

**INFORMATION & HISTORY FOR HB 1448  
SENATE INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE**

**March 14, 2023**

**By: ADAM TESCHER, NDDPI SCHOOL FINANCE OFFICER**

**701-328-3291**

**North Dakota Department of Public Instruction**

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Chairman Larsen and Members of the Committee:

My name is Adam Tescher, and I am the School Finance Officer with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI). I am here to provide testimony in support of the amendment offered by ND Association of Counties, Executive Director Aaron Birst.

The number of school districts in North Dakota has decreased by 96% since peaking in 1918, with 4,700 schools served by 53 superintendents to 168 operating districts, with 468 schools served by 144 superintendents. North Dakota student enrollment reached a high point in 1923, with 170,000 students attending public schools compared to today's 115,000. These numbers represent a governance transition from a system of 53 elected county superintendents working with numerous boards and schools. (State Historical Society, *Unit 7: Set 4: Rural & Town Schools*; [history.nd.gov](http://history.nd.gov))

County superintendents are still required by law in [NDCC 15.1-11 County Superintendent of Schools](#) and [NDCC 11-10-10.5](#)

The employment qualifications of the county superintendent are:

**15.1-11-01. County superintendent of schools - Employment - Qualifications.**

1. Except as provided in section 15.1-11-02, each board of county commissioners shall employ a county superintendent of schools on a full-time or a part-time basis.

An individual hired under this section:

- a. Must hold a baccalaureate degree from a regional or nationally accredited institution of higher education approved for teacher education.
  - b. Must hold a valid North Dakota professional teaching license.
  - c. Must have experience teaching at an approved elementary, middle, or secondary school.
  - d. Must be approved by a majority of the school board presidents representing school districts having their administrative headquarters in the county.
  - e. Serves until the individual resigns or is discharged by the board of county commissioners at the direction of a majority of the school board presidents referenced in subdivision d.
2. The presidents of the school boards referenced in subsection 1 shall perform the duties of school boards with respect to the evaluation, renewal, and discharge of an individual hired under this section.

The duties of the county superintendent are:

**15.1-11-04. County superintendent of schools - Duties.**

A county superintendent of schools shall:

1. Serve as the superintendent of all schools in a county except those schools in districts that employ a district superintendent of schools.
2. Receive copies of and review, in a timely manner, all reports submitted to the superintendent of public instruction by school districts having their administrative headquarters in the county.
3. Compile reports containing statistics and any other information requested by the superintendent of public instruction and forward the reports at the time and in the manner directed by the superintendent of public instruction.
4. If requested by a school district, assist in planning, coordinating, and providing education and related services.
5. Promote coordination and cooperation among the school districts and the multidistrict special education units within the county.
6. Assist school districts in taking advantage of incentive programs administered by the superintendent of public instruction.
7. As secretary of the county committee:
  - a. Provide to the public information regarding the annexation of property to another school district;

b. Provide to the public all forms necessary for the annexation of property to another school district;

c. Compile information regarding school district annexations and dissolutions and provide such information to the appropriate county committees, at the time and in the manner directed by the state board of public school education; and

d. Compile information regarding school district annexations, reorganizations, and dissolutions, and provide such information to the state board of public school education, at the time and in the manner directed by the state board. 8. Perform any other duties required by law

Some have asked if other states use county superintendents exclusively for school leadership in their state. An analysis identified seven states that have county-wide school districts:

- **Florida**
- **Georgia**
- **Louisiana (by parish)**
- **Maryland**
- **Nevada**
- **North Carolina**
- **Virginia**
- **West Virginia**

- Other states use counties for **some** but not all district boundaries.

The following examples highlight how state policy organizes districts in states that rely on counties for district boundaries.

**Florida's** state constitution establishes local school districts at the county level. As such, the state has 67 counties and 67 public school districts.

**Nevada** statute established county boundaries as school district boundaries in 1956. Carson City is the only exception, but it is treated like a county school district in policy. Nevada currently has 17 school districts, including Clark County, which is one of the largest in the country.

- North Dakota has 12 schools using a county superintendent.

04-001	Billings Co 1	95	Co Sup
08-025	Naughton 25	27	Co Sup
08-033	Menoken 33	58	Co Sup
08-035	Sterling 35	16	Co Sup
08-039	Apple Creek 39	68	Co Sup
08-045	Manning 45	21	Co Sup
15-010	Bakker 10	2	Co Sup
27-032	Horse Creek 32	12	Co Sup
28-050	Max 50	148	Co Sup
30-004	Little Heart 4	27	Co Sup
30-017	Sweet Briar 17	25	Co Sup
44-012	Marmarth 12	21	Co Sup

- To the best of our knowledge, six school districts share a superintendent other than the County Superintendent.

- Linton Public Schools and Kidder County Schools
- Anamoose Public Schools and Drake Public Schools
- Flasher Public Schools and Roosevelt Public Schools (Carson)

Given the importance of many of the duties of county superintendents, the fact that there is an opportunity to better leverage these individuals in each county for the efficiency and effectiveness of our school systems and the \$2.3 billion investment the ND State Legislature makes in K12 education each biennium, NDDPI looks forward to partnering with the ND Association of Counties and providing this training.

- Chairman Larsen, members of the committee, that concludes my report.