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## EDUCATION POLICY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, February 23, 2022  
Roughrider Room, State Capitol  
Bismarck, North Dakota

Senator Erin Oban, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**Members present:** Senators Erin Oban, David A. Clemens\*, Cole Conley, Diane Larson, Richard Marcellais, Michael A. Wobbema; Representatives LaurieBeth Hager\*, Patrick Hatlestad, Pat D. Heinert, Donald Longmuir, Andrew Marschall\*, David Monson, David Richter, Cynthia Schreiber-Beck\*

**Members absent:** Senators Jay R. Elkin, Doug Larsen; Representative Jeff A. Hoverson

**Others present:** Senator Donald Schaible, Mott, member of the Legislative Management  
See [Appendix A](#) for additional persons present.

*\*Attended remotely*

**It was moved by Representative Hatlestad, seconded by Representative Monson, and carried on a voice vote that the minutes of the December 13, 2021, meeting be approved as distributed.**

### COMPETENCY-BASED LEARNING AND INNOVATIVE EDUCATION STUDY

Mr. Luke Schaefer, Executive Director, Central Regional Education Association, presented an overview ([Appendix B](#)) of North Dakota Full-Service Community Schools (NDFSCS), partnerships, and the benefits and challenges of the NDFSCS model. He noted:

- The United States Department of Education awarded a 5-year grant to Nexus-PATH Family Healing (Nexus), a nonprofit organization providing community-based services for youth and families to build, sustain, and expand a North Dakota consortium for full-service community schools.
- A full-service community school is a school that collaborates with community partners to remove barriers to learning, provide equity to all students, and meet both the educational and noneducational needs of students by providing programs and services to schools and families, including health care and dental services.
- Approximately 20 community partners work to provide eight types of services in schools through the NDFSCS project.

In response to questions from the committee, Mr. Schaefer noted:

- The Ronald McDonald Care Mobile program, which provides mobile dental services to underserved communities, is a community partner with NDFSCS; and
- The NDFSCS model engages and encourages parents to allow community partners to provide needed services to students.

Ms. Heather Simonich, Operations Director, Nexus-PATH Family Healing, presented testimony ([Appendix C](#)) regarding services provided by Nexus as a community partner with NDFSCS, including the benefits and challenges of participation. She noted:

- Nexus provides a variety of services to schools through the NDFSCS project, including placing social workers in schools, to help address the targeted case management needs of the schools.
- Community partner services provided by Nexus primarily are funded through Medicaid, donations, and grants.

- The school district is responsible only for 25 percent of the cost of the placement and services provided by a social worker to a partner school.

In response to a question from the committee, Ms. Simonich noted the average annual cost of hiring and placing a full-time licensed social worker in a school to provide targeted case management services ranges from \$100,000 to \$120,000.

Ms. Liz Tofteland, eNurse, Central Regional Education Association, and Ms. Sheila Freed, eSchool Health Director, Avel eCare, presented testimony ([Appendix D](#)) regarding services provided by Avel eCare as a community partner with NDFSCS, including the benefits and challenges of participation. Ms. Tofteland noted the North Dakota eCare School Health Program provides schools with all-day access to nurses through live audio and video connections.

Ms. Tofteland and Ms. Freed presented a virtual demonstration of the services provided in a typical eCare visit.

Ms. Jolene Garty, Director of Student Services, South East Education Cooperative, presented testimony ([Appendix E](#)) regarding services provided by North Dakota Reading and Math Corps as a community partner with NDFSCS, including the benefits and challenges of participation. She noted North Dakota Reading Corps tutors work in the school building to ensure students are proficient readers by the third grade.

### **COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE STUDY**

Ms. Kirsten Baesler, Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Mr. Jerry Standifer, Principal, Harwood Elementary School, presented an update ([Appendix F](#)) on work being completed by advisory cabinet stakeholder groups on the compulsory school attendance study.

Mr. Standifer noted:

- Chronically absent students represented 15 percent of the statewide student body during the 2020-21 school year and accounted for almost one-half of all absences; and
- A chronically absent student means a student who was absent for more than 10 percent of the school year.

Mr. Standifer also noted the advisory cabinet stakeholder group recommended:

- Changing the compulsory attendance requirement to begin at age 6;
- Adopting a uniform definition of chronic absenteeism;
- Funding a full-time equivalent position in the Department of Public Instruction to monitor, support, and reduce statewide chronic absenteeism; and
- Collaborating with local education associations and law enforcement offices to develop better accountability for compulsory attendance.

In response to questions from the committee, Mr. Standifer noted:

- Students chronically absent for 1 year are at higher risk of dropping out of school and those who are chronically absent for at least 3 years have a graduation expectancy of less than 20 percent; and
- Students who enroll in school at age 6 are required to follow the attendance protocols, but a student who is 6 years old may be withdrawn from school and enrolled the following year.

### **REPORT**

Mr. Stan Schauer, Director of Assessment, Department of Public Instruction, presented a report ([Appendix G](#)) required under North Dakota Century Code Section 15.1-21-10 regarding the compilation of test scores of a test aligned to the state content standards in reading and mathematics. He noted the 2020-21 assessment reflected an overall student proficiency of 42 percent in English language arts and 38 percent in mathematics across all grade levels.

### **ALTERNATIVE TEACHER LICENSURE STUDY**

Mr. Nick Archuleta, President, North Dakota United, and Mr. Dean Mitchell, Consultant, DFM Research, presented testimony (Appendices [H](#), [I](#), and [J](#)) regarding survey results and data on teacher retention in relation to the committee's study of alternative teacher licensure. Mr. Archuleta noted approximately 80 percent of North Dakota teachers are members of North Dakota United.

Mr. Mitchell noted, as of the January 2022 survey results, only 25 percent of responding North Dakota United members indicated they have not considered leaving the teaching profession and only 41 percent of those responding indicated they intend on retiring from the teaching profession at the end of their career.

Dr. Becky Pitkin, Executive Director, and Ms. Mari Riehl, Assistant Director, Education Standards and Practices Board, presented testimony ([Appendix K](#)) regarding alternative teacher licensure programs and recruitment and retention of teachers in the state. Dr. Pitkin noted:

- Alternative teacher licenses were developed in response to a national teacher shortage, and there are two alternative teacher licensure programs in North Dakota.
- In addition to the two alternative teacher licensure programs, an individual may receive a permit to teach certain subjects without a 4-year degree if the individual meets established requirements, including possessing at least 4,000 hours of relevant work experience over the preceding 5 years in the subject area to be taught.
- The programs are accomplishing the desired objectives of addressing teacher shortages and retention issues.

In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Riehl noted:

- Some school districts are covering nontraditional expenses and paying stipends to employ and retain both existing teachers in the district and student teachers upon becoming licensed; and
- The Education Standards and Practices Board is discussing eliminating certain testing requirements necessary for entrance to education programs.

The committee requested additional information from the Education Standards and Practices Board regarding:

- The use of funds for the North Dakota Teacher Support System mentor program;
- The number of licensed teachers in the state actively teaching;
- The number of individuals who graduate with an education degree and become teachers in the state; and
- The number of individuals employed in schools, other than active teachers, who have a teaching license.

The committee noted school districts also may participate in the North Dakota Career Builders program, which provides matching funds to help businesses recruit and retain employees through scholarships or loan forgiveness.

Dr. Penny Schwinn, Education Commissioner, Tennessee, presented an overview ([Appendix L](#)) of the Tennessee Teacher Residency Program, including the manner in which the program is addressing teacher shortages. She noted:

- Tennessee's program became the first registered apprenticeship program for teaching approved by the United States Department of Labor.
- The program supports 650 future educators through the use of the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund and state funds.
- The funds are used to pay for the college degree and the credentialing of future teachers.
- Tennessee is working with the state's Department of Labor to fund the apprenticeship program moving forward.

In response to questions from the committee, Dr. Schwinn noted:

- Over 90 percent of the first cohort of teachers from Tennessee's program were retained;
- The apprentice teacher to be placed and the funding to be used for the placement is approved by the state, but the school district has discretion on where to place a teacher within the district; and
- A master teacher supporting a teacher in the apprenticeship program receives additional compensation.

Ms. Baesler noted the Department of Public Instruction worked with Minot State University to use special education funds to create scholarships for 70 special education paraprofessionals to continue their education and become licensed teachers. She noted the department is considering expanding the program to include individuals who want to become elementary education teachers and is considering seeking approval from the Department of Labor for funding for an apprentice program similar to Tennessee's program.

The committee requested information from the Department of Public Instruction regarding the time commitment for coursework in the Minot State University program.

No further business appearing, Chairman Oban adjourned the meeting at 4:05 p.m.

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Dustin Assel  
Counsel

ATTACH:12