

March 12, 2025

Dear North Dakota Leaders,

It has been an honor to be part of the Marketplace for Kids program for the past eight years, volunteering as a presenter and board member, chaperoning my own kids' classes on Education Day, and as an advocate for the work the program does to advance workforce in North Dakota. Thank you for continuing to support the Marketplace for Kids mission in building community relationships in order to strengthen our workforce and make ND the best place to work, raise a family, and call home.

Each year, communities across the state plan for Marketplace for Kids Education Days. Teachers excite their students with the idea of creating inventions that could someday become their personal business. They support them throughout the brainstorming, planning, creating, and presentation process. In celebration, students gather at their local Education Day to explore careers, learn of job opportunities in their community, listen to the stories of community leaders, and present their own invention with the promise of a medallion in recognition of their effort. The energy radiating from the presenters, volunteers, teachers, and students is contagious.

Learning centers on connecting ideas and facts to authentic experiences. While learning begins in the classroom, hands-on experiences ignite the students' curiosity and passion. Marketplace for Kids is the only statewide, no-cost program that provides this type of experience for elementary and middle school kids. We hope to continue increasing the number of Education Days, especially in the rural and smaller areas that are often faced with challenges not permitting them to travel or participate in the regional Education Day.

As a parent of four school-aged kids, past elementary classroom teacher, current educational leader, and community member, I am grateful that our state offers this program to all of our kids. Helping as a judge at the Marketplace for Kids Education Days has allowed me to tap into the imagination and creativity of our students. I have observed devices that help with housecleaning jobs, machines that reduce pollution in our oceans, take care of pets when the owners are away, and reduce the amount of time we spend on daily tasks. Kids not only learn from the process of creating their own invention but also are intrigued by the projects of their peers. Being inspired by others is one of the best ways to spark curiosity and learning.

The shortage of community helpers in North Dakota, particularly in rural areas, is evident when we visit our local restaurants, make doctor appointments, schedule routine maintenance for our vehicles and homes, shop in grocery stores, and read updates on teacher shortages in our schools. Luckily, we have the opportunity to alleviate this issue through programs like Marketplace for Kids. Marketplace for Kids provides experiences for students to explore exciting career opportunities while motivating our kids to seek careers within the state of North Dakota. I strongly believe that kids instinctively want to stay in the place they call home yet often look outside their local community because they are unaware of the opportunities outside their front door. Marketplace for Kids provides this chance for kids.

Please consider this letter of encouragement for continued support for Marketplace for Kids. If you have questions or would like to visit about Marketplace for Kids, you are welcome to contact me at mleibel@nd.gov.

Sincerely,

Marijke Leibel EdD
Assistant Coordinator
ND RISE State Mentoring Program