

TESTIMONY ON HB 1013
OVERVIEW OF K12 EDUCATION & DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC
INSTRUCTION
HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
Thursday, Jan. 16, 2025
By: Kirsten Baesler, State Superintendent
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Chairman Nathe and members of the House Appropriations E & E Committee:

For the record, my name is Kirsten Baesler. I am the superintendent of the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. I am here to provide an overview of House Bill 1013, the K12 budget, and the department's requests.

The Department of Public Instruction is the only constitutionally created K-12 education agency. However, it is just one of many entities that impact the success of our students. Other entities are governor-controlled, legislatively created, or non-government associations. We partner with numerous fellow educational stakeholders and legislative leaders and have established six student outcome goals that drive the work of K -12 education.

The Superintendent of Public Instruction is also responsible for supervising the North Dakota State Library, North Dakota Vision Services/School for the Blind in Grand Forks, the North Dakota School for the Deaf and Resource Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in Devils Lake, and the North Dakota Center for Distance Education.

The Department of Public Instruction is divided into two divisions: Student Support & Innovation and Information & Administration. The next three slides provide a visual of the team and a breakdown of the structures.

The office of Superintendent of Public Instruction goes back to North Dakota's territorial days. We are proud to be one of the longest-existing state agencies. Our pioneer ancestors placed great importance on education, just as we do today. Once we became a state, the North Dakota Constitution says North Dakota must have a uniform system of free public schools throughout the state that are open to all children.

The North Dakota Constitution also specifies that the "powers and duties" of the superintendent of public instruction "must be prescribed by law."

The Legislature outlines the superintendent of public instruction's responsibilities and authority. The office has only the authority granted by the legislature. A complete list of the superintendent's duties is in Chapter 15.1-02 of the North Dakota Century Code.

The ND Legislature has required membership or representation from the State Superintendent on over 40 boards, councils or committees, and thus I was very pleased and excited to hear the announcement from Governor Armstrong that his administration would be reviewing the need for the existing 150+ boards with the legislature, because many of these board meetings overlap and the my attention to

them can oftentimes keep me from other responsibilities assigned to NDDPI by the legislature.

Our audit results found that “no errors, internal control weaknesses, or potential violations of law were identified.” The full report is in your binder.

Our Vision states, “All students will graduate Choice Ready with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be successful.” We serve 135,115 students attending public, non-public, and home schools, a steady increase over the past decade and a half. We have a high graduation rate and a high GED pass rate, and we accomplish this through our commitment to continuous improvement. We are focused on preparing our young people for their future through partnerships, personalized learning, interventions, and support.

Our most recent accomplishments are Greater Math, Science of Reading, Personalized Learning Network, ND A+ comprehensive assessment system, ND FIRST for chronically low-performing schools, ND’s Tribal History textbook update – the first update since the 1980s, supporting our schools with the federal funding cliff of the ESSER funds, Summer food programs, Modernizing our K12 Data and Reporting Systems, growing our teacher and principal apprenticeship programs, extraordinary growth in our Choice Ready graduation rate and the all-important training and professional development of our school board members across the state to focus on the reason public schools exist – to improve students’ academic

outcomes. You will see many of these programs in our budget to continue because we have seen the **impact** they have on the **academic success** of our students.

Before I turn things over to NDDPI's Human Resource Director, Krista Schulz, to review our Staffing status, I want to share that as I have observed your work for the past 12 years, participating in - 7 regular and two special sessions - for a total of 9 legislative sessions of the legislature, I've seen that one of the Appropriation Committee's **primary** focuses is the state aid program for K12 education. The Department of Public Instruction uses a formula written by the Legislature to distribute funding to local public school districts, and almost all of the final K12 budget (98%) is delivered to local school districts.

You will see this funding bill integrated into this budget later in the session, but for now, it is important to know that North Dakota chooses to use a **per-pupil-funded** formula. In contrast, some states choose to use a **resource-based allocation** funding formula. In that case, the state distributes funds to schools based on the specific resources needed—such as teachers, support staff, leaders, materials, and facilities—determined by recognizing the most effective and efficient recommendations for educating students and their unique educational requirements. For those of you with good memories, you might remember when the Oddin & Picus report established some of those guidelines.

I've already mentioned Mrs. Krista Schauer, but Mr. Jamie Mertz, NDDPI Director of the Office of Fiscal Management, and Mr. Adam Tescher, the school finance officer within that office, are also with me today. Mr. Mertz has important information about the department's budget proposal, and Mr. Tescher is available to answer any questions.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to working with you during the session. Please do not hesitate to call upon me or the hard-working and amazing team in the Department of Public Instruction as a resource to help your work. And now I will turn it over to Ms. Schulz.

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