Using Federal Funds to Support Career and Workforce Readiness

Melanie Kathrein, Dickinson Public School District
Laurie Matzke, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
Patrick Rooney and Todd Stephenson, U.S. Department of Education

U.S. Department of Education

National ESEA Conference
February 10, 2026

Agenda

- Overview of how Perkins V & the ESEA support career and workforce readiness
- How North Dakota focuses on career and workforce readiness
    - Lessons from the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction
    - The view on the ground at Dickinson Public Schools
- Wrap-Up

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Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century (Perkins V)

The Purposes of Title I & Perkins V

Title I

- The purpose of Title I is to provide all children significant opportunity to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps.

Perkins V

- The purpose of Perkins V is to expand opportunities for every student to explore and follow a career pathway to earn credentials of value and meet local workforce needs.

What is CTE?

A sequence of courses that—

- Provides academic content and technical knowledge and skills

- Provides technical skill proficiency

- Includes competency-based, work-based, or other applied learning

- Coordinates between secondary and postsecondary levels

- May include career exploration

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Advancing Opportunity for All CTE Students

- **Use of Funds:**
  - Recruitment of special populations to enroll in CTE programs.
  - Reduce or eliminate out-of-pocket expenses for special populations enrolled in CTE programs.
- **Comprehensive Local Needs Assessments (CLNAs)**
  - Evaluate the performance of students, including special populations, compared to state determined levels of performance (SDPLs).
  - Evaluate progress toward ensuring equal access to high-quality CTE programs.
- **State Plans and Local Applications**
  - Must describe how they are providing equal access, preparing special populations for high-skill, high-wage, or in-demand occupations, addressing disparities or gaps in performance, and ensuring that members of special populations are not being discriminated against.

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Perkins V State Set-Asides

State Administration

- Not more than 5% of grant or $250,000 (whichever is greater)

State Leadership

- Not more than 10% of grant
- Non-traditional - between $60,000 and $150,000
- State Institutions - not more than 2% of grant
- Special Populations Recruitment - .1% of State Leadership funds or $50,000 (whichever is lesser of grant)

Local Use of Funds

- Not less than 85% of grant
- State determines secondary/postsecondary split

Reserve

- Not more than 15% of the 85%
- Flexibility to allocate funds

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Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment

Section 134(c)(1)(A-B) of Perkins V

- To be eligible to receive financial assistance, an eligible recipient shall—

  (A) Conduct a comprehensive local needs assessment (CLNA) related to career and technical education and include the results of the needs assessment in the local application submitted for funding; and

  (B) Not less than once every 2 years, update such CLNA

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Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment

Student performance on the indicators, including performance of special populations and subgroups

Whether programs are of sufficient size, scope, and quality to meet the needs of all students and are meeting labor market needs

Progress toward the implementation of CTE programs and programs of study

How the eligible recipient will improve recruitment, retention, and training of CTE professionals, including underrepresented groups

Progress toward implementation of equal access to high-quality CTE courses and programs of study, for all students

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Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment

Instruction & Teaching Methods

Career Development
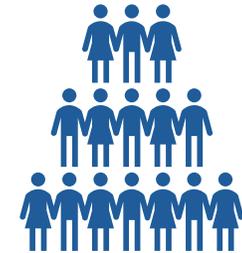
Facilities & Equipment

Business & Community Partnerships

Work-Based Learning

CTSOs
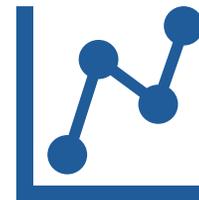
Data & Program Improvement

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ESEA Support for CTE

ESEA Support for CTE

Coordination

- State and local plans for ESEA programs were developed in coordination with Perkins
- Challenging State academic standards align with State's CTE standards
- Program-specific support

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ESEA Support for CTE

Title I-A

- Schoolwide programs (over 80 percent of Title I schools): use Title I funds (or consolidated funds) for CTE programs
- Schools identified for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI): LEA includes access to CTE as part of needs assessment of CSI schools

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ESEA Support for CTE

Title I-A

- Direct Student Services: pay for a student's CTE coursework that is not available at the student's school

- State's committee of practitioners includes CTE educators

ESEA Support for CTE

Title I-D

- Provide CTE for children and youth in State-operated neglected or delinquent facilities (Subpart 1) and in local correctional facilities and community day programs (Subpart 2), including access to advanced coursework for CTE

- As part of transition services (Subpart 1)

- Supports activities for at-risk children and youth in an LEA (Subpart 2)

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ESEA Support for CTE

Title II-A

- State-level funds: support integration of CTE content into academic instructional practice

- LEA-level funds: integrate rigorous academic content, CTE, and work-based learning in professional development.

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ESEA Support for CTE

Title IV-B

- Provides opportunity for a community to establish or expand activities in community learning centers, including CTE activities

- Funds may support Perkins aligned activities

- Support student engagement, including with CTE

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North Dakota Department of Public Instruction

Supporting Career and Workforce Readiness

- The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) and the North Dakota Department of Career and Technical Education (NDCTE) share in the responsibility for ensuring students are prepared for success after graduation.

- Highlighted today are several initiatives that support career and workforce readiness in our state.

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Initiatives Highlights:

- Choice Ready Framework

- Grow Your Own Programs

- MetaMetrics Growth Planner

- CareerViewXR

- Next Generation Workforce

- Career Ready Practices
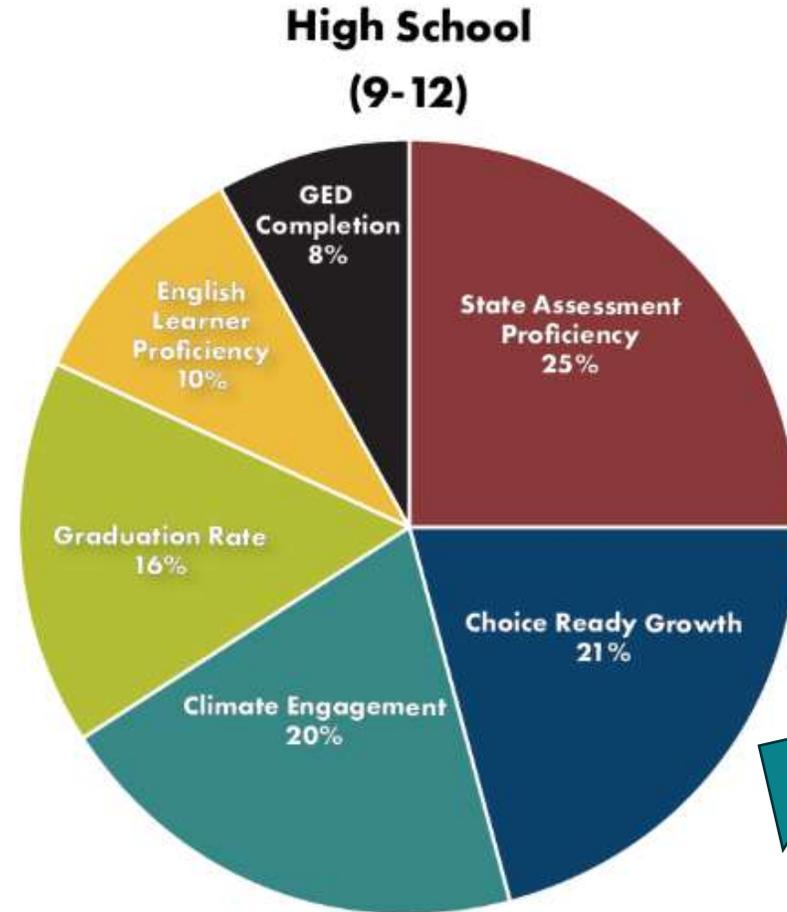
U.S. Department of Education

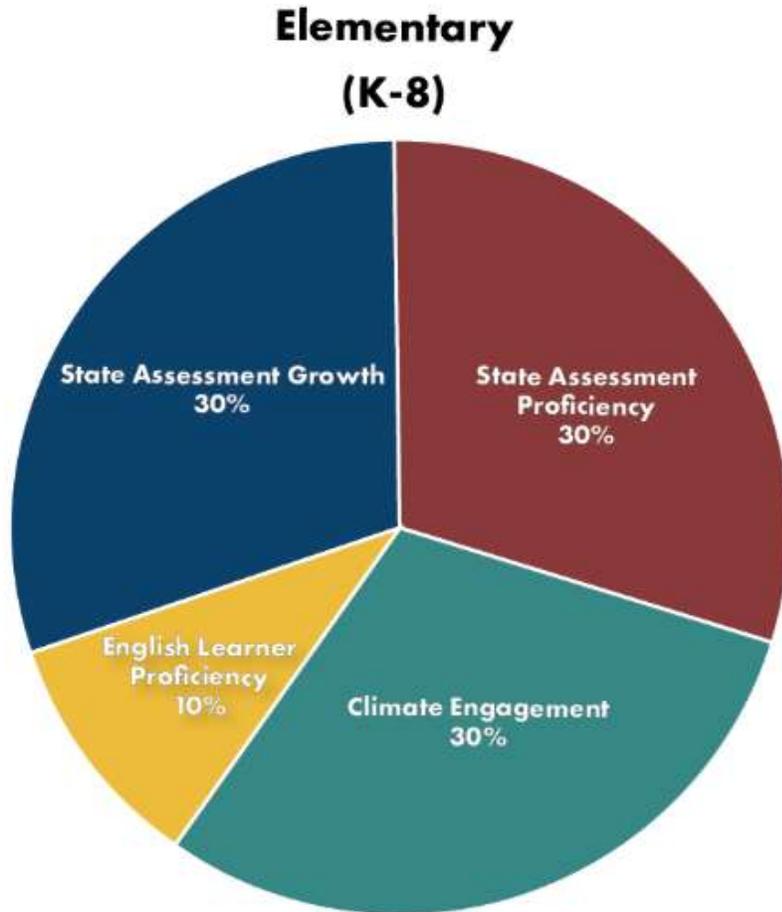# Choice Ready Framework

- Choice Ready is a key metric in the North Dakota accountability system and part of our statewide PK-12 strategic vision.

- Our vision states, "All students will graduate Choice Ready with the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be successful."

- Choice Ready growth accounts for 21% of each high schools ESSA accountability measurement.

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Student Growth Model

Under ESSA, North Dakota has a growth model at the elementary and high school levels.

Elementary (K-8)
- State Assessment Growth 30%
- State Assessment Proficiency 30%
- Climate Engagement 30%
- English Learner Proficiency 10%

High School (9-12)
- GED Completion 8%
- State Assessment Proficiency 25%
- English Learner Proficiency 10%
- Choice Ready Growth 21%
- Graduation Rate 16%
- Climate Engagement 20%

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NORTH DAKOTA CHOICE READY

The North Dakota *CHOICE READY* framework is a tool to assist educators to ensure all students successfully depart high school possessing the **ESSENTIAL SKILLS** necessary to be ready for life. The journey begins by ensuring students leave having the **ESSENTIAL SKILLS** to be successful for whichever path they choose. Students shall then strive to be **POST-SECONDARY READY, WORKFORCE READY,** and/or **MILITARY READY.**

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Earn a North Dakota high school diploma

Complete a 9-week Career Education Course/Individual Counseling (15.1-21-18), Financial Literacy (15.1-21-21), and pass **ND Civics Test** (15.1-21-27), Computer Science/Cybersecurity Requirement (15.1-21-02.2), and **four or more additional indicators:**

- 25 hours of Community Service
- Two or More Years in Organized Extra-Curricular Activities
- 95% Attendance (not counting school-related absences)
- Successfully Complete a Capstone Project

- Career Exploration Experience
- Successfully Complete an Online Learning Course
- Two or More Years in Organized Co-Curricular Activities
- Demonstrate Competency in 21st Century Skills
- Multicultural Awareness

Students shall then complete two or more of the *CHOICE READY* components below.

POST-SECONDARY READY

Complete a Four-Year Rolling Career Plan, and earn a 2.8 GPA or greater, and complete one academic indicator set below.

ACT / SAT minimum or subsections scores or equivalent ND A+ score.

ACT English – 18*

ACT Reading – 22*   SAT Reading/Writing – 480*

ACT Math – 21*   SAT Math – 530*

*ND A+ equivalent score will be added once available

or

Two or more additional indicators:

- Advanced Placement Course (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)
- Dual Credit Course (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)
- Algebra II (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)
- Advanced Placement Exam (3+)
- International Baccalaureate Exam (4+)
- 3.0 GPA in core course requirement for NDUS admission
- CREAM (Eng./Math) Course (70% or greater)
- Complete three Fine Arts Courses (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)

WORKFORCE READY

Complete a Four-Year Rolling Career Plan, and complete two or more additional indicators:

- Complete three CTE courses or more (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)
- Complete Career Ready Practices (3.0)
- Dual Credit Course (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)
- WorkKeys (Gold or Silver)
- Technical Assessment/Industry Credential
- Workplace Learning Experience (40 hrs)
- Work-based Learning Experience (Perkins V) (40 hrs)
- ND A+ (Reading/Math) Mid-point Level 2 or higher (Math 1000) (ELA 975)
- Complete three World Language Courses (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)
- Complete 2 credits of teaching-related coursework or 2 semesters of Educators Rising

MILITARY READY

Complete a Four-Year Rolling Career Plan and obtain an ASVAB score of 31 or greater (as determined by branch), or acceptance into the military.

Quality Citizenship (No Expulsions/Suspensions)

Physically Fit (Successfully complete required PE courses (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2))

and

Complete **two or more** additional indicators from the Post-Secondary or Workforce options

or
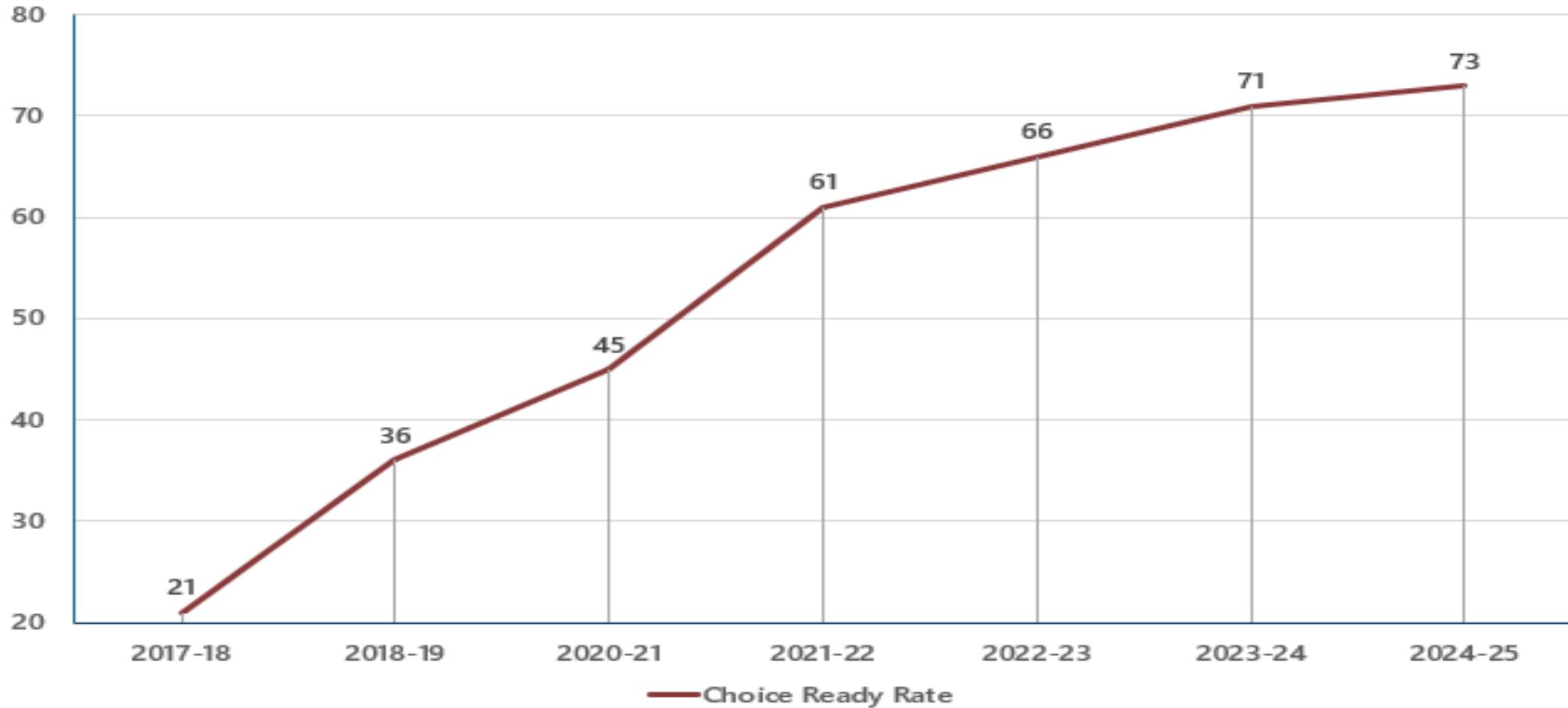
Complete two credits of JROTC or Civil Air Patrol

or

Complete **two credits** in the Military Pathway Program, selecting from the following 1/2 credit courses:

- Intro to Military Careers
- Military Health & Fitness
- ASVAB Essentials
- Career Foundations in Military Leadership
- Military Leadership Capstone

Revised October 2025

It Worked Like It Was Designed

Choice Ready Rate

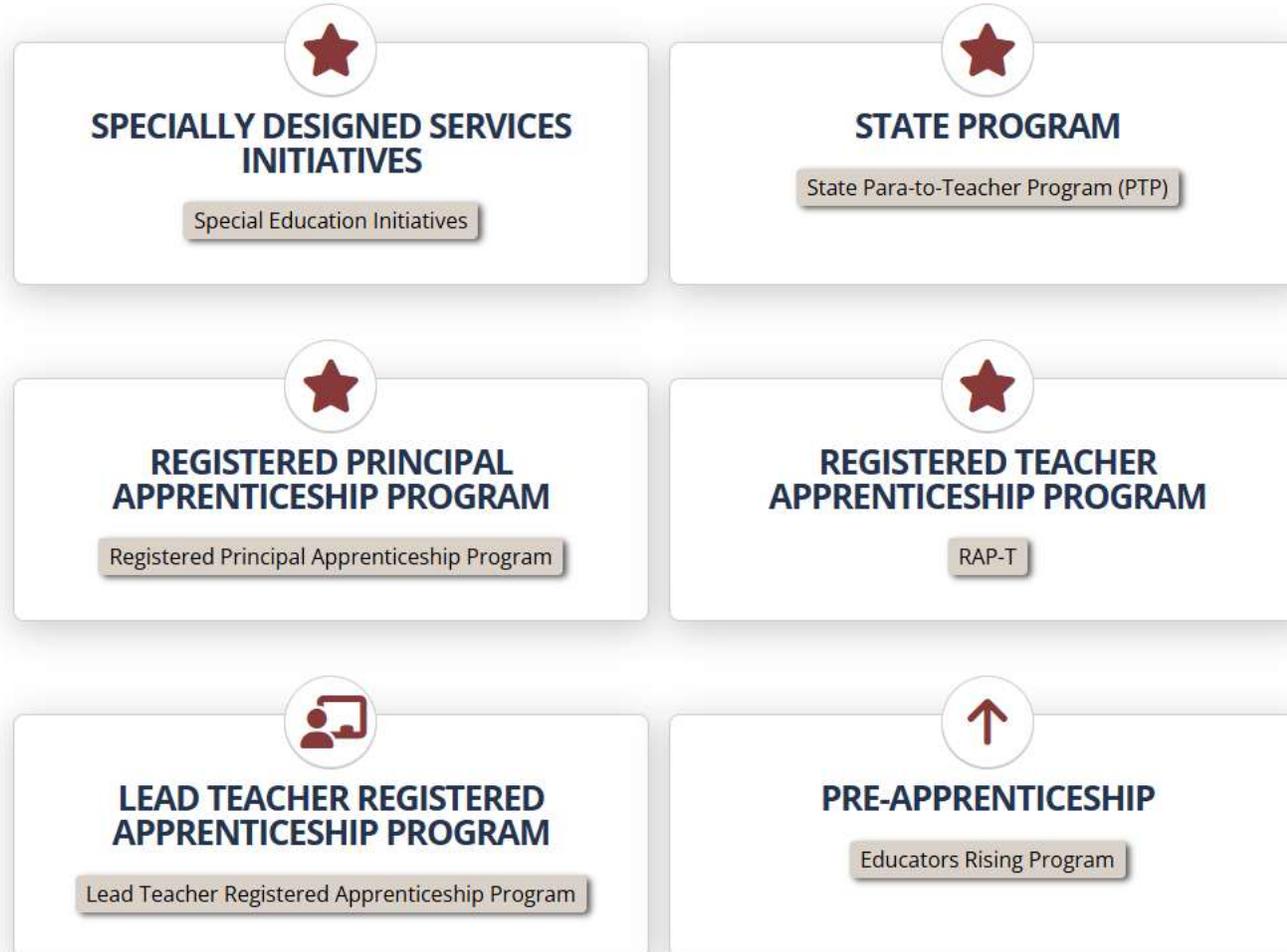| Year	Rate
2017-18	21
2018-19	36
2020-21	45
2021-22	61
2022-23	66
2023-24	71
2024-25	73

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Choice Ready Benefits

- Youth to think and plan for their future.

- Schools to fare well in accountability determinations.

- Students to graduate high school Choice Ready for their chosen path or develop a plan to be explored later in life.

- Parents to have their students take credit-bearing courses at a college or university, saving time and money.

- Schools to increase their collaboration with businesses and the community.

- Schools to focus on providing students with a well-rounded education.

- Students to document their high school planning through a Four-Year Rolling Plan.
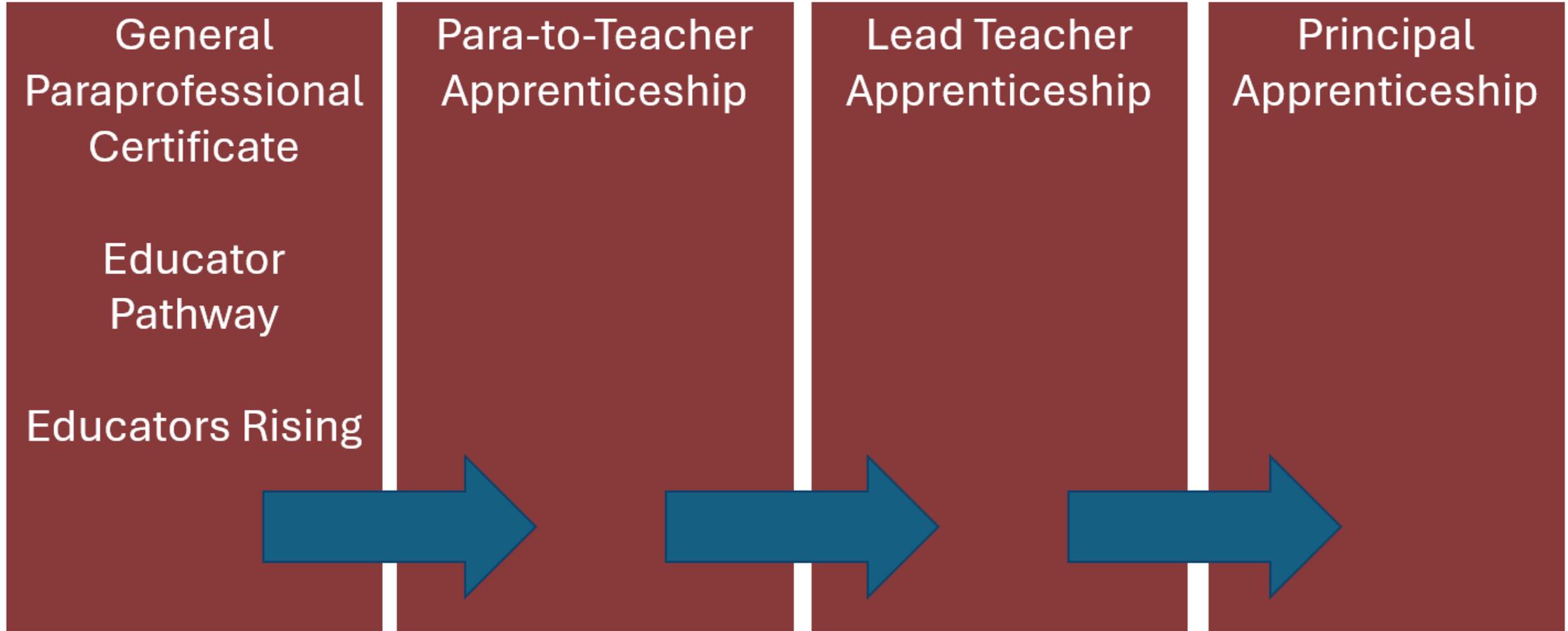
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Grow Your Own Programs

We currently have six GYO programs. These programs have been instrumental in building our workforce and addressing the statewide educator shortage.

SPECIALLY DESIGNED SERVICES INITIATIVES

Special Education Initiatives

STATE PROGRAM

State Para-to-Teacher Program (PTP)

REGISTERED PRINCIPAL APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Registered Principal Apprenticeship Program

REGISTERED TEACHER APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

RAP-T

LEAD TEACHER REGISTERED APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM

Lead Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program

PRE-APPRENTICESHIP

Educators Rising Program

U.S. Department of Educat

A Continuum for Registered Apprenticeships

General Paraprofessional Certificate

Educator Pathway

Educators Rising

Para-to-Teacher Apprenticeship

Lead Teacher Apprenticeship

Principal Apprenticeship

Partnerships: CTE and MetaMetrics

- In North Dakota, Career & Technical Education (CTE) is its own department and is not part of the state education agency. CTE provides students with a website called RUReady that assists with career exploration and building a career profile.

- NDDPI provides students with Lexile and Quantile (LQ) scores (a sub-measure from ND A+ summative and interim scale scores) to assist them in finding resources at their level. This is done in partnership with MetaMetrics, creators of LQ and Pearson.

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MetaMetrics Growth Planner

- NDDPI has expanded its partnership with MetaMetrics to include the MetaMetrics Growth Planner—a tool that helps students understand the reading and math demands of various careers.

- This feature will display a student's current and recommended Lexile and Quantile (LQ) scores for selected careers, along with key information such as:

    - Average salary

    - Required education

    - Job outlook

    - LQ expectation zones

    - Projected and recommended growth

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Combining Career Exploration and Growth Planning

MetaMetrics provides the only scalable, student-to-career skills matching using established metrics.

ND Students receive **Lexile & Quantile** measures reported on the state Summative Assessment

The Growth Planner **projects** students' Lexile & Quantile measures **upon graduation**

Students explore careers to **better understand the reading/math demands** needed to achieve their goals
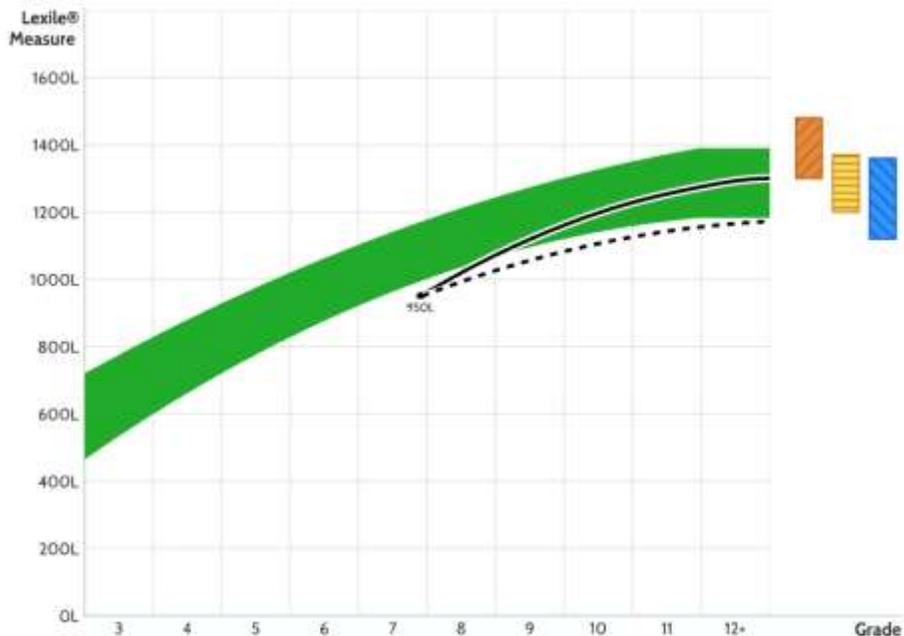
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MetaMetrics Growth Planners – Lexile (Reading)

WHAT IS YOUR PROJECTED GROWTH?

To begin, click on the Add/Edit Measure(s) button to enter your Lexile measures from statewide annual assessments.

Add/Edit a Lexile Measure

Lexile® Measure

Grade

- Pathway for Reading Readiness
- Lexile Measure
- Estimated Growth Path
- Recommended Growth Path
- University Readiness Range
- Community College Readiness Range
- Workplace Readiness Range

- Three targets:

  - **University Readiness Range:** The University Readiness Range describes the reading demand of typical materials that a student will be expected to read during the first two years of enrollment at a 4-year university.

  - **Community College Readiness Range:** The Community College Readiness Range describes the reading demand of typical materials that a student will be expected to read while enrolled in a community college program.

  - **Workplace Readiness Range:** The Workplace Readiness Range describes the reading demand of typical materials that an individual will be expected to read just prior to entering a career and just after entering a career.

CareerViewXR

- CareerViewXR is a North Dakota-based company.

- This initiative led by North Dakota Career and Technical Education is designed to close the career awareness gap.

- Now every K–12 student in North Dakota, including public, private and homeschool, will have access to experience immersive, 360-degree career journeys, from wind farms and hospitals to construction sites and bakeries, without ever leaving the classroom.

- North Dakota is the first state in the country to implement immersive career exploration technology accessible across all grades.

U.S. Department of Education

Next Generation Workforce

- NDDPI, in partnership with Arizona State University (ASU), is exploring ASU's Next Education Workforce model, which reimagines how educators collaborate and deliver instruction through team-based staffing. The approach features lead teachers guiding educator teams that share responsibility for student support, instructional planning, and delivery.

- Last fall, a group of North Dakota educators visited ASU to see the model in action. ASU's communications team published a story on North Dakota's experience.

Career Ready Practices

- North Dakota's Career Ready Practices focus on equipping students with essential skills for the workforce, emphasizing Work-Based Learning (WBL) and soft skills development.

- These practices are aligned with the Perkins V definition and aim to enhance students' employability through practical experiences and skill assessments.

- North Dakota offers resources and training for educators to effectively implement and assess Career Ready Practices.

- North Dakota has identified WBL as the key measure of quality for secondary NDCTE programs.

U.S. Department of Education

- The information I've shared today is available on our department websites:
  - 🌐 [NDDPI](#)

  - 🌐 [NDCTE](#)

Dickinson Public Schools, North Dakota

CAREER AND WORKFORCE READY

Melanie Kathrein, Dickinson Public Schools

DICKINSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

ABOUT US

Dickinson Public Schools serves a diverse and growing community in southwest North Dakota. Rooted in tradition and driven by innovation, we are committed to SUCCESS FOR ALL—preparing every student for life beyond graduation through strong academics, career pathways, and meaningful choice.
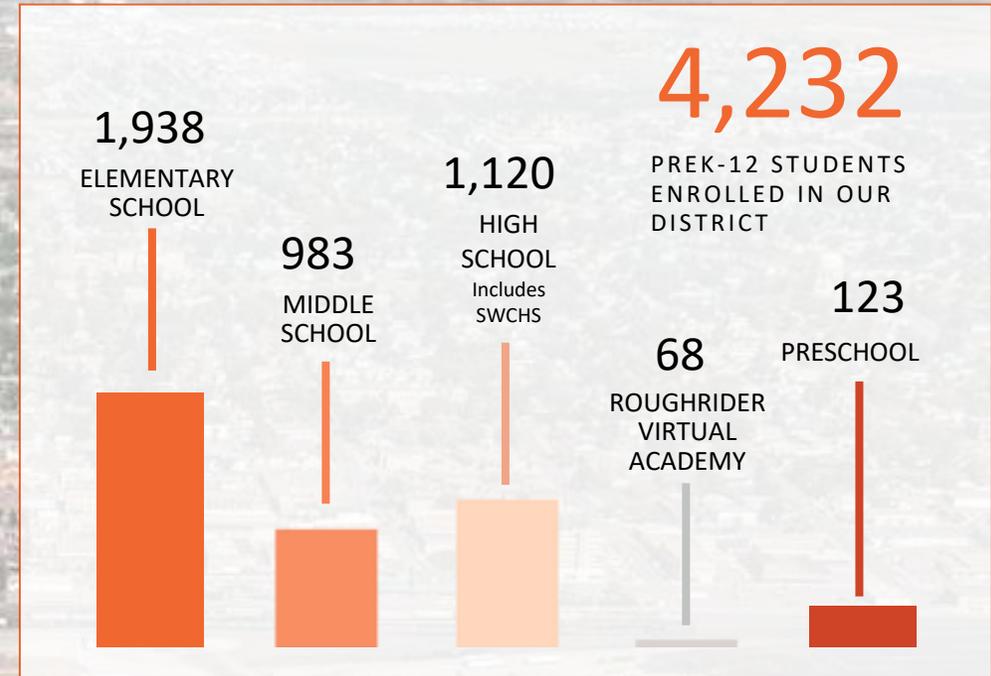
Location: Dickinson, North Dakota

Economy: Energy, healthcare, education, agriculture, and skilled trades
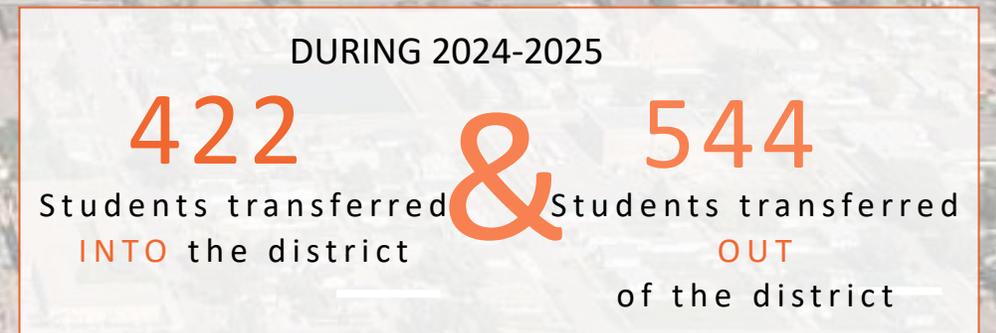
STUDENT ENROLLMENT

1,938 ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

983 MIDDLE SCHOOL

1,120 HIGH SCHOOL Includes SWCHS

4,232 PREK-12 STUDENTS ENROLLED IN OUR DISTRICT

68 ROUGHRIDER VIRTUAL ACADEMY

123 PRESCHOOL

INWARD/OUTWARD MIGRATION

DURING 2024-2025

422 Students transferred INTO the district

&

544 Students transferred OUT of the district

SUCCESS FOR ALL

Dickinson PUBLIC SCHOOLS
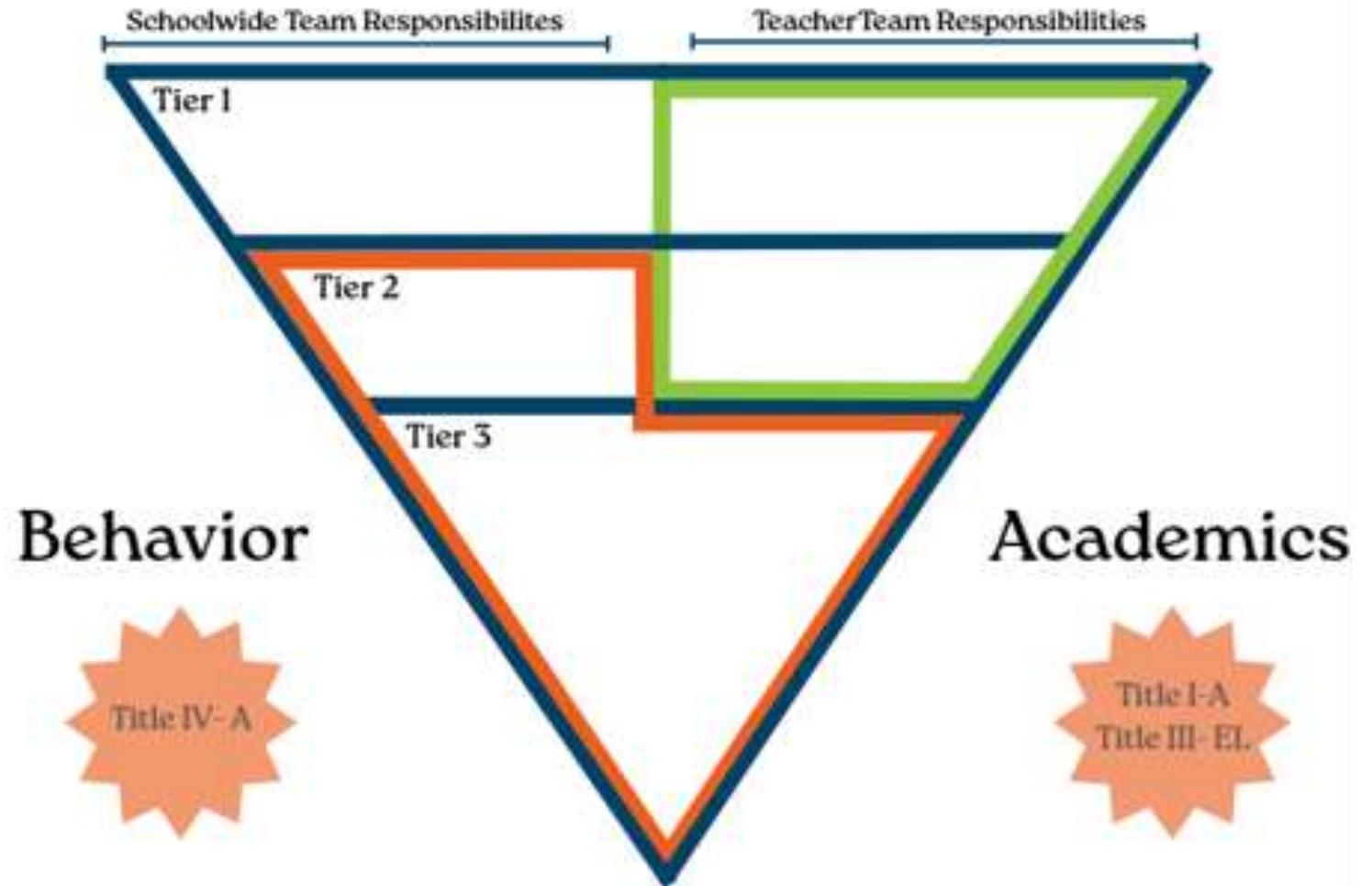
TEACHER PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

- Research consistently finds that teacher quality is the single most influential school-based factor affecting student academic achievement.

- Approximately 13% of our teachers are hired each year
  - The number of teachers coming into the professional without being fully licensed is increasing.

- **Title IIA** - used to provide supplemental activities that strengthen the quality and effectiveness of teachers, principals and other school leaders.

CHOICE RE

Begins in Kindergarten

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Schoolwide Team Responsibilites | TeacherTeam Responsibilities

Tier 1
Tier 2
Tier 3

Behavior — Title IV-A

Academics — Title I-A, Title III-EL.

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NDDPI
NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

North Dakota **Choice Ready**

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- Successfully Complete a Capstone Project
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Students shall then complete two or more of the *CHOICE READY* components below.

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- Complete Career Ready Practices (3.0)
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Complete **two or more** additional indicators from the **Post-Secondary** or **Workforce** options

or

Complete two credits of JROTC or Civil Air Patrol

or

Complete **two credits** in the Military Pathway Program, selecting from the following 1/2 credit courses:
- Intro to Military Careers
- ASVAB Essentials
- Career Foundations in Military Leadership
- Military Leadership Capstone
- Military Health & Fitness

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CAREER EXPLORATION

Where future pathways begin

CAREER ACADEMY EXPO

- 1,500 Students

- 75 local and regional businesses representing diverse career fields

- 110 Interactive Booths

- Hands-on career exploration

- Clear alignment with CTE pathways and postsecondary options

CHOICE READY

Post-Secondary Ready

Advanced Course work

↗ Advanced Placement – 7 courses

↗ Dual Credit - 16 courses (7 CTE courses)

University Partnerships

↗ Early Entry – 6 courses (2 CTE courses)

Coming Soon

↗ Pathways to Associate Degrees

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CHOICE READY

Workforce Ready

Complete 3 CTE Courses

Industry Credential

Workplace Learning Experience (40 hours)

↗ Students have real-life work experiences

↗ Apply academic and technical skills

↗ Help develop employability skills

Work-based Learning Experience (40 hours)

↗ Sustained interactions with industry or community professionals in the workplace or simulated environment

↗ Application process

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CTE

Career & Technical Education

14 PROGRAMS

OVER 70 COURSES

1200+ STUDENTS

Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment

↗ Advisory Boards for each program consider student academic achievement, industry needs, employment data, and economic development

↗ Results drive programming decisions
  • Local funding is supplemented by Perkins and industry partners

BUILDING C
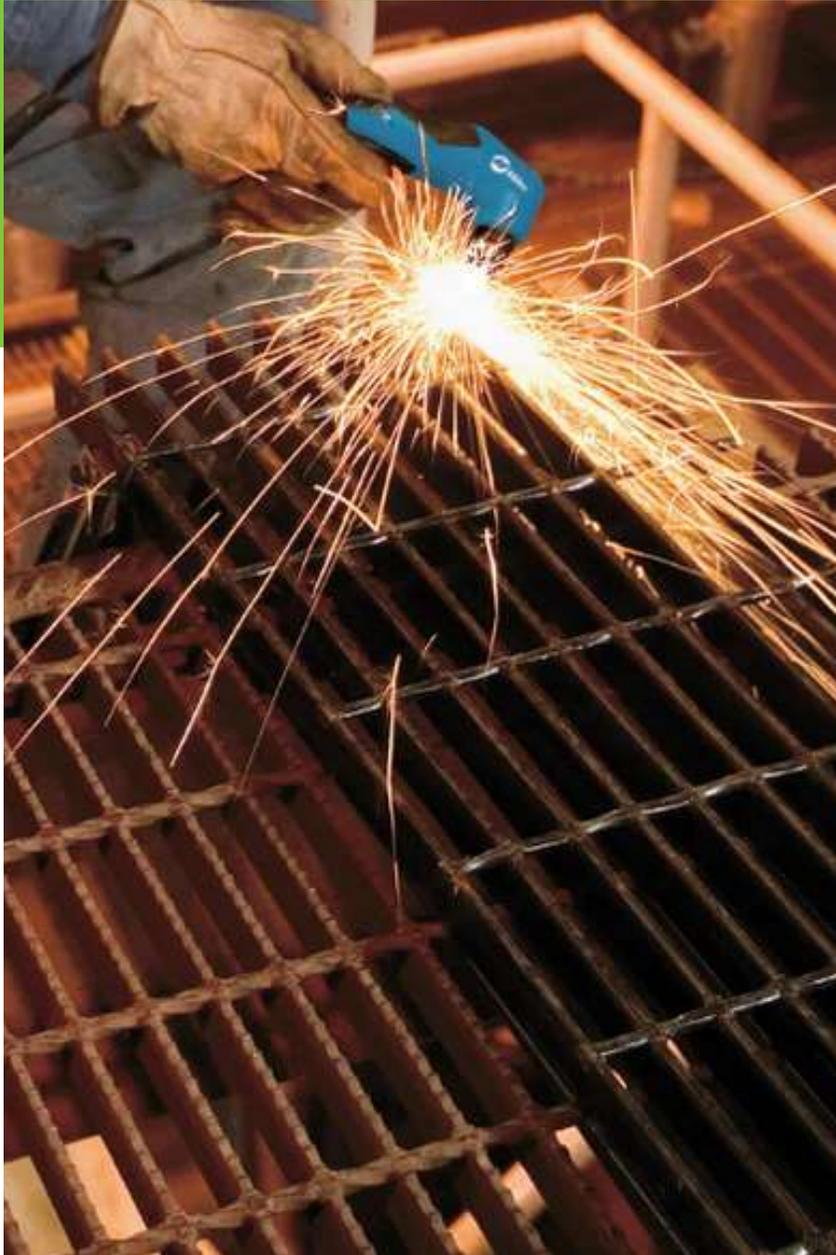
BUILDING B

BUILDING A

SWCTE

PERKINS FUNDING

Helps Drive Innovation

HEAVY EQUIPMENT & CDL SIMULATORS

Provide hands-on learning experiences in a controlled and safe environment

AGRICULTURE-AUTONOMOUS TRACTOR LAB

Cutting edge lab elevates STEM learning through hands-on exploration of autonomous farming technology

WELDING - PLASMA CUTTER

Precise cutting tool used extensively in metal fabrication, automotive repair, and construction

HYDRAULIC TRAINING SIMULATORS

Used in multiple pathways

Dickinson
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

WORK-BASED

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Applications Requirements

↗ One credit in a related CTE Pathway

↗ Good standing with grades, behavior, and attendance

↗ Two recommendations from teachers

Evaluations

↗ ND CTE requires students completing Work-Based Learning Experiences be evaluated using Career Ready Practices

↗ We currently use 6 of the 12 Career Ready Practices identified by ND CTE

#1 LEADER
Score: 4-3-2-1

- Consistency
- Communication Management
- Ethics
- Leadership
- Reliability

Sub Score

Divide by 5

SCORE

#2 COMMUNICATOR
Score: 4-3-2-1

- Active Listening
- Presentation Skills
- Persuasion
- Verbal Communication
- Written & Visual Communication

Sub Score

Divide by 5

SCORE

#3 CRITICAL THINKER
Score: 4-3-2-1

- Analytical Thinking
- Continuous Improvement
- Logical Reasoning
- Problem Solving
- Research Skills

Sub Score

Divide by 5

SCORE

#4 COLLABORATOR
Score: 4-3-2-1

- Conflict Resolution
- Cultural Awareness & Competence
- Networking
- Recognizing & Mitigating Biases
- Teamwork & Collaboration

Sub Score

Divide by 5

SCORE

Score Key:
4=Exceeds Competency
3=Meets Competency
2=Approaching Competency
1=Not Yet Reached Competency

#7 TIMELY MANAGER
Score: 4-3-2-1

- Delegation
- Organization
- Prioritzation
- Task Management
- Understanding the System

Sub Score

Divide by 5

SCORE

#12 SKILLED EMPLOYEE
Score: 4-3-2-1

- Continuous Skill Learning
- Industry-specific Tool Usage
- Math Skills
- Reading & Interpreting
- Technical Problem-Solving

Sub Score

Divide by 5

SCORE

NORTH DAKOTA
Career and Technical Education

Career Ready Practice Rubrics
INDIVIDUAL'S NAME:

2025-2026 Work-Based
Learning Assessment

COMPLETE CRP SCORE

Total of all Sud-Scores

Divide by 30

TOTAL SCORE

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WORK-BASED

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Senior Class Work Based Learning Experiences (Spring)

	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
Goal data	7%	10%	14%	18%	22%	25%
Actual data	7%	14%	16%	32%	42%	
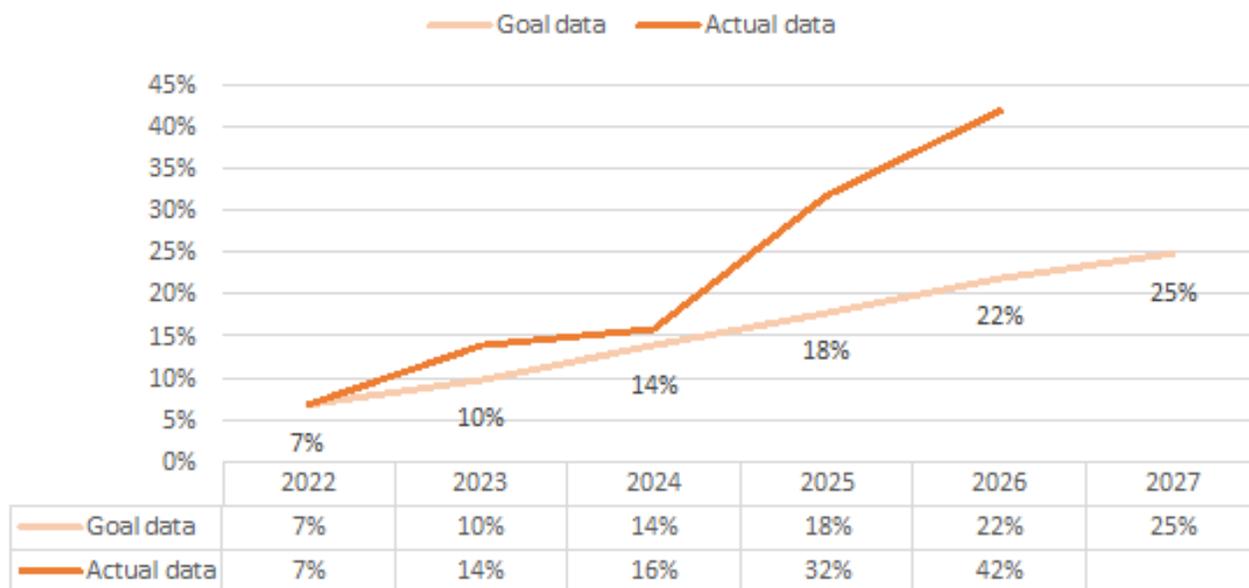
Work Based Learning Enrollment			
	Fall 2026	Spring 2026	Fall 2026 Target
Senior	**52**	**52**	--
Junior	24	54	--
Sophomore	21	25	--

95 Seniors (42%) graduated with WBL experience by the end of the 2025-2026 school year

Fun facts:

- 30 of these students have completed more than one WBL experience
- Currently we have the highest number of internships we have ever had in a semester
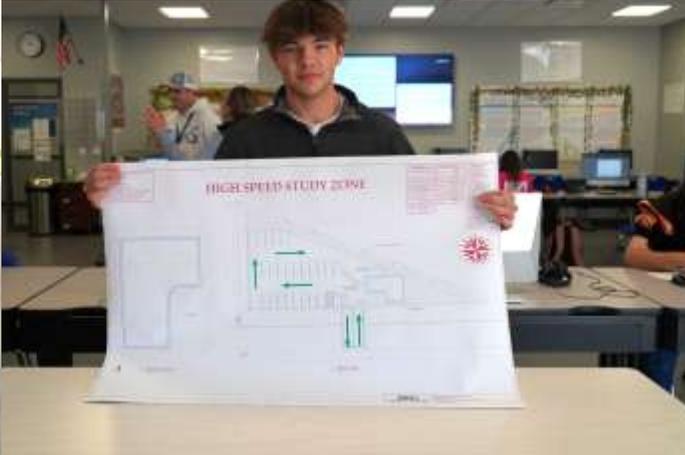
14

WORK-BASED

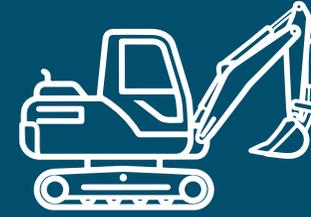## CULINARY II

WORK-BASED

ARCHITECTURE & ENGINEERING II

WORK-BASED

HEALTH CAREERS

WORK-BASED

HEAVY EQUIPMENT

WORK-BASED

TEACHING & EARLY CHILDCARE

WORK-BASED LEARNING

STUDENT IMPACT

Dickinson
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

19

WORK-BASED

Industry Certification	Class/Program
OSHA 10	Construction II, Architecture & Engineering II, Heavy Equipment, CDL, Diesel II
ServeSafe	Culinary II
CNA	CNA
EMR	EMR
Fire I and II	Fire I and II
Dental Assisting, Pharmacy Tech, Direct Support Professional	Health Occupation Experience
Para Educator	Intro to Teaching / Early Childhood
CDL	CDL
Operator I	** Bismarck State College
Mechatronics Tech I	** Bismarck State College

CHOICE READY

MILITARY READY

Quality Citzenship

Physically Fit

ASVAB Score

Plan for next year

↗ Offer two courses in a Military Pathway

↗ Capstone – **Partnership with ND National Guard**

CAREER & WORKFORCE READINESS

SUCCESS FOR ALL -

All students graduate CHOICE READY!

To meet this goal

↗ Begin with kindergarten students

↗ Leverage federal funding for the greatest impact

↗ Establish partnerships with our community

Dickinson PUBLIC SCHOOLS

QUESTIONS?

Wrap-Up

Secretary McMahon's Supplemental Priorities

- Career Pathways & Workforce Readiness
  - Prioritizing access to demand-driven career pathways and workforce preparedness to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in a dynamic and evolving economy.
  - Ensuring that learning pathways are designed to enable students to master competencies that are aligned with high-growth, high-wage, and high-demand careers.
  - Integrating career exploration, career readiness, technical education, and work-based learning opportunities into the K-12 general and special education setting.

U.S. Department of Education

https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/09/25/2025-18639/proposed-priority-and-definitions-secretarys-supplemental-priority-and-definitions-on-career

Secretary McMahon's Supplemental Priorities

- Meaningful Learning
  - Includes a focus on aligning workforce development programs with state priorities.

  (c) Provide career-connected learning through one or more of the following priority areas:
    i. Career and academic advising and mentorship opportunities for all students;
    ii. Integrating career-connected and work-based learning into K-12 education, including approaches to help all students connect core academic instruction with real-world career skills and foster career awareness, exploration, and advising throughout their education journey; or
    iii. Supporting vocational rehabilitation for students with disabilities (pre-employment transition services and transition services); or
    iv. Supporting States in developing, piloting, or scaling statewide plans for career-connected learning.

U.S. Department of Education

https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2025/09/25/2025-18640/proposed-priority-and-definitions-secretarys-supplemental-priority-and-definitions-on-meaningful

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