

Kirsten Baesler
State Superintendent

Dr. Donna Fishbeck
Chief of Staff

Laurie Matzke
Assistant Superintendent



**NORTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

600 E Boulevard Ave., Dept. 201
Bismarck, ND 58505-0440
Phone (701) 328-2260
Fax (701) 328-2461
<http://www.nd.gov/dpi>

For Immediate Release

Contact: Dale Wetzel, Public Information Specialist
Office 701-328-2247
Cell: 701-400-8557
Email: dewetzel@nd.gov

Baesler Provides Flexibility For Professional Development Training

BISMARCK, N.D., Dec. 17, 2020 – State School Superintendent Kirsten Baesler said she will not require North Dakota schools to close for two days during the 2021-22 school year, which she said will give school districts more options in planning their upcoming school year.

“Local school boards have long been granted broad discretion in setting their school calendars,” Baesler said. “Given the current public health crisis, this discretion has proven to be even more important than ever. Additionally, the pandemic has spurred creative ways to deliver professional development enabling all educators to participate remotely from locations across North Dakota.”

On October 14, 2020, the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders (NDCEL) requested October 20-22, 2021, be designated as days a school district may not schedule school-sponsored, school-directed, or school-related activities, including instruction time.

“After giving the matter the utmost consideration, I am declining to exercise the authority to declare any days in conflict of a professional development conference under NDCC § 15.1-06-04.1. This decision will give our school districts added flexibility in developing their 2021-22 school calendars during these unprecedented times,” Baesler said.

School districts continue to have the option of creating their calendars to allow their teachers or administrators to attend the NDCEL Fall Conference for professional development days, but for the forthcoming school year NDCC § 15.1-06-04.1 will not be exercised to prohibit school districts from scheduling, sponsoring, or directing other school activities or instructional time during those conference days.

“This potential for calendaring instruction and school activities on these days has been made all the more workable because NDCEL’s Fall Conference, like so many conferences, is now being provided with a virtual option in October 2021 with a broad window of opportunity for attendees to complete the virtual offerings -- eliminating the time and cost of travel, and thus offering teachers and administrators the opportunity to serve their students and also obtain professional education,” Baesler said.

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Dec. 17, 2019

Dr. Aimee Copas
Executive Director
North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders
125 Slate Drive, Suite 7
Bismarck, ND 58503-6174

Dear Dr. Copas,

On Oct. 14, 2020, I received from you ND SFN 61092, which asked to designate Oct. 20-22, 2021 (Wednesday, Thursday, Friday) as days during which a “school district may not schedule school-sponsored, school-directed, or school-related activities, including instructional time” ([NDCC 15.1-06-04.1 \(1\)](#)) during the 2021-22 school year. You requested that the State reserve those days for the 2021 fall conference of the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders.

North Dakota law allows the state superintendent of public instruction to designate two days each year for the restrictions described above. This letter is to inform you I will not be exercising this authority to designate any days that restrict instruction or school activities for the 2021-2022 school year. Given our current pandemic crisis, this approach will provide maximum flexibility for our school districts as they craft their schedules for the next school year.

This approach is consistent with NDCEL’s plans to provide a virtual option during the October 2021 Fall Conference. Your offering of a broad window of opportunity for attendees to complete the virtual offerings allows administrators and teachers the opportunity to serve their students and obtain professional education. Thank you for this innovative approach.

Please contact Joe Kolosky, our director of school approval and opportunity, if you have any questions. Joe’s email is jkolosky@nd.gov. His phone number is 701-328-2755.

Sincerely,

Kirsten Baesler
ND Superintendent of Public Instruction

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