

NORTH DAKOTA



Adopted the North Dakota Content Standards Based on the Common Core State Standards in 2011

North Dakota School Demographics

Total #Schools	532	
Total #Students	103,947	
Total #Black Students	3,271	3%
Total #Hispanic Students	3,817	4%
Total #Amer Ind/AK Native	9,078	9%
Total #Asian/Pac Islander	1,648	2%
Total #Two or More Races	1,545	1%
Total #White Students	84,588	81%
Total #Free and Reduced Lunch	30,676	30%
Total #ELL	2,895	3%
Total #Students with Disabilities	13,342	13%

North Dakota adopted new college-and career-ready standards in English language arts and mathematics in 2011, with the expectation that schools would begin fully implementing the standards in 2013. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (the Department) began working immediately with stakeholders to provide professional development to the state's educators.

Since 2000 the North Dakota Curriculum Initiative (NDCI) provided professional development for North Dakota administrators and teachers. The NDCI, which ended in December 2013, was instrumental in the rollout and support of North Dakota's new college- and career-ready standards. The purpose of the NDCI was to help assure that all North Dakota students received equitable educational classroom

opportunities; assist students in acquiring the knowledge, skills, and shared values essential to our civic culture; and support students in attaining critical work and management skills essential to be productive and responsible citizens.

Traditionally the Department had three main venues for providing professional development: a summer math institute, a summer reading institute, and an annual fall conference. These professional development opportunities shared statewide initiatives with educators. When first organized, the events focused primarily on Title I, but have been broadened since the new standards were put in place. About 200 teachers attend each of the math and reading institutes and 1,000 educators attend the fall conference annually, which have been focused on instructional strategies in both content areas aligned to the standards.

Partnering with Regional Education Agencies

The Department also broadened professional development opportunities by working closely with the state's Regional Education Associations (REAs), which are separate from the Department and have their own advisory boards. REAs operate independently from the Department; however, the Department does provide some funding to the REAs and has a close working relationship with them.

The REAs' primary function is to provide support and professional development to North Dakota school districts. Many of the REAs chose to heavily invest in providing professional development on the new college-and career-ready standards in English language arts and math. They were the ground level support for local districts to receive professional learning opportunities.

Stronger State Department Support

As North Dakota schools worked to implement the new college-and career-ready standards



many expressed a desire to have the Department take a more active role in implementation. That prompted the superintendent to create a new office within the Department called the Office of Academic Support. The main job of the office is to provide resources and assistance to local districts to implement the new standards.

The North Dakota math leadership team took the work they did with their counterparts from the other states and customized the modules for North Dakota educators.

The Office of Academic Support was formally created in July 2015 and has a staff of five, including content specialists and an early childhood coordinator. It oversees several programs, one of which is the [Cross State Collaborative Math Modules](#) for North Dakota. North Dakota joined with South Dakota, Montana, and Iowa in a project sponsored by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) where teacher leaders from each state came together to collaborate and develop resources for teachers to use when implementing the college- and career-ready standards in math. The North Dakota math leadership team took the work they did with their counterparts from the other states and customized the modules for North Dakota educators. Teachers can now download the modules for their own use and the REAs use them for professional learning sessions locally. The modules consist of sections including collaborative grouping, using assessments, modifying tasks, mindset, and using real world tasks.

Also, the department is growing additional supports to the field in a variety of areas including Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) as well as English language arts/literacy. The Department has strengthened partnerships

among groups interested in promoting STEAM instruction to increase the number and quality of STEAM activities and initiatives for students and teachers. Also, with the passage of the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the Department will seek additional funding to support initiatives to support English language arts/literacy.

North Dakota educators also have access to the Smarter Balanced Digital Library, an online collection of instructional and professional learning resources. It includes a series of interactive assessment literacy and instructional modules in English language arts/literacy and mathematics. The resources are aligned to the state's standards and assist educators with implementing the formative assessment process to improve teaching and learning.

Feedback from Educators

In March 2016 the Department launched "North Dakota Education...Watch Us Grow." It is a statewide survey that will help the Department get a better understanding of just how well the new standards are being implemented across the state. The survey will provide feedback for local teachers and administrators on their efforts to implement the North Dakota Standards in English language arts and mathematics.

The Department wants to get at data that will help them understand the challenges local districts have faced and how they can better respond to meet their needs with regard to standards implementation. The idea is that a statewide report would be generated, as well as local district and Regional Education Association level reports, so that they can develop future professional development based on the data.

The reports will be available in late summer 2016 and the Department will then use that information as it begins a review of the English language arts and math standards.



NORTH DAKOTA - DISTRICT



West Fargo Public Schools

West Fargo Public Schools

Suburban

K-12

17 Schools

9,600 Students

30% Free and Reduced Lunch

West Fargo Public Schools (the District) is a rapidly growing school district in North Dakota that expects to add 500 more students to their enrollment in the 2016-17 school year. Over the past several years the District has had to open new schools to keep pace with new students, which has meant hiring new teachers and shifting other teachers into new schools. Growth is a good problem to have, but it can become more difficult as you implement new college- and career-ready standards, especially when there's already a shortage of teachers and substitutes.

The District began implementing the new North Dakota Standards for English language arts and math soon after they were adopted in 2011. At the elementary level they began work on the new math standards first. They created grade level curriculum teams that pulled educators together during the school day to work collaboratively writing curriculum, adopting resources and creating grade level pacing guides. In English language arts, the teams developed their own curriculum, choosing not to buy one. While the work to implement the standards began in 2011, the new standards

weren't fully taught in the classroom for two years in math and three years in English language arts.

It was difficult work. On any given day there may be 120 substitute teachers working in the district, while still another 20 teaching positions don't get filled. The district had to be creative when it came to providing professional development for their teachers. One approach was a unique partnership with Valley City State University, a four-year college near West Fargo.

West Fargo and Valley City worked together to find a solution that would allow for their teachers to get professional development time, while providing third-year teaching students with valuable experience. The teaching students are able to come in on Fridays, a day the district uses for professional development, and teach lessons to students. They are supervised by university professors and get valuable experience learning their craft. It has provided the district with the ability to get teachers ongoing professional development, knowing the specific classes would be covered without having to wonder if a substitute would be available.

The move to the new standards has caused the district to rethink how it provides professional development. The district has changed its calendar, shifting from all-day professional development to ongoing professional learning communities every Wednesday and common scheduled planning time daily.

"Most of our professional development focused around strong use of formative assessment and student engagement," said Allen Burgad, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education. "That evolved into professional learning communities (PLCs) along with teachers



supporting teachers through learning walks or other types of classroom observations.”

The district worked on consistency. They wanted all schools to be on the same page, so that as a student moves from one school to another they don’t fall behind. They solicited feedback on curriculum during professional development sessions and would bring the curriculum teams back together to rewrite specific areas based on the feedback of their peers.

“Teachers believe the research of what the best practice is for math and they are seeing the benefits in their students’ work,” said Beth Slette, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education.

As the district has moved forward with implementing the new standards, teacher confidence in the standards has grown. Initially, they were met with some skepticism from teachers. Some thought the college- and career-ready standards wouldn’t last long, or they were concerned whether a third grader could do keyboarding or a second grader could add three digit numbers in their heads. But as they worked to unwrap the standards and saw the research behind the standards they began to get more comfortable. In fact, as North Dakota started to see pushback on the standards, the district’s math teachers were on the front lines defending them. They saw what was happening in their classrooms and were excited to see the impact of the standards on their students learning.

“Teachers believe the research of what the best practice is for math and they are seeing the benefits in their students’ work,” said Beth

Slette, Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education. “If teachers believe in standards, they will jump on board.”

Administrators say they are seeing a difference as they walk through the buildings. High school teachers have embraced new engagement strategies, allowing students to help guide their own learning and also introducing more student self-assessment.

“They are really focused on assessment and engagement and increasing the substance of classroom discussions. We’ve had to work with some of our newer teachers to help them bring it alive in the classroom, but we see more pockets of excellence every day.”

