

**TESTIMONY ON SB 2213**  
**SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE**  
**January 28, 2025**  
**By: Ann Ellefson, Director of Academic Support**  
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Chair Beard and Members of the Committee:

My name is Ann Ellefson, Director of Academic Support with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI). I am here to provide supportive testimony on Senate Bill 2213, a critical piece of legislation aimed at improving mathematics education outcomes for students across North Dakota.

Mathematics is a cornerstone of academic success and a vital skill for the workforce of North Dakota's future. However, many of our students face significant challenges in mastering math concepts, and these challenges have been compounded by the pandemic, gaps in curriculum alignment, professional development for educators, and early intervention systems. The attached charts of North Dakota's results on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP or the Nation's Report Card), in 2013, 48% of students in grade 4 and 40% of students in grade 8 were proficient or above. As of 2022, those percentages have dropped to 40% in grade 4 and 28% in grade 8. It took the unprecedented impact of a global pandemic to cause such a significant decline in our math scores. Regaining that ground and starting the climb back will require an equally transformative and substantial effort.

Senate Bill 2213 is that substantial effort. It addresses this challenge through a comprehensive approach, providing a framework for improvement in five key areas:

1. **Mathematics Curriculum:** This bill ensures that math curricula are aligned with our newly revised, rigorous standards written by North Dakota teachers, equipping students with the skills they need to succeed in the workforce and college. A cohesive and research-based curriculum is essential for fostering mathematical understanding and critical thinking. Texas Policy Institute's recent study discovered that only 19% of nationally produced curriculum and daily assignments in classrooms are at or above grade level standards. When students are not exposed to and given the opportunity to work on math at grade level, they will continue to fall further behind and their math skills will be underdeveloped compared to those necessary to be successful in professions across the state.
2. **Professional Development:** Teachers are the backbone of student success. This bill empowers educators with the tools and strategies to deliver effective math instruction tailored to diverse learning needs by providing robust, ongoing professional development opportunities. This professional development will help supplement learning and fill in

the gaps with strategies providing educators the confidence to feel comfortable teaching math at the level needed to move student achievement forward.

3. **Screening and Intervention:** Early identification of students who struggle with math is crucial. This bill establishes evidence-based screening protocols and targeted interventions aimed at supporting students before they fall behind, ensuring equitable access to resources and opportunities, providing transparency on student performance, understanding the gaps in learning, and intervening in a timely enough manner to close those gaps before they fall even further behind.
4. **Administrative Rules and Reporting Requirements:** Transparency and accountability are vital for systemic change. This bill enables education stakeholders to be part of the rule making process to inform the rollout of this legislation. The requirement for the state to report regularly on the progress of this work encourages data-driven decisions to enhance program effectiveness.
5. **Mathematics Instructor Competency:** Lastly, this bill underscores the importance of ensuring that math instructors possess the necessary content knowledge and instructional skills. Competent, confident

teachers are essential for inspiring students and fostering a love of learning.

As referenced during the joint House and Senate Education meeting on January 8, 2025, the NDDPI prioritized discretionary federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) funds to respond to the significant decline in achievement referenced in 2022. The next part of my testimony is to share about two of these investments and how they have informed this draft legislation.

The first of these efforts is the Greater Math in North Dakota grant program. Beginning in the 2022-2023 school year, this pilot program assisted schools with implementing blended learning structures utilizing existing online tools/software, monitoring progress, and making adjustments through a continuous cycle of improvement. Blended learning combines face-to-face teaching with online learning by leveraging technology to assist educators in understanding students' prior knowledge, designing different learning plans for each student, and adjusting lessons and assignments. Eight districts (Glenburn, Grand Forks, Lone Tree, McKenzie County, Minot, New England, St. John, and Wahpeton) began this work, and seven districts have continued into this final year of support. The grant brings together a variety of educational stakeholders to support North Dakota schools and districts including: the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL Central) and representatives from North Dakota's Regional Education Associations (NDREAs).

After working with the Greater Math Districts for a year, the need to scale broader mathematics professional learning was recognized. The NDDPI began its work on “ND Effective Math Instruction,” which is also known as “ND Science of Math.” This is a partnership with the NDREAs and NDDPI to provide in-person and online training for K-12 educators focusing on the North Dakota state standards, and instructional strategies that are evidence-based, explicit, systematic, diagnostic, and cumulative. The NDDPI and NDREAs meet regularly as a workgroup to continue to guide the ND Effective Math Instruction professional learning offerings and the development of tools, resources, and guidance regarding best practices in mathematics.

The NDDPI also has provided schools and districts with supports specific to the newly revised 2023 Mathematics Standards including Standards-Based Learning professional development, resources and tools; family and community guides on math standards, ND Educational Hub courses in math, as well as other standards guidance documents, tools and resources used by schools and districts as they review and align their curriculum. These investments are a good start to scaling mathematics supports across the state and this legislation will ensure more schools and districts have access.

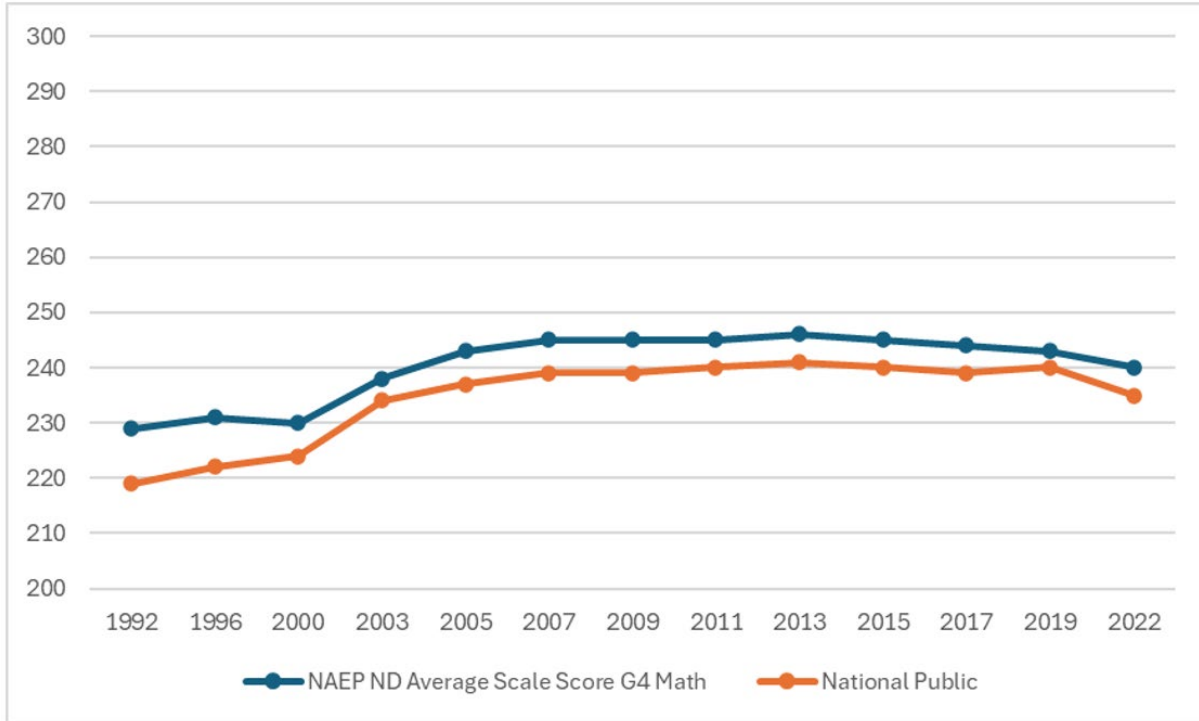
Through these grant opportunities to work closely with schools and districts, we have learned the following:

- Teachers need high-quality, research-based teaching materials for their lessons and the ability to respond to individual student needs. In these grant opportunities, at times, teachers had tools and resources that did not address their needs, or the curriculum provided had gaps in content and grade-level instruction.
- On-going, high-quality professional development is critical. In some cases, this has been the only “math” professional learning an educator has experienced since their college coursework.
- Online tools and resources can be part of the solution but not the sole solution. The greatest impact in the classroom is the quality and readiness of the teacher.

Senate Bill 2213 lays the foundation for a brighter future for our students, teachers, and communities. This legislation is not just an investment in math education—it is an investment in the success of North Dakota and its youngest citizens.

Chair Beard and Members of the Committee, thank you for your leadership and for your commitment to improving educational outcomes for all students. This concludes my testimony and I stand for any questions.

## NAEP North Dakota Grade 4



## NAEP North Dakota Grade 8

