



1 **1/6/2020 - HB 1075 – Student Extracurricular Activities held on Teacher/Admin professional**
2 **development days. NDCEL Testimony in support with potential amendment.**

3 Good afternoon Chairman Owens and members of the House Education Committee. My name is
4 Dr. Aimee Copas and I am here today representing NDCEL which serves all educational leaders
5 in schools with the exception of school boards and teachers.

6 Today we are discussing the Fall Convention for Teachers and Administrators. I’m here today to
7 provide you with some historical context as well as valuable data that both supports the bill and
8 that may support a suggested amendment to assure the opportunity to develop our school leaders
9 and instructional staff each year.

10 These two days have been held as no-school days for over 40 years. For many decades, there
11 were two separate conferences – one held for teachers, one for administrators, however both
12 were held on the same two days of the year (the third Thursday and Friday in October). Over
13 time the state has transitioned between whether the time spent in PD would be required, paid for
14 or not, etc. It seems that from a “requirement” standpoint that the past decade has been handled
15 well in that there is no-school that day to provide the opportunity, but schools were not required
16 to pay their teachers to attend. In more recent years, NDUnited discontinued hosting the
17 conference. For many years, the week before the conference week, NDDPI would host what was
18 called the Title I conference. Upon the discontinuation of the NDUnited Teacher Conference,
19 NDDPI expanded their offering to make it more relevant to more teachers. For the past 6+ years,
20 the field continually asked for NDCEL to work with NDDPI to merge the two conferences and
21 have them both held on the two days of no-school as the substitute teacher issue that existed to
22 have teachers attend the NDDPI Educator conference the week before as well as expenses was a
23 burden to districts.

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25 As a response to the field, NDCEL did just that and requested that NDDPI partner. NDDPI was
26 gracious in working with NDCEL and handed over the conference to them as conference
27 planning was a large burden on their staff as well. Hence, in 2020, NDCEL hosted the first ever
28 Fall Conference for *All Educators* – targeted at all instructional staff from Para-Educators to
29 Superintendents and all staff in-between. All educational parties interested were invited to help
30 design the conference to provide an assurance of quality for all attendees. Albeit that it was an
31 odd year and a bit of a challenge since it needed to be remote due to COVID, it was hugely
32 successful with over 3000 registrants. Live attendees over the two days of no-school were up to
33 1000 people and others have been continually utilizing content and are able to do so through
34 April. Many districts registered their entire instructional staff. To date we can account for over
35 25,000 hours of training that our educators have participated in.

*NDCEL is the strongest unifying voice representing and supporting administrators and educational leaders in pursuit of quality education
for all students in North Dakota.*

Executive Director: Aimee Copas-----Assistant Director: Russ Ziegler



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Now let's talk about the future.

In 2021 NDCEL has the Bismarck Event Center contracted to bring us back together live once again. There will be incredibly valuable and dynamic professional development and networking opportunities that only happen at the Fall Conference. We anticipate recorded *breakout sessions* to be available **after** the conference for expanded PD offerings for districts as it provides an ongoing opportunity for educators to self-direct their growth. Keynotes will **NOT** be recorded however based on their contract requirements and *may* be livestreamed (if allowed by speaker) on the two days of the conference for those attendees that may wish to attend remotely and have access to the training for the entire year. This option provides districts huge PD flexibility later in the year and the ability to tailor their development all year long while saving dollars.

The chief complaint that I've received over the years, and that NDHSAA has also heard is that there should be flexibility to host extracurricular activities on Friday afternoon after the conclusion of the conference – that is the crux of this bill offered by Rep. Dockter. Further-more just before Christmas the decision was made by the state superintendent to NOT declare those two days held by school districts as non-school days. My phone and email has been non-stop with schools that are concerned about this decision. This prompted my office to conduct a survey and find out what the desires of our schools are. On Monday of this week, in a 9 question survey with over 300 respondents, we asked about the participants school size, their position in the school, and based on a research driven Likert scale the degree to which they found the Fall Conference days useful, whether there should be extra-curriculars held on Friday, the challenges posed by not holding those days as no-school days statewide, whether or not the respondent attends the fall conference, and whether their school calendar plans have changed. Finally, we asked whether we should partner with NDHSAA, and other partners such as our legislators to ensure these two days are held as no-school days moving forward.

The only way our administrators and teachers can attend in a significant way (especially in smaller districts) is if there is not school. In 2015, when legislators questioned the value of the 2 days held, the law was amended to reflect its current verbiage. However, the educational leaders are asking now for a stronger assurance that this will not potentially adjust each year.

This brings me to our requested amendment. Based on the survey data, the districts are indicating that having this anchored in law would be beneficial. This will also alleviate NDDPI the annual burden of having to spend the time doing the applications, declaring the day, and doing press releases annually regarding the declaration of the days.



74 We'd humbly request the consideration of the following amendment which includes Rep.
75 Docktor's language and request and goes further to have the ND Legislature hold the days
76 moving forward that have been historically for this purpose:

77 **15.1-06-04.1. School district calendar - Limitation.**

78 1. A school district may not schedule ~~school-sponsored, school-directed, or school-related~~
79 ~~activities, including~~ instructional time, during the third Thursday and Friday of October that any
80 day that the superintendent of public instruction declares is in conflict with a professional
81 development conference directed toward all teachers or all administrators and hosted by an
82 educational organization in this state.

83 2. The declaration permitted by subsection 1 is limited to two days during a school year.