

2025 SENATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

SB 2263

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Workforce Development Committee Fort Lincoln Room, State Capitol

SB 2263
1/30/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation for mastery framework training grants.
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9:33 a.m. Chairman Wobbema opened the hearing.

Members Present: Chairman Wobbema, Vice-Chairman Axtman, Senator Boschee, Senator Larson, Senator Powers.

Discussion Topics:

- Continuous training
- Availability of training time
- Available funding
- School innovation
- Number of applicants
- Cost differences in past programs

9:33 a.m. Senator Braunberger introduced the bill and submitted testimony #31917.

9:36 a.m. Mark Vollmer, Executive Director of the ND K-12 Coordination Council, testified in favor and submitted testimony #32913.

9:49 a.m. Sarah Ricks, Sarah Ricks, Chair of Support and Innovation Committee K-12 Coordination testified in favor and submitted testimony #32919 and #32920.

9:58 a.m. Ann Ellefson, Director of Academic Support for North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, testified in favor and submitted testimony #32692.

10:10 a.m. Chairman Wobbema closed the hearing.

Andrew Ficek, Committee Clerk

Good Morning, Chairman Wobbema and honorable members of the Senate Workforce Committee,

For the record, my name is Senator Ryan Braunberger from District 10 Fargo. Senate Bill No. 2263 is a forward-thinking initiative designed to invest in the future of North Dakota's education system by providing mastery framework training grants for our school districts. This one-time appropriation of \$500,000 from the general fund will empower schools to adopt innovative and sustainable approaches to student learning.

The purpose of SB 2263 is to support school district teams in developing and implementing mastery-based education frameworks. These frameworks shift the focus from traditional time-based progression to competency-based learning, ensuring students advance by thoroughly understanding the material. This is critical for preparing our students to succeed in an ever-evolving workforce.

Here's how the funding will work:

1. Each school district team may receive up to \$25,000, which can be used to provide stipends for up to ten additional working days dedicated solely to training.
2. Teams will include administrators and instructional coaches to ensure successful implementation and leadership.
3. Priority will be given to districts that have completed or are preparing for leadership training, fostering readiness and effectiveness.
4. While multiple applications are allowed, no single district can receive more than \$75,000, ensuring broad participation across the state.
5. This one-time funding effort is designed to catalyze change and innovation.

By equipping schools with the tools to develop mastery frameworks, SB 2263 addresses current educational needs and creates a replicable system to share successful models across the state. This bill represents a meaningful investment in our educators, our students, and the future workforce of North Dakota.

I am happy to answer any questions; others in the room will be able to answer questions as well. Thank you for your time and consideration.

TESTIMONY ON SB 2263
SENATE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
January 30, 2025
By: Ann Ellefson, Director of Academic Support
North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

Chair Wobbema 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 2263 regarding grants to provide time for training and planning for the mastery framework.

SB 2186 was passed by the legislative assembly in 2017 and SB 2196 in 2021, and together, these bills provide the ultimate flexibility for local school districts to “do school differently.” As the department lead for the personalized, competency-based education work in North Dakota, I am honored to work so closely with a variety of districts implementing these bills. It has provided the state education department great insight into the complexity and logistics of transforming educational systems and informed our practices moving forward. What we have learned is that this work is complex and very challenging for school systems to innovate at a systems level while also conducting the daily operations of their districts.

A grant structure, such as the one outlined in SB 2263, would provide the much-needed time, space, and supplemental funding for districts to pursue educational

innovation within their systems and encourage more districts to explore the great flexibility provided by the North Dakota Learning Continuum and Mastery Framework structures afforded to them.

Chair Wobbema and Members of the Committee, thank you for your leadership and commitment to the state of North Dakota. This concludes my testimony and I stand for any questions.

Senate Workforce Development Committee**Senator Wobbema, Chair****January 30, 2025**

Senator Wobbema and Members of the Senate Workforce Development Committee,

My name is Mark Vollmer, and I am honored to serve as the Executive Director of the North Dakota K-12 Coordination Council. Today, I stand before you to express support for SB 2263, a bill that will provide essential funding for mastery framework training grants.

The North Dakota K-12 Coordination Council urges your support for this legislation. In just a few moments, you will hear from Dr. Sarah Ricks, an Instructional Coach from Dickinson Public Schools. Dr. Ricks represents secondary teachers on our Council and chairs the Support and Innovation Subcommittee. She will provide valuable insight into how SB 2263 can foster innovation and directly support educators in our state.

Before you hear from Dr. Ricks, I would like to take a moment to highlight the key strengths of this bill:

1. **Leveraging In-State Talent** – Rather than relying on costly external consultants, SB 2263 capitalizes on the expertise and creativity already present within North Dakota's schools. Our educators are best equipped to develop innovative solutions tailored to their unique challenges.
2. **Providing Targeted Funding** – With a shortage of substitute teachers, this bill allows schools to fund teacher-led innovation outside of their regular duties, ensuring meaningful progress without disrupting classrooms.

Simply put, SB 2263 is a practical, cost-effective solution that empowers educators to drive positive change without imposing undue financial burdens on individual schools or our state budget.

Once enacted, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction will collaborate with schools receiving funding, ensuring accountability and measurable outcomes. I am confident that this bill will lead to meaningful improvements in our schools.

I respectfully ask for your support of SB 2263, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you.



SB 2263

Testimony- In Favor

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, my name is Sarah Ricks, I am a resident of Dickinson, North Dakota, and I am in favor of this bill. I have the privilege of working as an educator at Dickinson Middle School and I am the current chair of the Support and Innovation subcommittee of the K12 Coordination Council. To help you understand why I am in favor of this bill, I'd like to give you some context on its origins.

As the support and innovation subcommittee, we were asked to answer the question, "How can schools prepare tomorrow's workforce?" So of course, we first thought to identify the skills students will need for tomorrow's workforce. We did a literature review and conversed with experts in career and technological education. We discovered that the skills needed by students are already very much present in state-created frameworks such as the Learning Continuum, the Profile of Graduate, the Choice Ready framework, and the North Dakota Career Ready Practices. We then asked ourselves, "How can we know if students are mastering the skills they need for tomorrow's workforce?" The Learning Continuum seemed to offer an obvious answer especially because the century code allows districts to create a mastery framework aligned to the learning continuum in lieu of traditional graduation requirements. So, if schools were using a mastery framework to measure progress toward those skills, then we would know if students were prepared for the workforce, or not. However, we found that schools are not using mastery frameworks. So, we could get a general sense by looking at Choice Ready numbers, but we wouldn't be able to see skill by skill. Therefore, the next obvious question was, "Why not? Why aren't schools taking advantage of this mastery framework opportunity?"

To answer this question, we spoke with school leaders and other stakeholders, as well as individuals involved in the Personalized Learning Network. Through these conversations, we identified key elements needed to drive educational innovation in the area of personalized learning. We also identified an important barrier schools were facing. You can see these key elements in the attached infographic. We start with the first element, a reason to change. We all know we want our students to be successful in the future. Next, we need standards that define what it is we want students to learn. These are provided by the state in the form of content standards and the learning continuum. Another needed element is leadership from individuals at all levels of the educational system who are willing to push the work forward, and we have many wonderful people working in education in our state. We also need a culture of risk which previous legislatures have endeavored to encourage by opening the doors of policy to new ideas. The last element is time. We heard again and again from educational leaders that this element of time is a barrier for them in moving innovative work forward in their schools.

Teams of administrators and teacher leaders need time together to do the deep work it takes to develop a mastery framework and shape what personalized learning looks like for their school and their community. Right now, organizations in the state offer support for schools trying to do this work in the form of innovation academies and the personalized learning network. In order to take advantage of these opportunities, schools must either pull their best and brightest out of the classroom on student contact days to do this work, or they must ask their teacher-leaders to volunteer many many hours of their own time outside of the school week and school year. Neither lends itself to moving this big, important work forward in an efficient and timely manner. One requires sacrificing student experience, the other burdens teachers with an additional unpaid workload. The added challenge of a substitute teacher shortage frequently makes the option of taking a teacher out of their classroom untenable.

This bill is an effort to remove time as a barrier for schools that want to provide innovative and personalized learning for their students. The bill provides grant dollars for schools to buy time from their teacher leaders outside of their contracted days to do the heavy but impactful work needed to create and implement mastery frameworks. All mastery frameworks and implementation models created through this grant process would be required to be shared openly with other North Dakota schools- offering a supportive network and a pathway for them to follow.

This grant program has several advantages. First, it is targeted. The dollars are only to be used to develop mastery frameworks and implementation models. Because mastery frameworks are only useful in a personalized, competency-based system, this ensures that only schools that want to grow in that direction will have access to the dollars. In fact, the grant prioritizes schools that have shown they are serious about personalized learning. Second, there is no opportunity for waste. Dollars cannot be used to pay for travel or materials. This is an investment in human capital that we already have here in North Dakota working with North Dakota's students. These dollars will not be going to outside contractors or agencies. Third, accountability is built into the grant with the requirement that schools share their finished products as models to be used throughout the state. Fourth, this is low-stakes, high-reward. For \$500,000 we can support at least 20 school teams in doing high-quality work to transform educational experiences for kids across our state. If 20 schools from diverse communities with diverse educational needs can create mastery frameworks that work in their setting, then all schools will be able to see how personalized learning might work for them. In other words, this grant program offers an opportunity to systematize innovative, personalized education while still maintaining local control.

Previous state legislators and state agencies have spent years laying the groundwork for personalized, competency-based education for all students in North Dakota. This bill removes the barrier of time so that the right people can do the right work to take the next steps toward enacting that vision.

Thank you.

2025 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

Workforce Development Committee Fort Lincoln Room, State Capitol

SB 2263
2/6/2025

A BILL for an Act to provide an appropriation for mastery framework training grants.
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10:50 a.m. Chairman Wobbema called the meeting to order.

Members Present: Chairman Wobbema, Vice-Chairman Axtman, Senator Boschee, Senator Larson, Senator Powers.

Discussion Topics:

- Mastery framework implementation in schools
- Liaison with the school
- Diverse student needs
- Time limitations
- Funding sufficiency

10:57 a.m. Ann Ellefson, Director of Academic Support with the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, answered committee questions.

11:35 a.m. Senator Larson moved a Do Not Pass.

11:35 a.m. Senator Axtman seconded.

Senators	Vote
Senator Mike Wobbema	Y
Senator Michelle Axtman	Y
Senator Josh Boschee	N
Senator Diane Larson	Y
Senator Michelle Powers	Y

Motion passed 4-1-0.

Chairman Wobbema will carry the bill.

11:36 p.m. Chairman Wobbema closed the hearing.

Andrew Ficek, Committee Clerk

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE
SB 2263 ([25.0582.02000](#))

Workforce Development Committee (Sen. Wobbema, Chairman) recommends **DO NOT PASS** (4 YEAS, 1 NAY, 0 ABSENT AND NOT VOTING). SB 2263 was placed on the Eleventh order on the calendar. This bill does not affect workforce development.