

January 28, 2025

SB 2213- Relating to Mathematics Requirements
Testimony on behalf of New Classrooms Innovation Partners

Good afternoon, Chairman Beard and members of the Senate Education Committee. New Classrooms respectfully submits this neutral testimony in response to SB 2213, which is being heard by the Senate Education Committee today. We commend the Committee on building upon the state's recent success in implementing instructional supports aligned to the science of reading in the classroom and recognizing a need to now do the same in math.

New Classrooms is a national nonprofit on a mission to empower schools to move beyond the limits of the traditional classroom experience in middle school math so every student can access an educational foundation for lifelong success. As an organization, we advocate for unique and innovative policies and solutions designed to accelerate student learning in math. Through this work, we have gained unique research-based insights into how students best learn math. As a team of former educators, principals, U.S. congressional staff, and appointed state officials, we bring years of experience in education reform and policy, as well as a passion for ensuring students are set up for lifelong success.

In regard to SB 2213, we appreciate Senator Schaible's work to identify students who are behind in math. In particular, we commend the language that would use formative assessments and high-quality supplemental materials to target students needing additional support. We also applaud the initial focus on instruction for grades four through eight.

However, to ensure this legislation both uses limited funds wisely and has a transformational, not transactional, impact for North Dakota's students, we suggest additional work on this bill. Specifically, we recommend adding precise language regarding the adoption of innovative supports based on our research on how students learn best.

Math skills are traditionally taught based on the student's age, not what they already know or have yet to master. The negative effects of this model are especially acute in mathematics, due its cumulative nature: the skills a student masters in one year are foundational for mastering more advanced topics later. An eighth-grade student, for example, will struggle to learn eighth grade math skills if they are missing foundational concepts from the fifth, sixth, or seventh grade. For students who fall behind, research shows learning gaps accumulate, making it nearly impossible for them to catch back up, particularly as grade-level

skills become more complex. In math, access to rigorous, grade-level content alone is not sufficient for ensuring greater levels of achievement or getting back on track.

It's an impossible task and unfair to solely place the burden on teachers to determine where each and every student is without additional support. Solutions commonly revolve around increased professional development focused only on grade-level instruction and aligned textbooks. This approach, which has been legislated in other states, has not produced the intended outcomes for students. SB 2213 can break this trend by adding language that provides teachers with a personalized, competency-based supplemental tool, without creating an additional financial burden on districts. Ensuring a strong supplemental tool in a classroom which identifies where each student is in their learning journey, then integrates precise diagnostics, high-quality content, embedded assessments, real-time data, and personalized instructional pathways that span multiple grade levels is the key to math transformation. The professional learning opportunities should then support teachers in implementing personalized, competency-based supplemental materials.

This is why several states are taking initiative to provide schools with help in implementing personalized, competency-based math instruction that would put innovative supplemental supports directly into the hands of teachers to better meet the unique strengths and needs of their students. For example, [SB 1441](#) was recently introduced in Virginia to create a middle school math pilot in grades six through eight. Most importantly, this pilot includes a strong personalized diagnostic to measure where each student is in their learning journey and provides individualized, evidence-based curricula to create personalized pathways to mastery for students.

We believe amending this bill to add similar language and funding to allow for the adoption of a skill-level diagnostic in North Dakota classrooms - as well as the necessary training for teachers on how to use it - will help finally meet students where they are and then go back as far as needed to master skills. Research shows these proposed changes would move this bill in the right direction of ensuring all students achieve mastery in math by the end of middle school.

We thank the Committee for their consideration and leadership on this issue. We stand ready to work with you to deliver the best results for North Dakota's teachers and students.

Respectfully,

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