

PK12 Education Strategic Vision 2024 Strategic Plan Report

Introduction:

- State Superintendent Kirsten Baesler, Department of Public Instruction

N.D.C.C §15.1-02-04 (9). Superintendent of Public Instruction Duties – Report. Shall facilitate a process to review and update annually the statewide prekindergarten through grade twelve education strategic vision. The process must include input and participation from a steering committee that includes representatives of all state-level entities receiving state education funding and education stakeholder groups. Each steering committee member entity receiving state education funds shall provide components of the entity's strategic plan which are aligned to the statewide strategic vision. The steering committee shall prepare a collaborative report of the strategic plans of each committee member entity receiving state education funds. The superintendent shall provide the collaborative report and any updates to the strategic vision to the legislative management during each interim and to a joint meeting of the education standing committees during each regular legislative session.

Strategic Themes:

- **Quality Early Childhood Education**
 - Kay Larsen, ND Department of Health and Human Services
- **Support for Safe and Healthy Behaviors**
 - Pam Sagness, ND Department of Health and Human Services
- **Career Awareness, Exploration and Development**
 - Wayde Sick, ND Career and Technical Education
- **Quality Education Personnel**
 - Daniel Conn, ND Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
- **Quality Student-Centered Instruction**
 - Alyssa Martin, ND Center for Distance Education

Quality Early Childhood Education

The first strategic theme in the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision is Quality Early Childhood Education.

The North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services (NDHHS), Human Services Division, and Early Childhood Section (HHS Early Childhood) work closely with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) to advance quality early childhood experiences for children birth to age five, their families and caregivers, and the professional who support them. Both our executive leaders and administrators meet on a regular cadence to align agency priorities, resources, messaging, and opportunities for further collaboration.

Both agencies are invested in increasing early learning partnerships for literacy and engagement, including joint professional development opportunities for those serving children from birth to age 5. Together, we market monthly early literacy community of practice webinars and have contracted partners (REAs and CCR&R) that make literacy trainings available to teachers and community-based childcare providers. We are also collaborating on updating an early childhood literacy resource to be widely distributed to parents, caregivers, and early childhood services providers.

In addition, NDHHS supports 2000 children in the year before kindergarten each biennium with access to Waterford Upstart early learning (literacy, mathematics, and science) and family engagement. NDDPI added additional licenses to this program specifically for Targeted Support and Improvement schools, Comprehensive Support and Improvement schools, and Title 1 schools to increase early learning outcomes over the summer.

Over the past year, HHS Early Childhood and NDDPI, along with higher ed, participated in a national Kindergarten Sturdy Bridge community of practice to learn about the transition from early childhood to kindergarten and kindergarten into first grade. The team also supported a local kindergarten sturdy bridge implementation team in Grafton, ND. Mandan Little Learners and the state leadership team did a site visit with the Grafton team this year to share successes and challenges. The state leadership team is continuing to explore kindergarten sturdy bridge with plans to develop resources to help other communities with the transition from early childhood into kindergarten and into the early grades.

NDDPI continues to work with Pearson to build the kindergarten to second-grade section of Navvy for a standards-aligned, classroom formative assessment inside the ND A+ system. Kindergarten and First grade are now participating in two interim assessments a year in math and reading.

The Best in Class program, which was piloted with ESSER funding, is now part of the HHS executive budget. During the 2023/2024 cohort year, there were 45 programs operating 65 classrooms across the mixed delivery system where children received

quality early childhood experiences in school and community-based childcare programs. Some locations are partnering with local Head Start programs.

Over the past year, NDHHS has implemented all the strategies funded in the ND Child Care Initiative during the last legislative session. Many of the initiatives supported families and their ability to afford childcare. Several others were aimed at supporting the availability and quality of the programs that young children attend, these included tiered quality rating incentives, above and beyond training incentives, facility improvement grants, and inclusive child care support grants that help programs with environmental modifications, equipment and materials to serve children with special needs, and the extra hands it may take to ensure all children have a quality early childhood experience.

To further support children with disabilities, IDEA Part B 619 Early Childhood Special Education and IDEA Part C Early Intervention conducted a statewide survey on the transition from Part C to Part B 619 services, and a workgroup is in the process of revising the transition guide that supports early childhood professionals and parents in navigating the transition processes. NDHHS also offered mini grants to Early Childhood Special Education Units to enhance family engagement and school support. We also developed an Early Childhood Special Education Mentorship lab for early childhood special education practitioners that launched this fall at the University of North Dakota.

Many others partner to support Early Childhood.

EduTech is working to expose PreK-2 teachers to cyber security awareness, resources, and activities, including them in workshops and presentations utilizing the Code.org and Cyber.org curriculum.

The North Dakota Education Standards and Practices Board (NDESPB) ensures that all educators licensed in North Dakota have met ND Standards. As a result, all early childhood majors must have field experience in early childhood and complete coursework in the Science of Reading. NDESPB also requires any student majoring in Early Childhood enrolled in the apprenticeship program to receive mentoring.

When reviewing Four-Year-Old program applications, HHS Early Childhood utilizes NDESPB to verify that qualified teachers are in place. Schools with Four-Year-Old approval are eligible for a Pre-K designation.

NDHHS is partnering with CTE, DPI, and higher ed to improve career pathway opportunities for students interested in pursuing careers in the field – including on-the-job training, in partnership with community-based childcare programs.

The Department of Career and Technical Education is the primary agency charged with leading Career Awareness, Exploration and Development and continues to provide technical assistance and funding to Family Consumer Science Education (FCSE) programs, which includes child development and early childhood coursework. Currently, nine programs exist across the state, provided by high schools, CTE Centers, and the

Center for Distance Education. In smaller schools where there is generally only one Family Consumer Science Education teacher, a rotation of courses is created over four years to address all of the career pathways FCSE has, not just the education and training or early childhood development pathways. FCSE programs in all schools have the ability to teach child development-related classes. During the last school year, 1422 students enrolled in child development courses at their high schools.

Over the past two years, HHS Early Childhood, along with the Department for Career and Technical Education, has served as liaisons to facilitate partnerships between high school programs and various institutions of higher learning to offer dual credit and assist programs in developing partnerships with local childcare providers to offer community-based opportunities to their students. HHS Early Childhood has also presented to FCSE teachers at the annual CTE meetings.

Many school districts are wrestling with how they can help with childcare capacity in their communities. HHS Early Childhood presented to school leaders at the Back to School Drill Down to share how they can serve children in the years before kindergarten.

Support for Safe and Healthy Behaviors

Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB)

The Education Standards and Practices Board requires that all teacher candidates have training in Youth Mental Health awareness as required by SB 2048 in 2025.

Behavioral Health in Education Resources and Opportunities (B-Hero)

During the 2019 Legislative Session, SB 2149 established that all K-12 schools in North Dakota identify a Behavioral Health Resource Coordinator (BHRC) each fall, and that the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services' Behavioral Health Division will provide behavioral health resources to these identified individuals (SB 2313). The Behavioral Health Division continues to partner with the Central Regional Education Association to provide these resources through the B-Hero program. B-Hero provides training and technical assistance to identified BHRC's and schools on a variety of behavioral health topics, including Suicide Prevention, Restorative Practices, Relationship Building, Trauma, and many others. Through the last four years, B-Hero has provided training to over 2,200 educators across North Dakota.

Behavioral Health School Grant

During the 2019 legislative session, the Behavioral Health Division was allocated funds to provide behavioral health services and support grants to school districts or special education units to address student behavioral health needs. School districts or special education units that bill Medicaid for school-based services during the previous school year are eligible. During the 2023-2024 school year, all 24 eligible districts or units applied for funds totaling over \$2,700,000 to support the behavioral health needs of students, with nearly 75% going towards direct behavioral health services for students who may not otherwise be eligible due to transportation barriers, no insurance, high deductibles, etc. In 2024-2025, 25 districts or special education units are eligible for funding totaling nearly \$4,500,000. As of the beginning of September, 16 of the 25 have applied for funds, with over \$3,000,000 approved thus far for behavioral health initiatives identified by each local agency, based on the individual needs of students.

Prevention and Early Intervention Pilot Grant

The Prevention and Early Intervention Pilot Grant was developed to improve children's behavioral health in the school setting. The goal of the project was to learn with schools on how to fully integrate a continuum of supports that could be tailored to each individual schools' identified needs. It was started in 2018 at Simle Middle School in Bismarck and expanded to include a rural and tribal school in 2020 (Barnes County North and Dunseith). In partnership with Simle Middle School, three toolkits were developed and are made available to schools to assist in establishing school-wide continuums of support. The Behavioral Health Division continues to support Barnes County and Dunseith Elementary in their efforts to provide direct behavioral health services to students in need.

Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Grant (PMHCA)

In 2023, the Behavioral Health Division was awarded the Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Grant through the Health Resources and Services Administration through September 2026. Prior, this grant was housed under the ND Department of Health. During the 2023-2024 federal year, over \$350,000 was provided to enhance behavioral health efforts in ND schools. Currently, BHD has granted these funds to the Central Regional Education Association to provide additional training to school staff on topics including trauma, relationship building, safe and civil schools, behavior interventions and supports, suicide prevention, etc. This funding has also supported multiple schools in providing education and therapeutic supports to parents and care givers on a multitude of behavioral health topics.

Career Awareness, Exploration, and Development

Good afternoon, Chair Axtman and members of the Interim Education Policy Committee, my name is Wayde Sick, State Director of the Department of Career and Technical Education. I am here today to provide a report on the Strategic Theme of Career Awareness, Exploration, and Development. Many agencies and organizations partner to support the PK12 Education Strategic Vision. The work the multiple agencies and organizations are doing is instrumental in helping students make the transition from education to career. I will not discuss everything the partner agencies are doing but rather briefly mention some high points.

Department of Career and Technical Education

The Department of Career and Technical Education is the primary agency charged with leading Career Awareness, Exploration, and Development. Above what the agency is already providing in funding for CTE programs, technical assistance to CTE educators, and advising the State's Career and Technical Student Organizations, we have embarked in additional work. As mentioned last interim, the Department of Career and Technical Education continues to enhance the RUPrepareND platform. In the fall of 2022, the Compass platform was added to the system. Compass is a platform that allows both students and employers to create profiles. Students create profiles that include courses they have taken, hobbies, part-time jobs, and various interests. Employers develop profiles of what they are looking for in employees. The system then helps match the students with opportunities for work-based learning. The Department also created Work-Based Learning Coordinator training, a Work-Based Learning Coordinator endorsement (in partnership with ESPB), and secured a Legislative appropriation of \$1,500,000 to fund WBL Coordinators across the state. NDCTE is currently funding thirteen coordinators across the state, many located at our CTE Centers, serving multiple school districts. The second enhancement of RUPrepareND is the inclusion of the CareerView XR virtual reality career exploration tool. CareerView XR allows students to see what the worksite may look like without visiting that worksite. This is available to all middle and high school students.

Department of Public Instruction

The Department of Public Instruction has several initiatives, I will highlight three.

First, The Department has developed a General Education Paraprofessional Certificate, that can be offered to High School Students. A certificate is awarded once a student completes at least two courses within an education pathway. Students have three options, either the CTE Pathway, which is embedded in our current Family and Consumer Science programs, the General Education Pathway, in which all certified teachers are allowed to teach, or a combination of courses from both pathways. Secondly, the previously mentioned Compass platform has been upgraded to allow students to complete their four-year rolling plan within Compass. This upgrade will drive more students to RUPrepareND more often to conduct more career exploration, plan their high school and post-secondary careers, and locate Work-Based Learning Opportunities.

Finally, the Office of Specially Designed Services is collaborating with various organizations to enhance employment opportunities and transition processes for youth with disabilities. Key initiatives include:

- Customized Employment: Working with the ND Center for Persons with Disabilities (NDCPD) to increase teacher knowledge and opportunities in Customized Employment.
- Youth Engagement: Collaborating with ND Voc Rehab, Pathfinders of ND, and others to expand youth involvement in the transition process and support employment through CAPE (Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth).
- LaunchMyLifeND: Partnering with multiple organizations to update this resource as a comprehensive hub for transition services.
- Transition Summer Institute: Planning a summer institute in June 2025 with NDCPD, VR, Pathfinder, and Designer Genes.
- Transition IEP Training: With input from CTE (Career and Technical Education), the NDDPI Office of Specially Designed Services offered in-person training to counselors and teachers on Transition IEPs and related resources such as RUPReadyND and CareerView XR.
- Employment exploration: Choice Ready grants were provided for special education units to purchase PAES (Practice Assessment Exploration System) labs for employment exploration activities for youth in rural areas.
- Career Fair: The ND Transition Community of Practice provided funds to the Region VI Transition Community of Practice to sponsor the eighth Region VI Health, Technology, and Trades Career (HTTC) Fair.
- Transition Assessment Course: Transition assessments are a critical part of a student's transition program. They help the IEP team determine the strengths, interests, and needs of students with disabilities in many areas. A transition assessment course was created and offered on the Educational Hub for educators to view on their own time.

Center for Distance Education

The North Dakota Center for Distance Education (NDCDE) has taken several steps to enhance its Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs to better serve students across North Dakota. Through a combination of course reviews, stakeholder feedback, and new initiatives, NDCDE is committed to ensuring its CTE offerings are high-quality, accessible, and aligned with the needs of both students and the workforce. In the past year, it has taken the following steps:

1. **Curricular Review and Commitment to Hands-On Learning:** To help ensure the quality of its CTE offerings, NDCDE has implemented a new CTE Curricular Review Policy. Key components of the policy include:
 1. **Ensuring course alignment with CTE Standards**
 2. **Hands-On Learning Evaluation:** Courses requiring more than 20% hands-on learning that cannot be replicated virtually are phased out.

3. **Three-Year Review Cycle**
4. **High-Demand Fields Focus:** The review process prioritizes courses that prepare students for jobs that can be performed remotely or align with evolving workforce needs.

Through the implementation of this policy, the NDCDE curriculum director has been tasked with the infusion of hands-on experiences into our CTE curriculum wherever possible. Through live teacher interactions, student-created videos, and the use of simulations, NDCDE is ensuring that students gain the skills they need in a virtual setting, with plans to expand these opportunities using technologies such as virtual reality. After conducting a thorough internal review under this policy, NDCDE has phased out nearly 20 CTE courses. These courses have been removed from NDCDE's catalog to ensure that students receive the best educational experience possible and a second review of CTE offerings will be conducted this spring.

2. **Military and Paraprofessional Pathway Programs:** NDCDE is developing a Military Pathway Program aimed at preparing students for careers in the military. The program will emphasize leadership development and other essential military skills, fostering student interest in a military career. NDCDE has taken similar steps to implement two new educational courses that allow students to earn a paraprofessional certificate from DPI upon completion. This is part of NDCDE's broader strategy to offer specialized career pathways that meet student and workforce needs.
3. **21st-Century Skills Integration:** In alignment with NDCDE's strategic plan, the organization is developing standards on 21st-century skills. These skills, including critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, will be incorporated into all CTE courses and evaluated regularly to ensure they prepare students for the evolving workforce. This effort reflects NDCDE's dedication to keeping its curriculum relevant and forward-thinking.
4. **Stakeholder Feedback and Course Quality:** Recently, NDCDE conducted a detailed evaluation of its CTE courses, gathering feedback from nearly 700 students. Over 74% of the respondents expressed high satisfaction with their courses, citing flexible scheduling, self-paced learning, and the ability to review course content as major benefits. Additionally, 27% of the students stated they would not have access to these courses without NDCDE, highlighting the organization's critical role in reaching underserved and rural populations across the state.

By focusing on 21st-century skills, specialized pathways like the Military Program, and a rigorous curricular review process, NDCDE is ensuring that its students are well-prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the modern workforce. NDCDE has updated its objectives and initiatives in the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision document to better align with the goals and ongoing work highlighted above.

Education Standards and Practices Board

ESPB, in partnership with the Department of Public Instruction, the Department of Career and Technical Education, and Higher Education, is working to solidify the work begun at a Central Region US Department of Education and Hunt Institute workshop, regarding developing and expanding on pre-apprenticeship and high school educator pathways.

EduTech

EduTech has partnered with multiple organizations to support and provide training to teachers. It has partnered with Be More Colorful, the creator of CareerView XR, to provide training to teachers. It has provided Career Ready Practices training for new CTE Teachers. Finally, it continues to partner with Palo Alto, CYBER.org, DPI, CTE, etc., to deliver the Cyber Madness Competition to both middle and high school students.

Regional Education Agencies

The REAs have been staunch supporters of Choice Ready, including partnering with NDDPI and NDCTE in organizing Choice Ready Workshops. The REAs have also supported school districts to analyze Choice Ready data and foster collaboration.

Governor's Office

The Governor's Office has been instrumental in advocating for opportunities to better equip our educators in implementing cyber and computer science, including AI. The Governor and his team have been strong supporters for resources to expand access to Career and Technical Education Centers, not only through the Capital Projects Grant Program, but also ongoing program needs.

ND Council of Educational Leaders

NDCEL hosted the Innovation Academy, that has helped shift thirteen schools towards a personalized learning approach, often directing students towards career exploration.

ND Association of Colleges for Teacher Education

NDACTE plays a vital role in preparing future educators through comprehensive coursework that meets CAEP accreditation standards. They support teacher candidates with meaningful practicum experiences, starting long before student teaching, allowing them to apply theory to practice in real-world classroom settings. The program is designed to ensure candidates meet key competencies through a variety of checkpoints that monitor their progress throughout their education journey. Additionally, they survey graduates and their employers to assess the effectiveness of programs and make continuous improvements.

Regular stakeholder meetings are held that bring together teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, administrators, parents, and community leaders. These meetings provide valuable feedback and ensure our programs are aligned with the needs of the field, while fostering collaboration across the education community. The ongoing graduate programs and professional development opportunities help support career exploration, development, and retention.

Quality Education Personnel

Introduction

The Quality Education Personnel initiative is central to the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision, focused on ensuring that North Dakota's schools are staffed by highly qualified, well-prepared, and effective educators. Given the increasing demand for skilled teachers, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (DPI) has partnered with key educational stakeholders to address teacher recruitment, preparation, professional development, and retention across the state. This report highlights current initiatives and strategic actions that contribute to building and sustaining a robust educator workforce.

Strategic Objectives

The Quality Education Personnel initiative is guided by the following strategic objectives:

1. **Increase the rigor and relevance of educator evaluation systems:** Enhancing evaluation methods to promote continuous educator improvement.
2. **Expand the pool of effective educators to fill vacancies in hard-to-staff areas:** Addressing teacher shortages, particularly in rural and underserved regions of North Dakota.
3. **Support professional learning for education personnel:** Ensuring ongoing development for educators to remain current with best practices.

These strategic objectives serve as the foundation for the initiatives and action plans that will be implemented over the 2023-2025 period to address North Dakota's educational personnel needs and ensure the ongoing development and retention of high-quality educators.

Key Initiatives and Action Plans (2023-2025)

To achieve the strategic objectives outlined above, several key initiatives and action plans have been implemented by DPI in collaboration with Dakota University System (NDUS), Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB), North Dakota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NDACTE) and other stakeholders. These initiatives are designed to enhance educator effectiveness, expand the workforce in critical areas, and provide ongoing support and professional development to ensure educators have the tools they need to succeed.

To synthesize the initiatives and action items for the report, this report breaks them down into corresponding areas that connect the broader initiatives with specific actions:

1. Enhancing Educator Evaluation Systems

- **Initiative:** Increase support for the fidelity of educator evaluation systems.
- **Action Item:** DPI has established a system for approving educator evaluation systems that are valid and reliable, based on research-backed topics. These

systems are implemented through the Teacher Effectiveness Report, which is produced annually to track and support continuous educator improvement.

2. Collaboration with Educator Preparation Stakeholders

- **Initiative:** Collaborate with stakeholders in educator preparation to ensure quality coursework and expand licensure, credentialing, and micro-credentialing pathways.
- **Action Item:**
 - DPI actively collaborates with the Education Standards and Practices Board (ESPB), North Dakota University System (NDUS), North Dakota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NDACTE), and other stakeholders to align teacher preparation coursework with state standards and industry needs, especially in areas like cybersecurity.
 - Partnerships have been developed to create the general paraprofessional certificate for high school students, and collaboration with multiple NDUS institutions ensures approval of specialized credentials such as the dyslexia credential and special education technician certification.

3. Supporting Coaching, Mentoring, and Professional Development

- **Initiative:** Partner in establishing new and supporting existing high-quality coaching, mentoring, and professional development opportunities for educators.
- **Action Item:**
 - DPI, in collaboration with the North Dakota Regional Education Associations (NDREAs), organizes high-impact professional development events such as the Back-to-School Drilldown, Cogna Conference, and IgniteND, ensuring that educators have access to the latest best practices in education.
 - A new coaching and mentoring model, designed for site coordinators and educators, has been developed to enhance support in low-performing schools, including assigning NDREA coaching liaisons to work with schools through continuous improvement science approaches.
 - The Literacy Task Force and CLSD coaching network also provide mentorship and training in evidence-based literacy and math instruction practices, promoting improved outcomes for both students and educators.

These initiatives have led to measurable progress and successes, as highlighted in the following section.

Progress and Successes

Collaborative efforts between DPI, NDACTE, ESPB, NDACTE and other key stakeholders have led to several notable successes:

- **Teacher Evaluation Systems:** The implementation of research-based educator evaluations has allowed for improved accountability and professional growth opportunities.
- **Expansion of Para-to-Teacher Pathways:** The para-to-teacher programs have successfully expanded, creating opportunities for paraprofessionals to become licensed educators. This has been a highly successful strategy for addressing teacher shortages, particularly in rural and high-need areas. NDUS has played a key role in supporting this initiative through its Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs).
- **Specialized Credentials and Alternate Pathways:** The introduction of new credentials, such as those for special education technicians and dyslexia specialists, has filled critical gaps in schools, ensuring that students receive the support they need from qualified professionals.
- **Mentorship and Professional Development:** The statewide mentoring program, supported by Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds, continues to make a positive impact on teacher retention by providing new educators with valuable guidance and support during their initial years in the classroom.

These achievements underscore the collective commitment of DPI and its partners to enhancing the quality and availability of education personnel across North Dakota. As these initiatives continue to evolve, there remain opportunities for further improvement and expansion, which will require additional support and action. The following section outlines future directions and areas where legislative support will be crucial to sustaining and building on these successes.

Future Directions and Legislative Support

To further enhance the success of the Quality Education Personnel initiative, the PK-12 Education Steering Committee recommends the following actions for legislative consideration:

1. **Increased Support for Para-to-Teacher Programs:** Expanding funding for para-to-teacher programs will help ensure that rural and underserved schools continue to have access to qualified teaching staff. NDUS EPPs should be supported in their efforts to provide tailored coursework and mentorship for paraprofessionals transitioning to teaching roles.
2. **Continued Financial Support for Teacher Mentorship Programs:** Maintaining funding for mentorship programs is essential to retaining high-quality educators, especially in hard-to-staff areas.
3. **Support for Alternate Pathways to Teacher Licensure:** Legislative support is needed to further streamline alternate licensure pathways, ensuring flexibility while maintaining high standards for teacher preparation. Alternative access programs offered through NDUS EPP’s are key to this effort.

By prioritizing these recommendations, North Dakota can continue to strengthen its educator workforce, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Legislative support will be vital in expanding successful programs and ensuring the long-term

sustainability of initiatives that provide educators with the tools, training, and pathways necessary to thrive.

Conclusion

North Dakota's commitment to building and maintaining a workforce of high-quality educators is evident through the success of the Quality Education Personnel initiative. Through collaboration with higher education institutions, innovative programs such as para-to-teacher pathways, and ongoing professional development opportunities, the state is addressing teacher shortages and fostering the growth of a capable, committed educator workforce. Continued support from the North Dakota Legislature will ensure the long-term success of these initiatives, leading to improved educational outcomes for students across the state.

Quality Student-Centered Instruction

North Dakota Governor's Office

The North Dakota Governor's Office has actively supported the advancement of quality, student-centered instruction across the state through several key initiatives. A primary accomplishment is the **recognition of districts and schools** that have demonstrated a commitment to personalized learning. By acknowledging the efforts of these institutions, the Governor's Office promotes the adoption of personalized and competency-based learning models.

In collaboration with the **K-12 Coordination Council**, the Governor's Office has continued its work to support and expand personalized, competency-based education efforts statewide. This collaboration ensures that state-level policies align with the vision for a student-centered educational system and that schools receive the necessary support to implement these innovative approaches.

The Governor's Office also continues to **prioritize policy and programs** that further operationalize the state's educational vision. These priorities include fostering innovation in educational practices, ensuring alignment with long-term strategic goals, and encouraging schools to adopt personalized learning methodologies that meet the diverse needs of North Dakota students. Additionally, the Governor's Office supports the **North Dakota Personalized Learning Network (ND PLN)** and is working to identify strategies for establishing a **Center for Excellence**.

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

The Department of Public Instruction is working to build capacity for districts and schools to implement student-centered learning as well as strategies to address the unique needs of Native American students, students experiencing poverty and students with disabilities. These are done through various offices and initiatives throughout the state. In particular, the department would like to highlight the following work that will be occurring during the 2024-2025 school year:

- We will continue working to expand the ND Network for Personalized Learning, which includes Network Convenings, Learning Opportunities, and Site Visits. Additionally, the Network is developing digital resources to inform educators and spread personalized learning approaches.
- The department's focus on Science of Reading professional development and curriculum review work in reading is expanding to develop systems that are responsive to individual student needs. Providing precision in instruction that is finely tuned toward student-centered instruction will increase equity in the short and long term.

- The >Greater in Math pilot involves educator learning of best practices in implementing a blended learning structure that allows for differentiation, interventions, and continuous improvement science all put into practice.
- Specific training and resources have been designed for dyslexia and literacy interventions.
- Implementation and training have been provided to schools on the use of STARS Reporting and Analytics so that schools can break down their accountability data and inform instruction and systems change.
- The NDDPI Funding Your Plan guidance supports schools in funding and supporting all students through supplemental funds by focusing on student needs, outcomes, and best practices.
- North Dakota Content Standards provide the base for standards-based systems and are an essential part of the personalization and individualization strategies occurring in schools. The department continues its cycle of writing, review, and adoption of new state standards. Computer Science/Cybersecurity and Financial Literacy standards revisions are currently in process. In 2024 Physical education standards were updated. As the standards are written, North Dakota educators examine each standard closely to ensure that the information published reflects standards that can be assessed within standards-based systems, are clear, concise, and aligned across grade levels, and represent the beliefs of North Dakota.

DPI continues to lead efforts in providing equitable and personalized educational opportunities to North Dakota students. The integration of formative and summative assessments, along with targeted support for teachers and schools, ensures that instruction is responsive to individual student needs while promoting long-term academic success.

North Dakota Center for Distance Education

Under the PK-12 steering committee’s strategic goal of quality, student-centered instruction, NDCDE has made significant progress. A key achievement is the implementation of **Competency-Based Education (CBE)** under a state Innovation Waiver, allowing students to progress based on proficiency rather than time spent in class. By 2023-24, 25% of courses were aligned with state priority standards, with a goal of reaching 70% by June 2025. Using structured rubrics and measurable outcomes, students receive timely feedback on their progress. This curricular alignment work has fostered additional curricular improvements with CDE teachers developing personalized assessments and new engaging content in response to identified standards gaps. NDCDE’s assistant superintendent was recently recognized nationally by the Digital Learning Collaborative for these innovative efforts to usher in CBE, receiving the top individual honor: the Individual Excellent in Digital Learning Award, and NDCDE is leading the nation in developing mechanisms in its student information system to report student proficiency by standard to parents and schools—reporting that NDCDE plans to aggregate for planning and accountability purposes to help demonstrate the impact that it is having on student achievement statewide.

NDCDE has an ongoing goal of improving the quality of online instruction, bolstered by a new **teacher evaluation system and professional development plan**. Our new teacher evaluation system is based on the Marzano model, focusing on four key domains of effective teaching. This evaluation model ensures that teachers receive data-driven feedback and engage in self-reflection to continuously improve their instructional practice and ensure that, at least annually, our administrators evaluate each of our virtual classrooms to ensure it is an effective learning space for our students. A new teacher professional development plan offers educators targeted training on key instructional strategies such as personalized learning, differentiated instruction, and the use of AI in education, requiring regular, year-round training that is data-informed.

NDCDE's dedication to leveraging technology to enhance student engagement is another key accomplishment. The **integration of computer science and cybersecurity education** across our curriculum, driven by legislative mandates, ensures that North Dakota students will receive in-depth training in the standards whenever taking our core courses. NDCDE's new cybersecurity courses, launched in response to new state graduation requirements, saw a remarkable 343% increase in just one year. All these efforts reflect NDCDE's ability to quickly respond to evolving educational needs and ensure students are equipped with essential skills for the digital age. Furthermore, the "**Introduction to Virtual Learning**" course has prepared students for success in an online learning environment driven by NDCDE student data on their self-reported gaps in their ability to learn online and a slight decrease in our course pass rate, likely spurred by a record influx of new NDCDE students. This new onboarding course aligns with North Dakota's cybersecurity standards, ensuring that students not only excel academically but are also proficient in managing their online safety.

To help measure the impact of these efforts, NDCDE is focused on regularly reviewing and responding to its data. **Data-driven improvements** are already showing results. A 2024 survey revealed 87% of students and parents were satisfied to highly satisfied, with 81.5% rating instruction as excellent or good. Student course evaluations scored instructional quality at an average of 3.75 out of 4.0 in many of the areas measured, and two teachers were honored with ND DPI Excellence in North Dakota Education Awards. Furthermore, despite record growth, our student completion rates remain at over 96%.

NDCDE's commitment to student-centered instruction, demonstrated through its competency-based education model, innovative teacher development, and technology integration, ensures that students receive high-quality, personalized learning experiences. As NDCDE continues to refine its approaches and leverage data for improvement, it remains at the forefront of virtual education excellence. NDCDE has updated its objectives and initiatives in the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision document to better align with the goals and ongoing work highlighted above.

Department of Career and Technical Education

The Department of Career and Technical Education, to better serve the CTE Programs and, ultimately, the students of North Dakota, has restructured staffing at the State level. First, we added more staff to our two largest program areas, Agricultural Education and Family and Consumer Science. Second, we have closely integrated our Marketing Education and Business Education Offices in order to even out workload. The State has many more Business Education programs than Marketing. This will allow for more support to our Business Education Teachers and programs. Our next steps are the following: We have developed a Health Sciences and Public Safety Program Supervisor position. This is a program area currently in the portfolio of another Program Supervisor, but it has been determined, due to the state's workforce needs, that NDCTE needs to put more emphasis on Health Science and Public Safety Programs. We were unable to secure an individual but will attempt again in late winter of 2025. Finally, NDCTE is developing a procedure to validate industry recognized certifications so CTE programs can strive to provide those to their students.

EduTech

NDIT-EduTech provides information technology services and education technology professional development to K-12 educators in North Dakota. Our services are designed to give educators access, training and support to use technologies in their classrooms to improve teaching and learning.

ClassLink

EduTech has deployed ClassLink to 87 school districts, covering 72% of the student population across the state of North Dakota, Providing a student focused learning experience that improves the quality of classroom instruction time as well as the ability to more easily access educational technology applications from home while increasing security and privacy.

Artificial Intelligence

Artificial Intelligence is poised to make a significant impact on education and EduTech has been helping teachers prepare. AI has become the focus of our IgniteND educational technology conference. We are also preparing a series of training cohorts to build capacity for all teachers to understand how to use artificial intelligence to maximize student learning and guide students in ethical use.

Cybermadness

In cooperation with the Department of Public Instruction, Career and Technical Education, Palo Alto Networks and CYBER.org, EduTech has continued to deliver the Cybermadness cybersecurity competition to middle schools and high schools in North Dakota. The increased popularity has resulted in a virtual play-in round being added to the high school competition in 2024 to allow more opportunities to play. \$30,000 in scholarships, donated by Industry sponsors, have been awarded to date.

Empowering Educators to Teach Cyber | CYBER.org

To date, NDIIT-EduTech has obtained over one million dollars in grant funding from Microsoft, CYBER.org, and other partners to underwrite computer science and cybersecurity training. As a result, nearly 800 ND K12 teachers have received or are eligible to receive their computer science/cybersecurity credential.

Microsoft

All ND K12 school districts benefit from the Microsoft 365 system managed by NDIIT-EduTech with 29,000 users actively using the system on an average day. NDIIT-EduTech is a Microsoft Training Partner, therefore we are provided with up-to-date training resources and early access to tools. Our trainers are certified Microsoft Innovative Experts who train educators on Microsoft tools and teaching pedagogy.

Regional Education Associations

The Regional Education Agencies (REAs) play a critical role in advancing quality, student-centered instruction across North Dakota by supporting schools with professional development, data-driven resources, and leadership activities. A primary focus of the REAs is to align school improvement initiatives with key frameworks such as Cognia, the North Dakota Multi-Tier System of Supports (NDMTSS), and Comprehensive Support and Improvement/Targeted Support and Improvement (CSI/TSI). By assisting schools in meeting these standards, REAs help ensure that all students, regardless of background or ability, have access to high-quality, personalized instruction.

A major focus of REAs has been supporting **school boards** and **educators** in honing their leadership skills, focusing on **student achievement** and providing leadership learning and collaboration opportunities for administrators. Furthermore, REAs emphasize professional learning for educators, particularly through workshops and training sessions that highlight evidence-based, highly effective instructional practices. Paraeducators also benefit from customized professional development programs designed to enhance their ability to support student success in the classroom. REAs facilitate **Beginning Teacher Workshops, equipping new educators with the skills and knowledge necessary to succeed in their early years** of teaching.

REAs have also provided **targeted assistance** to schools identified for support under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). By delivering professional learning on **priority standards, proficiency scales, and standards-based resources**, REAs help schools implement high-quality instruction tailored to individual student needs. They have focused on delivering interventions aligned with student progress and closely monitored for effectiveness, ensuring that instruction adjustments are made when necessary to optimize learning outcomes.

North Dakota Council of Education Leaders

At the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders (NDCEL), we continue to work with our administrators strongly encouraging student-centered learning by fostering environments where students are empowered to take control of their educational

journey. This focus ensures that our students develop critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and real-world readiness.

A cornerstone of this commitment is the **North Dakota Innovation Academy**, hosted annually by NDCEL. Launched in 2018 with initial support from Governor Doug Burgum and funding from Ted Dintersmith, author of **What Schools Could Be**, the academy has made a lasting impact on participating districts. The Innovation Academy has continued to provide cutting-edge professional development to educational leaders across the state.

The Academy's training is grounded in four "Big Shifts" that deeper learning schools make:

1. Higher-Level Thinking
2. Student Agency
3. Authentic Work
4. Technology Infusion

Districts that have participated in the Innovation Academy are some of the highest performing in North Dakota, with many returning each year to build on their progress. To date, over 50 have engaged with this transformative program, and the impact on student outcomes is evident. Innovation is not rushed in these districts—it is thoughtfully implemented through a multi-pronged approach that allows for sustainable, long-term change. This deliberate method of innovation has proven successful where rushed efforts may falter. Some of the cornerstones of personalized learning were born out of the Innovation Academy, including the "Jag Academy" at Northern Cass and "Empower" in Bismarck.

Participants in the Innovation Academy have testified to its incredible impact, sharing that it's the most effective training available for making tangible changes in their schools and delivering results for students. Among the innovative practices implemented by these districts are:

- Altered schedules for optimized learning time
- Standards-based grading
- Enhanced teacher collaboration
- Development of learning continuums
- Personalized learning plans
- Teaching students to connect with business and industry
- Problem-solving for challenges that once seemed unsolvable
- Successfully managing district-wide change
- Essential shifts for CSI/TSI districts

At NDCEL, we are proud of our role in supporting these districts as they lead the way in student-centered innovation. By staying true to our mission and embracing purposeful, impactful change, we ensure that every student has the opportunity to thrive.

North Dakota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NDACTE)

The North Dakota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (NDACTE) is committed to promoting student-centered instruction as a central pillar of its teacher preparation programs. NDACTE prepares both pre-service and in-service teachers with the skills necessary to put students at the center of the learning process. This focus on student-centered learning is grounded in constructivist learning theory, which emphasizes hands-on, experiential learning experiences that incorporate both student choice and relevance to individual needs.

NDACTE institutions integrate personalized learning approaches across various programs by embedding pre-service teachers in innovative schools. These early field experiences, learning walks, and student teaching placements allow future educators to practice personalized learning strategies in real-world settings. Additionally, pre-service teachers are given a high degree of choice in where they complete their fieldwork, enabling them to customize their experiences based on their specific interests and career goals.

The association also fosters personalized learning within its courses through practices such as Choice Boards, which offer students multiple ways to demonstrate their learning. Faculty members model personalized learning strategies, encouraging pre-service teachers to embrace these methods and apply them in their future classrooms. By continuously evolving its programming and staying current with best practices in North Dakota's PK-12 schools, NDACTE ensures that future educators are well-prepared to implement personalized, student-centered instruction effectively.