



Senate Bill 2254 (SB 2254), mandates a rigorous and robust intervention process aimed at supporting North Dakota's consistently lowest-performing schools. This bill specifically targets schools previously identified as [Comprehensive Support and Improvement \(CSI\)](#) schools, ensuring they receive enhanced support to improve performance. The bill's policy provisions are scheduled to go into effect in September 2025. The bill outlines three potential interventions in identified schools, including:

- “Funds to be held in escrow for the school or school district or spent as designated by the superintendent of public instruction.
- Changes to curriculum, training, instruction, assessment, or the school calendar in the school or school district.
- Reassignment or hiring of school or school district staff to fill roles associated with school or school district needs.”

Currently, these schools would only receive a federal grant between \$60,000-\$75,000. All other identified support needed to carry out this work would have to be accomplished and paid for through the identified school's current budget unless additional funds are added.

Planned Use of Funds

Additional funds are needed to support schools that are identified as needing further oversight and support through the accountability process. The ND FIRST teams will execute and operate statewide supports for ND FIRST schools and districts while working collaboratively with and being overseen by NDDPI. Schools will establish a project management plan that outlines the implementation expectations in the initial 18 months. Funds would be used to procure contracts for the below teams to support schools' goals and objectives.

Team	Purpose
Executive Improvement Specialist (EIS)	The primary purpose of the EIS is to provide intensive, individualized support to identified ND FIRST schools and districts. The EIS employs a focused approach on outcomes by eliminating duplicate services and providing timely and effective support while taking into consideration the unique context and needs of each ND FIRST school and district. The EIS is the primary point of contact between the school/district and NDDPI. See Appendix A for more information on the EIS' role and responsibilities.
Transformational Operationalized Partners (TOPs)	The TOPs are a group of vetted external consultants dedicated to supporting, guiding, and nurturing ND FIRST district superintendents and principals. The TOPs will be comprised of a cadre of former school and district leaders who are local and national experts. The TOPs' strategic objective is to design, deploy, and implement a pool of principal and superintendent partners who have demonstrated success in improving student performance and building leadership capacity at the district level. Their primary role is to serve as leadership coaches and mentors, with an emphasis on building capacities to support transformational leadership in ND FIRST schools and districts. See Appendix B for more information on the TOPs' roles and responsibilities.
Research & Evaluation (R&E)	The R&E team develops and implements the accountability and measurement systems aligned with Senate Bill 2254 and state policy. This team serves the dual role of evaluating progress of each ND FIRST school/district while simultaneously evaluating the implementation of the ND FIRST statewide system of support. See Appendix C for more information on the R&E team's role and responsibilities.

Links for more information:

[ND FIRST](#)

[School Improvement Process Map](#)

[ND FIRST Project Charter](#)

[ND FIRST MOU Template](#)

Senate Bill 2254 (SB 2254), signed into law on April 24, 2023, mandates a rigorous and robust intervention process aimed at supporting North Dakota's consistently lowest-performing schools. This bill specifically targets schools previously identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) schools, providing them with additional oversight and guidance to strengthen performance management and monitoring of school improvement initiatives. The bill's policy provisions are scheduled to go into effect in September 2025. The bill outlines three potential interventions in identified schools, including:

- "Funds to be held in escrow for the school or school district or spent as designated by the superintendent of public instruction.
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In June of 2023, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) began collecting feedback from public school staff, community members, and other relevant education partners across the state. This consultation process was not required by the legislation itself but helped inform the design of a statewide intervention process to support schools in their second cycle of CSI. The fundamental tenets of NDDPI's proposed intervention process were to ensure that districts with low-performing schools:

- engage in purposeful school renewal processes,
- address school- and district-level systemic improvement, and
- engage multiple stakeholders or "partners" in the school renewal process.

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The system of support established under SB 2254 to perform these tenets is called **North Dakota Fostering Improvement Results for School Transformation (ND FIRST)**. ND FIRST is positioned within the broader school improvement infrastructure that supports ND public schools. Schools in their second cycle of CSI will enter ND FIRST, through which they receive an additional layer of oversight and guidance not offered to schools under Targeted Support and Improvement (TSI) or the first cycle of CSI status. Rather than operating in isolation, ND FIRST builds on the school improvement efforts schools initiated during their TSI or first-cycle CSI designations, providing additional resources to continue and strengthen that progress. Throughout the multi-year process, schools undergo continuous evaluations with the goals of tracking progress, adapting strategies, and eventually exiting ND FIRST based on success metrics co-developed between the school or district and NDDPI.

Theory of Action

IF ND FIRST teams reduce barriers and connect partnership districts to resources



and IF the partnering district commits to the process



THEN every partnership district can achieve identified student outcomes

Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of ND FIRST is to provide a comprehensive system of support for second-cycle CSI schools and to improve outcomes for all students. To accomplish this mission, NDDPI is committed to achieving the following objectives:

Collaborate with ND FIRST schools and districts using best practices and highly customized supports.

Design, deploy, and implement a system for disbursing and evaluating the use of federal funds that support ND FIRST schools and districts.

Develop resources and technical assistance programs, services, and guidance that are utilized by ND FIRST schools and districts.

Develop a multi-faceted evaluation system that will reliably and validly measure the effectiveness of ND FIRST.

Develop and implement methods, tools, and mechanisms for determining district and school-level readiness for implementation of evidence-based practices and research-based policies.

Design, deploy, and implement a leadership coaching contractor pool that builds capacity for ND First schools and districts.

Ensure transparent and appropriate communication and consultation with families.

Recognize and prioritize the local beliefs, values, and behaviors of ND FIRST schools and districts.

