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Baesler: New Partnership Will Improve Math and Science Education

FARGO, N.D., July 15, 2015 – North Dakota Superintendent of Public Instruction Kirsten Baesler on Wednesday announced a new partnership that will improve the quality of math and science education in the state and ensure that students are college and career ready.

Baesler outlined details of the effort, a partnership with the nonprofit National Math and Science Initiative, at a news conference held at Davies High School in Fargo.

North Dakota is hosting a NMSI Laying the Foundation Summer Institute at Davies this week. It is part of an intensive professional development program for math, science and English teachers of grades three through 12. The program is open to all North Dakota teachers and includes four-day summer institutes that offer hands-on training designed by expert teachers focused on raising the level of instructional rigor in any classroom.

The program includes lesson plans and resources to help instructors become more effective teachers who are more knowledgeable about their subjects. The aim is to help teachers prepare their students for more rigorous high school coursework and encourage broader participation and achievement in the fields of science, technology, engineering and math.

Registration fees for the LTF Summer Institute are covered by private funds administered by NMSI. Each teacher's home school district is expected to pay for travel, lodging and meal expenses. A second summer institute is planned July 28-31 at Century High School in Bismarck.

Baesler has been working with NMSI officials for more than two years to bring the organization's comprehensive STEM education programs to North Dakota. Baesler was successful in getting legislative approval for \$1.25 million to support NMSI's work. The money is part of the Legislature's 2015-17 funding bill for North Dakota K-12 schools (SB2031, Section 32).

The ultimate goal is to build a coalition of private and philanthropic partners to provide additional funding for Laying the Foundation training and NMSI's College Readiness Program, which is slated to launch in several districts in the 2016-17 school year.

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“NMSI’s public-private partnership model for improving STEM education has had tremendous success across the country,” Baesler said. “The same type of investment by public and private investors in North Dakota will increase the number of students who take AP classes in math, science and English while they are still in high school. They won’t have to take the same classes in college, and this will not only reduce their college costs but also better prepare them for more advanced coursework.”

The number of North Dakota students who take AP classes has already been rising. In the last two years, the number of North Dakota students who earned qualifying scores on math and science exams has risen by 31 percent. For math, science and English, the increase has been 26 percent.

Baesler said North Dakotans can expect even greater success from AP students once NMSI’s College Readiness Program is in place.

“By helping to support this initiative, our North Dakota business community can nurture the dreams of our students and help them to thrive in a sophisticated, technically challenging workplace,” Baesler said.

NMSI’s College Readiness Program is a comprehensive program designed to boost student participation and achievement in Advanced Placement® coursework in math, science and English through extensive training and support for both teachers and students.

The AP® curriculum gives high school students the opportunity to complete college-level classwork in a number of subjects including biology, computer science, calculus and English literature. AP exams are graded on a scale of 1 to 5, with 3 or higher considered a “qualifying score” as it qualifies students for college credit in many colleges and universities across the country.

When implemented in other states, NMSI’s College Readiness Program has dramatically increased the number of students taking and earning qualifying scores on AP math, science and English exams. The improvement has been especially pronounced among females and minority students traditionally underrepresented in math and science.

Joining Baesler at Wednesday’s news conference were Jeff Schatz, superintendent of Fargo’s public schools; West Fargo Superintendent David Flowers; and Marcus Lingenfelter, vice president for state and federal programs for the National Math and Science Initiative.

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About NMSI

NMSI is a nonprofit organization launched in 2007 by top leaders in business, education and science to transform education in the United States. NMSI has received national recognition for training teachers of grades 3-13 and improving student performance through the rapid expansion of three highly successful programs: NMSI’s College Readiness Program, NMSI’s Laying the Foundation Program and NMSI’s UTeach Expansion Program. Inaugural funding for NMSI was provided by ExxonMobil, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Michael & Susan Dell Foundation. For more information, visit www.nms.org

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