

1 Tuesday, January 31, 2023

2 Beth Slette, Superintendent, West Fargo Public Schools

3 Opposing Senate Bill 2351

4 Good afternoon, Chairman Elkin, members of the Senate Education Committee. My name is Beth Slette and I am
5 the Superintendent of West Fargo Public Schools, along with Andrea Richards, our Wellness Director. Although
6 we support the intent of this bill, we are here today to oppose Senate Bill 2351 and request that you amend it to
7 a study to ensure data collection on this important topic is consistent and actionable.

8 The leadership of West Fargo Public Schools believes in data-based, outcomes-focused decision making; it is
9 necessary for program evaluation and continuous improvement, and ultimately, it provides the very best
10 opportunities for learners. We believe collecting data on incidences that can impact learning allows schools to
11 respond to student or program needs in an efficient and effective manner. Our current data collection practices
12 support building teams to improve outcomes for all learners, including the need for mid-year program
13 adjustments based on trends.

14 To underscore how complicated data collection for classroom and hallway closures can be, we'd like to share
15 our story of this work in West Fargo. WFPS has utilized an online form to document room clears and behavior
16 data for the past four years. This data, along with other data points, is used when making very important
17 decisions for the district. Getting to this point has been incredibly challenging. We had to work through many
18 variables to make sense of the data we were collecting.

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- 20 • What is the definition of a room clear verses a hallway closure?
 - 21 • Do medical emergencies count as room clears or hallway closures if those procedures are necessary to
22 protect the students?
 - 23 • If there was no instructional time lost, was it truly a room clear?
 - 24 • Do all instances need to be documented (e.g., if students are asked to pause for 30-60 sec in a hallway
25 while a neighboring hallway is cleared)?
 - 26 • How are school lockdown procedures included in these documentation requirements?
 - 27 • Within specialized programs with access to multiple learning spaces and inherent need for flexibility due
to the student's disabilities, is it still a room clear?

28 Across 14 elementary and 7 secondary buildings, we struggled as a district to find consensus and consistency on
29 these definitions, and each district of the 170 in North Dakota will bring a different element to the conversation.

30 Based on our experience tracking this data and using it to improve practices, we recommend a study before
31 implementing a bill. Without these important questions being discussed at the state level, definitions may not
32 be consistently applied between schools, ultimately affecting the reliability of the information. This is an
33 important conversation that shouldn't be rushed. The state will need to collaborate with districts to determine
34 not only the parameters of data collected, but also the tool that will be used to gather the information. What
35 resources will be needed in each district to collect information, and how can it be done in the most consistent
36 and efficient way possible?

37 Thank you for allowing us to testify this afternoon. We will now stand for questions if there are any at this
38 time.