



EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Wednesday, October 15, 2025
Roughrider Room, State Capitol
Bismarck, North Dakota

Representative Jim Jonas, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

Members present: Representatives Jim Jonas, Collette Brown, Matthew Heilman, Scott Louser, Mike Motschenbacher, Eric J. Murphy, David Richter, Mike Schatz; Senators Michelle Axtman, Jeff Barta, Jose L. Castaneda, Ronald Sorvaag, Paul J. Thomas

Members absent: Representatives Jay Fisher, SuAnn Olson

Others present: Representative LaurieBeth Hager, Fargo, member of the Legislative Management
See [Appendix A](#) for additional persons present.

Ms. Sheila M. Sandness, Senior Fiscal Analyst, Legislative Council, reviewed the [Supplementary Rules of Operation and Procedure of the North Dakota Legislative Management](#).

DUAL-CREDIT STUDY

Ms. Sandness presented a memorandum entitled [Dual-Credit Study - Background Memorandum](#), including information regarding the higher education funding formula, tuition and fees, elementary and secondary education integrated formula payments, and dual-credit tuition scholarships.

Ms. Lisa A. Johnson, Deputy Commissioner and Chief Academic & Student Affairs Officer, North Dakota University System office, presented information ([Appendix B](#)) regarding the dual-credit program, including which institutions may offer dual-credit courses and where dual-credit courses may be provided by the institutions; state funding provided for dual-credit through the higher education funding formula; dual-credit enrollment by course for each institution offering dual-credit courses; and dual-credit scholarships. She noted:

- Dual-credit enrollment is available from all North Dakota University System institutions to all North Dakota high school students in grades 10 through 12, and college credit is guaranteed upon successful completion.
- Early entry also is available at all University System institutions, but is not as popular as dual-credit because the student must pay the full tuition rate and may negotiate high school credit after the college course is completed.
- High school students enrolled in dual-credit, but still attending a postsecondary institution, are included in the average daily membership of their school district of residence for purposes of funding provided through the state school aid formula. In addition, completed dual-credit hours are included in the higher education funding formula for purposes of funding higher education institutions.
- During the 2021-23 biennium, high school dual-credit hours totaled 82,842 hours, or 4 percent of total hours, and are anticipated to generate approximately \$13.9 million, or 2 percent of the higher education funding formula base appropriation during the 2025-27 biennium.

- Of the 47,522 students enrolled in University System institutions in the fall 2025 semester, 6,013 students were high school students.
- During the 2024-25 school year, 12,090 high school students enrolled in 59,302 credits, representing 26 percent of all students eligible to participate, including 39 percent of students in grade 12.

In response to questions from committee members, Ms. Johnson noted:

- When a dual-credit course is taught by a high school teacher, the school district is paying the teacher's salary and the course is offered at a subsidized tuition rate of \$87, which is paid to the college or university partner. Courses offered by college instructors are not subsidized by the school district and are offered at a tuition rate of \$154, paid to the college or university partner.
- Dual-credit has become a larger factor in the higher education funding formula than when the formula was established.

Ms. Jennifer Bickel, Education Market Manager, Bank of North Dakota, provided information ([Appendix C](#)) regarding the Bank's dual-credit assistance program. She noted:

- The program began in 2011 with a federal grant and has been continued using student loan proceeds.
- The Bank integrated the online application process with the K-12 information system to allow for more efficient monitoring and data collection.
- Students who meet the eligibility criteria, primarily those qualifying for the federal Free or Reduced-Price Lunch Program or attending a Community Eligibility Provision school, may receive funding for up to two dual-credit courses per academic year.
- From July 2024 through June 2025, the Bank approved 1,364 dual-credit course assistance applications representing 116 school districts and providing approximately \$535,000 for tuition, fees, and books.
- For students who do not meet the eligibility criteria for free assistance, the Bank offers a student loan option and students who complete dual-credit coursework may be eligible for the state's dual-credit tuition scholarship, which provides up to \$750 toward future college expenses.

Ms. Davonne Eldredge, Assistant Director, Office of Academic Support, Department of Public Instruction, presented testimony ([Appendix D](#)) and information ([Appendix E](#)) regarding the department's role in dual-credit and other choice ready programs, including the impact of dual-credit courses on the K-12 funding formula. She noted:

- The role of the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) includes collaborating on dual-credit programming; providing assistance to students and the public regarding student eligibility and school responsibilities; assisting schools to align college courses with high school course codes; sharing information for the financial assistance program through the Bank of North Dakota; sharing information regarding teacher qualifications; and providing College Ready English and Math Program options for schools with students who do not meet placement criteria.
- A three-credit college course equals one semester of high school credit.
- Students are considered full-time for K-12 average daily membership and the K-12 funding formula is not adjusted for students taking dual-credit courses.
- In addition to dual-credit courses, students have access to advanced placement classes and DPI provides exam fee reimbursement for up to four advanced placement exams taken during a student's high school career.

In response to a question from a committee member, Ms. Eldredge noted less than one-half of schools in the state participate in College Ready English and Math Programs.

OTHER COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

Ms. Sandness presented a memorandum entitled [Other Duties of the Education Committee - Background Memorandum](#), including a listing of reports the committee has been assigned to receive during the 2025-26 interim.

Ms. Kirsten Baesler, Superintendent of Public Instruction, distributed a publication entitled [North Dakota Legendary Learners - Legendary Family Learning - Building Literacy Skills](#). She noted the publication, paid for by a competitive federal comprehensive literacy state development grant, was created by the department's Academic Support Office to provide a resource for families of early learners and is available free throughout the state.

Ms. Baesler reviewed a list of members of the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision Steering Committee and provided updates to the statewide strategic vision framework ([Appendix F](#)), including increased academic goals and the implementation of progress-monitoring metrics in chronic absenteeism and general attendance rates.

Ms. Baesler distributed the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision 2025 Strategic Plan Report ([Appendix G](#)), including copies of the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision for the 2023-25 biennium ([Appendix H](#)) and the 2025-27 biennium ([Appendix I](#)). She noted others would provide updates for five strategic themes outlined in the report, including quality early childhood experiences; support for safe and healthy behaviors; career awareness, exploration, and development; quality education personnel; and quality student-centered instruction.

In response to questions from committee members, Ms. Baesler noted:

- The COVID-19 pandemic impacted student engagement and families do not value daily attendance as much as they have in the past.
- Each school district determines attendance policy, including the definition of excused and unexcused absences, which does not impact average daily membership because the student still is considered enrolled.

Mr. Jim Upgren, Assistant Director, Office of School Approval and Opportunity, and Ms. Ann Ellefson, Director, Office of Academic Support, Department of Public Instruction, provided information ([Appendix J](#)) regarding school accreditation rule waivers pursuant to North Dakota Century Code Section 15.1-06-08, education statute waivers pursuant to Section 15.1-06-08.1, and the Innovative Education Program pursuant to Section 15.1-06-08.2. They noted:

- 8 school districts operate on waivers of instructional unit time pursuant to Section 15.1-06-08, of which 4 school districts will need to reapply after the 2025-26 school year.
- 15 school districts operate on a 4-day school week pursuant to Section 15.1-06-04, of which 6 school districts will need to reapply after the 2025-26 school year.
- Last year, in addition to the Center for Distance Education (CDE) and the Youth Correctional Center/Marmot High School, 6 school districts participated in the Innovative Education Program pursuant to Section 15.1-06-08.2. Waivers were approved for certain sections of Chapters 15.1-06, 15.1-18, 15.1-20, and 15.1-21, related to school calendar hours, teacher qualifications, instructional time, graduation, and scholarships.
- School districts operating under the Innovative Education Program submit annual reports regarding progress and outcomes, which are available to the committee and summarized in the department's presentation.
- In 2025, the Legislative Assembly provided funding to support a state intermediary for innovative education, the North Dakota Network for Personalized Learning, which has been established at Valley City State University.

In response to questions from committee members, they noted:

- No studies have been conducted related to student outcomes in districts with instructional unit time or 4-day school week waivers.
- State statute does not prohibit a school district from having multiple innovative education programs.

Mr. Upgren provided information ([Appendix K](#)) regarding alternative curriculum proposals pursuant to Section 15.1-07-35, or the Learn Everywhere Program. He noted:

- Established in 2021, the program allows school districts and nonpublic schools to adopt a policy allowing students in grades 6 through 12 to earn course credit for educational opportunities outside the classroom through a sponsoring entity.
- A program proposal must be approved by the school board and submitted to DPI, but Superintendent of Public Instruction approval is not required. Participating schools are required to provide program evaluation data to the department on an annual basis.
- Currently, one school district participates in the Learn Everywhere Program. Northern Cass School District has seven sponsoring entities that provide opportunities in Spanish language and culture; youth life skills in leadership, communication, and personal responsibility; character development, citizenship, physical fitness, and leadership; robotics; emergency medical services; music; and philanthropy.
- The department is determining how the program is being used across the state and whether schools may be implementing the Learn Everywhere Program without having submitted their policies and subsequent proposals to the department as required.

In response to a question from a committee member, Mr. Upgren noted the department is considering ways to promote the Learn Everywhere Program and other education waiver and innovative education programs.

In response to a question from a committee member, Mr. Wayde Sick, Director, Department of Career and Technical Education, noted:

- The department continues to pursue work-based learning opportunities, including placement as part of a course, internship, or apprenticeship.
- Apprenticeships are on hold as the State Director has retired and the federal position has not been filled.
- The Department of Career and Technical Education (CTE) is exploring a transition from federal oversight of apprenticeships to state oversight of apprenticeships.

Members of the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision Steering Committee provided reports for each of the five strategic themes included in the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision Framework, pursuant to Section 15.1-02-04.

Mr. Sick provided information ([Appendix L](#)) regarding the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision relating to career awareness, exploration, and development. He noted:

- The department has distributed a majority of the \$121 million appropriated for CTE capital projects and remaining funds are expected to be disbursed in 2025. All facilities, whether new or expanded, are open and operational.
- The department, in partnership with the Education Standards and Practices Board, created a work-based learning coordinator endorsement and is using a legislative appropriation of \$1.5 million to provide funding for coordinators across the state. There are 17 coordinators serving multiple school districts.

- The CareerView XR virtual reality career exploration tool for middle and high school students was added to RUReadyND in the fall of 2024, and the department anticipates expanding access to elementary students.
- The North Dakota National Guard, CDE, CTE, and DPI have collaborated to offer a military pathway program, which consists of a series of courses developed by CDE, offered at a discounted cost of \$20 per course, to learn more about military careers.

In response to questions from committee members, Mr. Sick noted:

- The state awarded 13 CTE center capital project grants and there are 14 CTE centers in the state, of which 2 are considered virtual centers.
- Even if they are not members of a CTE center, school districts may offer CTE courses. This may result in some areas of the state lacking variety in the courses offered.

Ms. Kay Larson, Early Childhood Director, Department of Health and Human Services, presented information ([Appendix M](#)) regarding the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision relating to quality early childhood experiences. She noted:

- The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) used federal Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five funds to offer kindergarten transition grants to school districts to support or enhance kindergarten transition efforts in their communities and DPI anticipates continuing the effort with literacy grant funding.
- DHHS, using Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five funds, awarded a grant to the University of North Dakota to develop a peer mentorship experience for early childhood special education professionals.
- DHHS has been exploring the Pyramid Model, an evidence-based framework for supporting children with challenging behaviors, and has been offering an above and beyond training incentive to child care providers who complete the Pyramid Model Birth to Five training module.
- The Best in Class Program was established 5 years ago and expands access to high-quality early childhood experiences in the year before kindergarten. There are 64 programs and 93 classrooms supporting nearly 1,300 children. The first cohort of Best in Class students entered the third grade this fall and the department soon will have interim assessment data.
- Waterford Upstart is an early learning program for 4-year-old children which provides engaging activities to build essential early learning skills at home. The department is collaborating with DPI to target 29 communities demonstrating third grade reading scores below 30 percent proficiency.

Ms. Laura Anderson, Policy Director, Behavioral Health Division, Department of Health and Human Services, provided information ([Appendix N](#)) regarding the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision relating to support for safe and healthy behaviors. She noted:

- Each fall, schools must designate a behavioral health resource coordinator.
- Throughout the school year, DHHS partners with the Central Regional Education Association to provide technical assistance to the coordinators and school districts on a variety of behavioral health topics.
- During the 2025-27 biennium, \$9.5 million is available to provide behavioral health services and support grants to school districts or special education units to address behavioral health needs of students.
- The [Parents Lead Suicide Prevention & Response - A Toolkit for Schools](#) publication is available to support professionals working in schools by providing resources and strategies to strengthen suicide prevention and response efforts.
- Other supports include a pediatric mental health care access program, training in structured psychotherapy for adolescents responding to chronic stress, system of care grants, teacher

training, school board model policies, distance education on-boarding courses, and other academic and behavioral health resources provided by DPI.

Dr. Daniel R. Conn, Professor, Minot State University, and President, North Dakota Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, provided information ([Appendix O](#)) regarding the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision relating to quality education personnel. He noted:

- Educator preparation programs graduated over 1,200 new teachers.
- Key initiatives include implementation of science of reading standards across programs and a statewide pilot study to test alternative pathways for candidates to demonstrate basic skills competency in reading, writing, and mathematics.
- Agencies and partners across the state launched or continued key efforts under the quality education personnel strategic theme, including educator evaluation and effectiveness, educator recruitment and pathways, professional learning and development, online and blended learning competency, and progress toward strategic goals.

Dr. Alyssa Martin, Director, Center for Distance Education, presented information ([Appendix P](#)) regarding the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision relating to quality student-centered instruction. She noted:

- Work focused on building statewide capacity, alignment to standards, and ensuring all students have access to pathways for success.
- The Insights Dashboard allows education partners to measure progress and while the work of the PK-12 Education Strategic Vision Steering Committee is not solely responsible for education gains, there are several areas of alignment between student gains and the committee's work.
- Statewide accountability results showed positive movement in English language learner proficiency, mathematics, English, and students graduating choice ready.
- As of June 2025, 70 percent of CDE's courses were aligned with state priority standards.

In response to a question from a committee member, Dr. Martin noted CDE uses artificial intelligence tutors within their core courses.

Committee members suggested receiving information at future meetings, including:

- Information from school districts regarding the cost to administer dual-credit courses.
- Information from dual-credit teachers regarding the benefits of dual-credit courses.

No further business appearing, Chairman Jonas adjourned the meeting at 2:42 p.m.

Sheila M. Sandness
Senior Fiscal Analyst

ATTACH:16