help stakeholders unlearn previous perceptions. Baesler encouraged feedback from the council on improving subcommittee efforts.

Supt. Baesler discussed how various groups such as school boards, REAs, and the School Board Association are using the goals in their work. She touched on Be Legendary School Board training, and how 30% of the school boards are using the six outcome goals in their meetings to improve school outcomes.

Kayla Effertz Kleven asked what the best approach would be to introduce a recommendation in the legislature. She suggested integrating training into new or existing programs.

Rep. Schreiber-Beck suggested that while training is important, individuals must also show an active interest in the subject matter, especially considering misinformation in the media. She suggests involvement from both legislative leaders and local school districts to ensure buy-in and collaboration. She mentioned ongoing school board training as a potential starting point for engagement.

Superintendent Baesler shared a map indicating that 30% of the 168 school boards across North Dakota have finished the Be Legendary School Board Institute training and she stated they are deeply engaged in using the six aspirational goals to drive their funding and resource allocation, and policy decisions. (Appendix 1).

Rep Schreiber-Beck commented that school boards need to educate the legislators as to why they need funding and no matter how the legislative body is educated, they need to have the local level show some interest as well.

Senator Schaible acknowledged the complexity of education funding and the lack of understanding among many legislators. He stressed the significance of local engagement by teachers, administrators, and school boards, noting that legislators listen to voices from their districts, especially if multiple people reach out to them.

Maria Neset mentioned that the students are the clients and that student input is often overlooked in policy discussions. She emphasized the importance of including student's perspective on how changes impact their school experience.

Chair Schaefer suggested involving the Superintendent's Student Cabinet to gather feedback on this matter. Superintendent Baesler expressed willingness to engage the student cabinet members for input about how policies affect them and stated her subcommittee would work to bring in the student's voice.

Sara Medalen suggested having legislators shadow a student to get legislators engaged and understand the goals more at the school level.

Senator Heinert suggested having the kids tell them how they want legislators to understand these outcome goals and the vision they have, then carry that to the legislative body.

Possible Additional Recommendation:

- Chair Schaefer stated that a possible recommendation out of the K12 Council could be around efforts to get more legislators, especially those who are not on the education committees, to see the school in action and possibly shadow a student.

c) Support and Innovation Subcommittee

Sarah Ricks presented an update on the subcommittee's two main topics:

- Cybersecurity Protection for schools: She explained that they have been assessing existing cybersecurity in the state, and they found that despite available cybersecurity options, there are lower than-expected participation rates. She mentioned that EduTech is conducting a survey to identify barriers to participation, and the subcommittee plans to determine its next steps based on those survey results.
 - AI: She discussed that another focus of the subcommittee is the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) and its impact on education. She reported that the subcommittee has been getting updates from Wayde Sick, who is a member of the AI task force that is developing guidance specific to North Dakota schools, and the subcommittee will follow that work closely.
- Reshaping Schools for Tomorrow's Workforce: She reported that the subcommittee has been reviewing existing frameworks and tools aimed at shaping tomorrow's workforce including the Troops Ready program, the Learning Continuum, and the Profile of a Graduate. She noted that the consensus of the subcommittee is that collectively all of these tools that are already in place do represent what students need to know to be successful, and the subcommittee is working to identify barriers hindering implementation and will work to propose solutions.

Subcommittee Recommendation:

Sarah Ricks reported that the subcommittee recommended the following for consideration:

- To allocate grant funding to support teams in creating mastery framework policies and systems of support within their districts.

She explained that the group has recognized that one of the main obstacles is the lack of dedicated time for school personnel to do this work, so she asked if this Council would support pursuing ways to provide financial resources for staff to move toward implementation.

Sarah Ricks stated that the subcommittee is comfortable with their scope of work, and no changes are needed.

Discussion was held amongst the Council members regarding how funds would be allocated if they moved forward with the recommendation of grant dollars to support school staffing.

Maria Neset raised concerns about the proposed grant's similarity to the Innovation Academy's initiatives and asked for clarification on how the funds will be used. Sarah Ricks explained that the grant would aim to support schools specifically interested in implementing mastery framework processes.

Kayla Effertz Kleven highlighted that the grant money would go to schools and would focus on providing additional contract days to educators because there are not enough contract days to do the work and serve students at the same time.

Aimee Copas agreed that backfilling is the challenge and mentioned that they don't need the money to make the training happen, the districts need the backfill staffing during this scheduled work.

Discussion was also held regarding the continuation and evolution of the Personalized Learning Network and the grant funding it. They discussed the importance of ongoing support for the network, potential grant opportunities, and the importance of ongoing professional development and capacity-building efforts within the districts involved.

Supt. Baesler stated that the grant is continuing, and although there are four school districts that are current members of this network, it's open to all districts.

Beth Slette noted the challenge of some schools not being able to participate due to staffing constraints.

Superintendent Baesler suggested the involvement of the K12 Council in providing guidance, consult and direction to the network's implementation.

d) Statewide Projects, Duplication and Replication Subcommittee

Brandt Dick reported that this subcommittee has been looking at non-licensed staff shortages such as paraprofessionals, bus drivers, cooks, etc. He thanked Ellie Shockley for providing a substantial amount of data on this subject for the group.

Ellie Shockley presented on staff headcounts, retention rates, and unfilled FTEs within schools across the state. She shared a table showing all the different types of school staff comparing teaching/licensed personnel with paraprofessionals (special ed), paraprofessionals (all other), custodians, food service, and pupil transportation. She discussed retention rates across the state over five years and highlighted a decline in retention overall, particularly among non-licensed personnel. She noted that retention issues are more severe for certain subgroups, such as special education paraprofessionals. She emphasized the importance of studying and supporting all school staff members and suggested considering the collection of data on unfilled FTEs for non-licensed personnel as well. She provided examples of how data on non-licensed personnel could be collected and integrated into existing reporting processes in STARS.

Subcommittee Recommendation:

Brandt Dick reported that the subcommittee recommended the following for consideration:

- Collection of data on unfilled FTEs for non-licensed personnel

Brandt Dick noted that the retention rates for paraprofessionals and other staff groups are worse than for teachers. He highlighted the need to determine the purpose and potential benefits of collecting data regarding non-licensed personnel from schools.

Nick Archuleta suggested the idea of establishing a task force similar to the Governor's Teacher Retention and Recruitment Task Force to address non-licensed school personnel.

Senator Braunberger stated that in addition to having the data, it is also important to understand the 'why' behind the trends to figure out the problem of why retention is an issue so that it can be fixed.

Brandt Dick discussed the importance of understanding the differences of how different districts handle salaries and benefits, then compare retention rates for positions in those districts. He suggested using this data to identify districts with higher retention rates and investigate the factors contributing to their success.

Maria Neset emphasized the significance of considering workplace culture, environment, and support systems when addressing recruitment and retention issues in education. She stressed that factors such as feeling valued and supported in the workplace significantly influence individuals' decisions to stay or leave their roles. She stated it is important to dive deeper into the pulse of staff, including both licensed and non-licensed personnel.

Beth Slette commented that her district does survey staff regarding culture, and data suggests that pay and benefits are the main reasons why people are choosing other professions.

Ellie Shockley mentioned that licensed personnel data includes comprehensive compensation and benefits details, and non-licensed personnel information is limited to hourly wages only. She still suggested analyzing hourly wages' impact on retention, even with the limitations on data on benefits.

Sara Medalen commented how shortages of support staff increase teachers' workload and, therefore, have a significant impact on teacher retention.

Nick Archuleta raised the question of how open positions are counted. Ellie Shockley explained that despite DPI encouraging reporting of all unfilled positions, even if the school was creative in covering the position, the self-reporting can vary, causing misinterpretation or underreporting as not all people consider open positions the same. She highlighted that even with the possible underreporting, the numbers continue to rise.

Chair Schaefer suggested accessing data related to exit interviews for school positions in North Dakota to understand the reasons behind staff turnover. Beth Slette discussed the Panorama survey used for assessing her district over the past three years and noted that the feedback showed salary being the main issue. Chair Schaefer noted consensus from the group for the committee to come up with ways to answer the question of "why" retention is an issue.

5. Annual Report

Kayla Effertz Kleven shared the annual report link, reviewed each section of the report with the Council, and then the Council members watched some of the videos.

<https://new.express.adobe.com/webpage/DLiq1Ietj8CHp>.

Kayla Effertz Kleven discussed the process of submitting the report to the Legislative Council for the purpose of getting on the record. She mentioned the need for coordination regarding the release of this annual report among organizations and suggested identifying a specific date for release as well as creating social media posts to enhance reach.

Senator Schaible recommended that the Funding Task Force or Policy Committee attach this annual report to the legislative management report so every member of the legislative body would have it.

Nick Archuleta moved to approve the annual report, and Marc Bluestone seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Timely Topics

- Artificial Intelligence (AI):

Chair Schaefer highlighted the prevalence of AI discussions in conferences and its impact on students. He mentioned that Wade Sick, the director of CTE (Career and Technical Education) has been involved in conversations about AI guidance policies for schools, and he invited Wade Sick to provide an update to the group on ongoing work related to AI.

Wayde Sick reported that a task force has been assembled at Supt. Baesler's request and consists of a diverse team that is reviewing various AI guidance documents from departments of education across the country. He explained that this task force will work to create guidance for school districts in North Dakota. He noted that considerations for the guidance include teacher and student use, plagiarism prevention, data protection, and professional development. He also discussed the importance of the human-AI-human process. He explained his involvement in the Technical Skills Gap Subcommittee of the Workforce Development Council, and emphasized the importance of AI training for adults. He shared his experience with AI certification training with LinkedIn, and his plans for staff education on AI usage.

Nick Archuleta commented that there was some initial resistance to AI in schools but noted the widespread adoption now. He highlighted how teachers are utilizing AI tools like ChatGPT for various purposes, such as translating materials into students' native languages and creating personalized assignments. He recognized AI's potential benefits while acknowledging concerns about cheating.

Supt. Baesler expressed excitement about the potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in education, both in instructional strategies and on the administrative side to increase time spent with students. She discussed the need for a framework for introducing AI into different educational levels, emphasizing a gradual approach tailored to primary, middle, and high school settings.

Sara Medalen discussed the effects of screen time on children's mental health, and raised questions about finding balance.

Further discussion was held about the proper citation of AI sources, AI producing AI, understanding AI's capabilities, and the evolving nature of AI.

- School Construction Loans:

Senator Schaible discussed changes in funding amounts for school construction projects. He highlighted the need for sufficient funds 'in the pot' to support school construction and emphasized the aim to create a large enough fund to sustain itself. He also raised concerns about whether the state could allocate enough funds to meet all school construction needs.

Sonia Meehl highlighted the challenges faced by different school districts, including varying enrollment trends and property types. She noted the difficulty of finding equitable solutions on a statewide basis. She mentioned resistance from stakeholders who question why property taxes should fund school construction when they believe the state has ample resources.

Chair Schaefer discussed the difficulty in passing referendums for funding school construction and mentioned the consequences of failing to address building issues, including potential school closures and community decline.

Beth Slette raised a question about the requirement of a 60% majority to pass a bond referendum and inquired about the possibility of changing it to 50%. Senator Schaible explained the historical context of the 60% requirement, highlighting the complexities related to taxation and voting demographics. He stated that a simple vote of the legislators could change it.

- Assessments:

Chair Schaefer commented on the change of assessments in North Dakota to the ND A-PLUS, noting improvements and increased collaboration compared to past assessments. He invited Superintendent Basler to provide an overview of the opportunities ND A-PLUS offers for schools.

Supt. Baesler discussed the transition from the North Dakota State Assessment (NDSA) to the ND A-PLUS assessment, highlighting the differences in assessment types and uses. She explained that the previous interim assessments were norm-reference tests and the ND A-PLUS is a criterion-referenced test which will better align with the year-end summative assessment. She outlined the components of the ND A-PLUS assessment package and clarified that ND A-PLUS interim assessments are now required at least twice a year from kindergarten to 10th grade, but school districts have the option to choose other assessment tools at their own cost. She explained that they are working on a way to convert the previous data into the ND A-PLUS scoring for accurate comparison. She also discussed that the assessments have different uses explaining that summative assessments should inform state policymakers and state department staff about what we need to do to provide better support, while interim assessments can drive local school decisions. She shared the link for more details: <https://www.nd.gov/dpi/districtschools/assessment/nd-plus>

7. Next Full Council Meeting: April 12, 2024 – Offsite at Northern Cass

The meeting adjourned at 4:11 pm.

Minutes taken and prepared by Shauna Marchus

Respectfully submitted,

ATTEST:

Chairman Luke Schaefer

Date

Appendix 1:

