

**2026 NDSBA WINTER SUMMIT:
GOVERNANCE & WORKFORCE
BSC NATIONAL ENERGY CENTER OF EXCELLENCE**

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2026

8:30 a.m. - 9:00 a.m. <i>Bavendick State Room</i>	Breakfast & Registration
9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. <i>Bavendick State Room</i>	Advocating for Public Education Outside of the Capitol <i>Erin Oban, North Dakotans for Public Schools</i> <i>Amy De Kok, NDSBA Executive Director</i>
10:15 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Break
10:30 a.m. - Noon <i>Rooms 431 & 433</i>	<u>Breakout Session:</u> School District Elections <i>Amy De Kok, NDSBA Executive Director</i>
10:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. <i>Bavendick State Room</i>	<u>Breakout Session:</u> Certified Employee Nonrenewal <i>KrisAnn Norby-Jahner, NDSBA General Counsel</i>
11:15 a.m. - Noon <i>Bavendick State Room</i>	<u>Breakout Session:</u> From Financial Reports to Community Understanding: Practical Tools for Budget & Property Tax Transparency <i>Dr. Jeff Fastnacht, Supt., and Darin Scherr, Bus. Mgr., Bismarck Public School District</i> <i>Dr. Rob Lech, Supt., Jamestown Public School District</i>
Noon - 1:00 p.m. <i>Bavendick State Room</i>	Lunch (provided) <i>Music by: BSC Men's Ensemble</i>
1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. <i>Bavendick State Room</i>	Keynote: Leading the Nation with America's Best Schools <i>Levi Bachmeier, North Dakota Superintendent of Public Instruction</i>
2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. <i>Rooms 431 & 433</i>	<u>Breakout Session:</u> Navigating the Four Day School Week <i>Leslie Bieber, Superintendent, Alexander Public School District</i> <i>Derek Gackle, Superintendent, Yellowstone Public School District</i>
2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. <i>Room 432</i>	<u>Breakout Session:</u> Building the Right Leadership Fit – A Board's Guide to Superintendent Search <i>Dakota Leadership Solutions</i>
2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. <i>Bavendick State Room</i>	<u>Breakout Session:</u> Navigating the 2026 Healthcare Cost Crisis: Workforce Recruitment, Retention & Affordability – A Strategic Guide for Public School Leaders <i>Randy Johnson, Sr. Vice President, Brown & Brown Insurance Services, Inc.</i>
3:00 p.m. - 3:15 p.m.	Break
3:15 p.m. - 4:15 p.m. <i>Bavendick State Room</i>	Effective Superintendent Evaluation: Process, Practice, & New Tools From NDSBA <i>Amy De Kok, NDSBA Executive Director</i>
4:15 p.m.	Adjourn

Thank you to our sponsor!



2026 NDSBA WINTER SUMMIT: GOVERNANCE & WORKFORCE

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5 – MORNING SESSIONS

9:00 a.m. - 10:15 a.m. – *Bavendick State Room*

Advocating for Public Education Outside of the Capitol

Erin Oban of North Dakotans for Public Schools and Amy De Kok, Executive Director of the North Dakota School Boards Association, will share practical ways to strengthen support for public schools year-round – beyond the legislative session. Participants will learn how to build relationships, tell their district's story with clarity and credibility, and engage families, staff, and community partners through effective local advocacy. The session will also highlight tools and strategies for communicating key messages, responding to misinformation, and mobilizing supporters in meaningful, positive ways. Attendees will leave with actionable next steps to champion public education in their communities and across N.D.

10:30 a.m. - Noon – *Rooms 431 & 433*

Breakout Session: School District Elections

Amy L. De Kok, NDSBA Executive Director/Attorney, will walk districts through the full lifecycle of an annual or special school election – from setting the election date and meeting candidate filing/publication deadlines to preparing ballots, designating polling places, and staffing election workers. The session also covers in-person and absentee voting procedures, post-election counting, and the school board's required canvass meeting on the 13th day after the election.

10:30 a.m. - 11:15 a.m. – *Bavendick State Room*

Breakout Session: Certified Employee Nonrenewal

KrisAnn Norby-Jahner, NDSBA General Counsel

This session will provide an overview of teacher and administrator continuing contract rights, written evaluations, resignation and contract breach, performance and RIF nonrenewal (including probationary), and discharge for cause. The goal of the session is to provide attendees with important legal compliance information, as well as practical tips for navigating these difficult situations from beginning to end. Attendees should walk away with specific statutory citations and practical guidance to support important decision-making in their school districts.

11:15 a.m. - Noon – *Bavendick State Room*

Breakout Session: From Financial Reports to Community Understanding: Practical Tools for Budget & Property Tax Transparency

Dr. Jeff Fastnacht, Supt., and Darin Scherr, Bus. Mgr., Bismarck Public School District
Dr. Rob Lech, Supt., Jamestown Public School District

Representatives from Bismarck Public Schools and Jamestown Public Schools will share practical approaches to property tax transparency – highlighting how districts report financial information, align budgets with long-range planning, and communicate clearly with stakeholders. The session will feature examples of public-facing reporting tools, budget summaries and hearings, community feedback strategies, and emerging practices such as using data systems and AI to improve clarity and engagement.

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5 – AFTERNOON SESSIONS

1:00 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. – Bavendick State Room

Keynote: Leading the Nation with America's Best Schools

New State Superintendent Levi Bachmeier shares his vision for how he believes North Dakota can lead the nation with America's best schools and how NDDPI and elected school leaders can work together toward a common vision that respects the local priorities of each of our school districts.

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. – Rooms 431 & 433

Breakout Session: Navigating the Four Day School Week

Leslie Bieber, Superintendent, Alexander Public School District

Derek Gackle, Superintendent, Yellowstone Public School District

Two experienced superintendents from two of the first school districts to implement a four-day school week will lead this session in explaining the processes that each of their districts went through from beginning to end when considering, planning, and implementing the four-day school week. This session will provide valuable information for school districts interested, considering, or wanting more information about the four-day school week model. Attendees will learn more about their personal experiences, as well as compliance requirements; planning recommendations; data-driven considerations; and staff, student, parent, and community member feedback.

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. – Room 432

Breakout Session: Building the Right Leadership Fit – A Board's Guide to Superintendent Search

Selecting the right superintendent is one of the most important decisions a school board will make. In this session, Paul Stremick of Dakota Leadership Solutions will walk attendees through the key steps of an effective superintendent search, from stakeholder input and candidate screening to interview preparation and final selection, highlighting practical strategies that help boards identify the best leadership fit for their district and community.

2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. – Bavendick State Room

Breakout Session: Navigating the 2026 Healthcare Cost Crisis: Workforce Recruitment, Retention & Affordability – A Strategic Guide for Public School Leaders

Randy Johnson, Sr. Vice President, Brown & Brown Insurance Services, Inc.

Public school districts across the U.S. are facing an unprecedented financial challenge in 2026 as healthcare costs continue their aggressive upward trajectory. Projections indicate that employer-sponsored health insurance costs will rise by 6.7% to over \$18,500 per employee with some forecasts predicting an even higher median increase of 9% before plan adjustments.

North Dakota Trend: N.D. public school districts have experienced consistent biennial premium increases of approximately 15%. Based on this historical trend, the average annual family premium is projected to surpass \$30,000 in 2026, one of the highest in the nation. This surge, driven by escalating prescription drug prices, the growing demand for mental health services, and high-cost cancer treatments, is significantly outpacing both inflation and educator salary growth.

3:15 p.m. - 4:15 p.m. – Bavendick State Room

Effective Superintendent Evaluation: Process, Practice, & New Tools From NDSBA

Amy De Kok, NDSBA Executive Director, will outline a clear, board-centered evaluation cycle that strengthens leadership, accountability, and trust. Participants will explore practical strategies for setting goals, gathering evidence, and conducting feedback conversations, and they will learn how NDSBA's updated tools can streamline documentation and support a fair, consistent process.