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For Immediate Release

June 18, 2015

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## **Baesler: New Academic Support Director Will Improve Student Instruction**

BISMARCK, N.D. -- Superintendent of Public Instruction Kirsten Baesler has promoted Ann Ellefson to be the Department of Public Instruction's new director of academic support, where she will supervise a number of initiatives to provide North Dakota students with more resources and opportunities.

"The Department of Public Instruction exists to meet the educational needs of students and to make sure they are successful, and that is why this position is critically important," Baesler said. "This will provide a great opportunity not only for us to collaborate on existing projects, but to begin new initiatives that are important for the success of our students."

One of Baesler's new initiatives is called "Leveraging the Senior Year." This initiative has two primary goals. One is to increase the number of students who take Advanced Placement classes in math and science. The second is to offer more intensive instruction for high school students who may not be adequately prepared for college or a technical career during their senior year.

Students who need additional instruction would be identified by analyzing their grade-point averages, ACT scores and results on the North Dakota State Assessment. State law requires North Dakota high school juniors to take the state assessment and the ACT.

Leveraging the Senior Year would help ensure that students are prepared to begin college without first needing remedial instruction, Baesler said. "This will empower them to take classes for credit in their first year, which will save time and money for students and their parents," Baesler said.

Ellefson, as director of academic support, will be responsible for overseeing a number of initiatives that will assist students and schools. One is the "Leveraging the Senior Year" project. Ellefson also will supervise summer teacher training programs financed by the National Math + Science Initiative (NMSI, pronounced NIM'-zee), which are being offered to bolster instructors' skills in teaching math, science and reading.

Baesler said the DPI's academic support emphasis "means there will be a go-to place for schools for assistance and support for improving instruction in reading, math, science and all content areas. We need not only to teach knowledge, but teach our students how to apply that knowledge to solving problems, critical thinking, collaboration and creative projects."

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Ellefson begins her new job July 1. She is presently an assistant director for the DPI's federal title programs, which provide help for at-risk students. Her position is part of the agency's newly formed division of student support and innovation, which Baesler created in May as part of a department reorganization. Ellefson will report to Laurie Matzke, who is manager of the new division.

Ellefson has worked at the Department of Public Instruction since 2002, when she was hired as a program administrator. She earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Moorhead (Minn.) State University in 1999, and a master's degree in educational leadership from the University of North Dakota in 2006.

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