



# bulletin



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*Excellence in North Dakota public education through local school board governance* ■ VOL XLII ISSUE 6

## Governor's Summit Brings Optimism for Education Innovation

State Superintendent Kirsten Baesler, educators, and state lawmakers expressed optimism that a new state law will foster a culture of innovation that will inspire students and educators and position North Dakota as a leader in education.

They were among the speakers at the first Governor's Summit on Innovative Education on June 8, 2017, which drew more than 500 people to Legacy High School in Bismarck. The summit featured discussion panels on ways to promote innovation; science and technology education; and the new education law, SB2186, which was approved by the 2017 Legislature and signed by Governor Doug Burgum earlier this year.

The bill encourages schools to draft innovation proposals, with support from teachers, parents, administrators, and the local school board. If some state education laws pose an obstacle to a project, the law gives Baesler authority to waive them.

Schools would be required to report measurable results from their projects, and Baesler must give regular briefings to the legislature about the progress of local innovation initiatives.

In anticipation of SB2186's approval,



From left, Ken Kay, Marcus Lingenfelter, Susie Wise, Ted Dintersmith, Kirsten Baesler, and Levi Bachmeier discuss ideas on the Innovation Panel. [Reprinted with permission from *Bismarck Tribune*; Tom Stromme, photographer]

the Northern Cass School District has drafted a proposed innovation plan that will begin in the eighth and ninth grades, Superintendent Cory Steiner said. It would assign instructors in different disciplines to work in the same classroom, and student progress would be measured by their proficiency in subjects, rather than by grades.

"We have the foundation in this state to really do great things," said Steiner, who added that he believes the bill is an invitation to "stop tinkering and start transforming education. ... This finally gives us the permission to create a great system."

State Senator David Rust, R-Tioga, a retired school superintendent and teacher, said he believed the bill "has the potential to revolutionize the delivery of education to students."

Burgum gave closing remarks via Skype from Washington, D.C., and said "Innovation is the key to our nation's infrastructure challenges and is a shared theme for the future of education. Those of you here today are change agents for a reimagined education system that will help North Dakota lead in a 21st Century economy."

Burgum's Chief Operating Officer

Jodi Uecker also announced the creation of a Task Force to explore additional ways to transform education. The Governor's Office will be soliciting participation from interested individuals in the near future.

## NDSBA Hires New Executive Director

The NDSBA Board of Directors is pleased to announce the hiring of Alexis Baxley as the new executive director for the association. She will begin her responsibilities on July 1.

Alexis currently serves as the Government Affairs Manager at the North Dakota Petroleum Council (NDPC), a position she has held since



*Alexis Baxley*

2012. In that position, she managed and resolved issues in North Dakota's second largest industry, gained extensive experience with the legislative process, and formed relationships with local and state officials. Her additional responsibilities included researching and developing policy and monitoring issues at the state and federal level.

Prior to her time with the NDPC, Alexis worked at Clearwater Communications assisting clients in the agriculture, education, and tourism sectors. She was responsible for writing and editing publications, website maintenance, and other communication-related activities.

As a strong supporter of local control, Alexis believes that no one knows better than those at the ground level what is best for an organization, and those individuals should be making the decisions on how to achieve the goals of the organization.

Alexis earned her bachelor's degree from North Dakota State University in 2008 and is a member of Lambda Pi Eta, a communication honor society.

## North Dakota Sees Jump in High School Advanced Placement Exams

State Superintendent Kirsten Baesler said a Department of Public Instruction initiative that was supported by the Legislature has dramatically increased the number of North Dakota high school students who are doing advanced coursework.

Students who elected to take Advanced Placement exams in a variety of subjects recently finished their testing for the school year. Baesler said North Dakota students took an estimated 3,590 Advanced Placement exams, a 31 percent increase from 2016.

Baesler estimated about 2,500 students took an Advanced Placement exam this year. That would represent a 32 percent increase in the number of students who sat for at least one AP exam this year.

During the 2015 Legislature, Baesler successfully advocated her “Leveraging the Senior Year” initiative to strengthen preparation of North Dakota high school

seniors for the life choices they will make after graduation.

Leveraging the Senior Year offered any North Dakota high school senior, including those in nonpublic schools or home-school settings, the opportunity to take at least one Advanced Placement exam in English, mathematics, science, or computer science at no cost.

Under Baesler’s initiative, students from low-income families may take up to four AP exams in those subjects for free. Other students may take one exam at no cost, and get a 50 percent discount on as many as three additional tests. Advanced Placement tests normally cost about \$96 each.

“We want to prepare our North Dakota students to be choice ready when they graduate from high school,” Baesler said. “That means they are ready to take on whatever career path they choose, whether it is going to college, pursuing career and technical training,

going directly into the workforce, or joining the military.”

After Baesler announced the availability of the test subsidies in March 2016, the number of students taking at least one AP exam jumped 7 percent, to 1,894 students. The number of tests taken rose to 2,746, an increase of 13 percent.

The Legislature continued to support “Leveraging the Senior Year” during the 2017-2019 session. “Even during difficult budget times, our lawmakers saw that Leveraging the Senior Year is an excellent investment in the future of our young people,” Baesler said. “This will strengthen the preparation of our students for life after high school. If a student chooses to go to college, AP tests translate into college credit, which means students and their families will save on tuition costs, take on less debt, and be on track to graduate more quickly.”

## State Test Results Available More Quickly to ND Schools

State Superintendent Kirsten Baesler said school administrators and teachers now have quicker access to student test results, which may be used to make improvements to classroom instruction in the future.

State law requires students to take the North Dakota State Assessment in English and mathematics annually in grades three through eight, and in one grade in high school. The high school requirement is met by testing 11th graders. Teachers began administering the assessment to students in those grades in early April.

Until this year, test results have typically not been available to teachers and school officials until the summer or fall. However, the new assessments, which most students take using a computer, can be scored more quickly. Results can be available within three weeks.

Rob Bauer, the Department of Public Instruction’s assessment director, said school administrators have been notified that scores from the first two batches of exams are now available for them to view online. About 55,000 North Dakota students sat for the exams this spring. About 38,000

tests have already been graded and the results made available to school officials and teachers, Bauer said. Schools may share a student’s results with his or her parents.

Tests that have not yet been graded were taken after April 28 or were taken using paper and pencil instead of a computer. About 3,000 students in 27 schools completed a paper-and-pencil version of the exams. The final batch of results should be available by June 14.

The tests are intended to evaluate what students have learned during the school year. “They show what the students have achieved in their grade, because it’s taken toward the end of the school year,” Bauer said.

“Some schools take these results and see in what standards they might have instructional deficiencies or strengths,” Bauer said. “They can then make adjustments for the incoming class of students in that grade. This can help our schools improve their instruction.”

The North Dakota State Assessment was administered in 373 public schools and 53 nonpublic schools. Bauer said that students in nonpublic schools are not required to take the state assessment, although many do so.



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# Recalling “Yesterday”

by L. Anita Thomas

The phrase “Class of 2017” has been used frequently during the past few weeks, most often in connection with graduation speeches. Whether referring to high school seniors or those who have earned a college or university degree, the phrase is somewhat bittersweet. The sense of excitement about the adventure that lies ahead for the graduates is always mixed with recollections of that which was, and as we get older, it is also tempered by the realization that time is beginning to move with exponential speed.

As an example, for many of us, 1999 qualifies as “yesterday.” While we were trying to understand all that might happen as a result of Y2K, this year’s high school graduates – the members of the “Class of 2017” – were coming into the world. As for those who earned a four-year degree this year, their arrival took place around 1995 – a year marked by the Oklahoma City bombing, the lifting of the 55 mph speed limit, and the determination that O. J. Simpson was innocent. Between those two years lies 1997 – a good benchmark to use in a brief retrospective view.

To put 1997 into context, one must recall that gas was \$1.22 a gallon and the Dow Jones Industrial Average broke 8,000. Bill Clinton began his second term as president and Princess Diana was making headlines with Dodi Fayed. The Apple Computer Company released the first iPhone, which sold for \$599. *The English Patient* won the Academy Award for best picture and James Cameron’s *Titanic* premiered in the U.S. The first color photograph appeared on the front page of the *New York Times* and the Red River flooded Grand Forks.

At the State Capitol, Ed Schafer occupied the Governor’s Office and John Dorso and Gary Nelson served as the House and Senate majority leaders. During the 1997 Legislative Session, exactly 1,000 bills and resolutions were introduced and 547 of them became law. Education bills during that session included the following:

- Directive that the State Fire Marshal inspect each public and private elementary and secondary school at least once every three years
- Authorization for students in grades 11 and 12 to receive dual credit for successfully completing an academic course offered by a postsecondary institution
- Option for school boards to provide teachers with up to two days as compensatory time for parent-teacher conferences held outside normal school hours
- Directive that the Education Standards and Practices Board conduct background checks on individuals applying for a teaching certificate
- Establishment of per student payments at \$1,954 and \$2,032 for the 1997-99 biennium, together with a 32 mill equalization factor and weighting factors of 65 and 75 percent

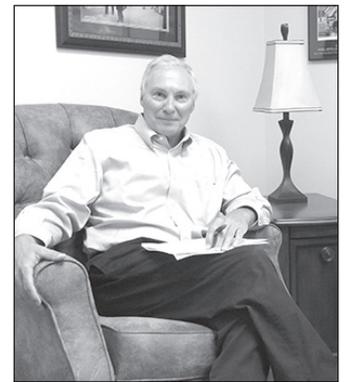
Additional statistics as of June 30, 1997, are set forth below. They are taken from the Department of Public Instruction’s annual compilation entitled Finance Facts. A comparison is included, using the latest available edition of Finance Facts, which is current as of June 30, 2016.

|  | DPI Finance Facts as of June 30, 1997 | DPI Finance Facts as of June 30, 2016 | Percentage change |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Number of school districts</b>              | 233                                   | 178                                   | -23.60%           |
| <b>Total K-12 public school enrollment</b>     | 116,104                               | 106,863                               | -7.96%            |
| <b>Graduates</b>                               | 7,990                                 | 6,817                                 | -14.68%           |
| <b>Number of teachers</b>                      | 7,472                                 | 8,580                                 | +14.83%           |
| <b>Cost of education per student</b>           |                                       |                                       |                   |
| • Presch Sp. Ed                                | \$ 5983                               | \$ 13,252                             | + 121.49%         |
| • Kindergarten                                 | \$ 2570                               | \$ 11,620                             | + 352.14%         |
| • Elementary 1-6                               | \$ 4267                               | \$ 11,775                             | + 175.96%         |
| • Elementary 7-8                               | \$ 4022                               | \$ 11,656                             | + 189.81%         |
| • Elementary 1-8                               | \$ 4201                               | \$ 11,405                             | + 171.48%         |
| • Elementary K-8                               | \$ 4029                               | \$ 13,241                             | + 228.64%         |
| • Secondary 9-12                               | \$ 4591                               | \$ 9,518                              | + 107.32%         |
| • All students                                 | \$ 4223                               | \$ 11,945                             | + 182.86%         |
| <b>Taxable Valuation (1996-97 and 2016-17)</b> | \$1,107,165,252                       | \$4,439,817,962                       | + 301.00%         |

# When the Last Bell Rings on the Last Day of School

By NDSBA President Jim Johnson

I hope the title of this article brings back fond memories of your younger days and perhaps puts a smile on your face.



Jon Martinson

As this school year comes to an end, it also marks the end of an era in the life of our State School Boards Association. Over the past 17 years our association has been guided by a variety of state board members and, in large part, by our Executive Director Dr. Jon Martinson. Later this summer when Jon officially retires, we will begin the next chapter of our association’s history. Under Jon’s leadership, we have seen our association become an even more powerful force for K-12 education and students here in North Dakota.

While much has been accomplished on Jon’s watch, I am absolutely sure he would give most—if not all—the credit to the incredibly talented staff he has had the privilege of working with. Some of our association’s milestones that have occurred since Jon joined our team include:

- Development of an outstanding Policy Services Program for local boards and districts
- Development of in-house Legal Services support system for local boards and districts
- Development of the Business Manager Certification Program and training
- Development and administration of the state-mandated new board member training program
- Acquiring a permanent home for our State School Boards Association offices
- District outreach services such as board training sessions and superintendent search assistance

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## ■ LAST DAY

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- Becoming a strong and trusted voice for K-12 issues with both the legislative and executive branches of state government

Past Board President Phil Eastgate was serving when Jon was hired, and he recently shared his thoughts regarding Jon's retirement: "His honesty, straightforward answers, intellect, and humility were what convinced me he was who we needed as the new leader for NDSBA! His vision, which was easy to buy into, was that we can't be just an acronym of what

the organization is, but an organization that is recognized, respected, and can get things done for public education in North Dakota—a proactive and aggressive organization that teachers, school boards, administrators, legislators, and the public appreciate. This he has done!"

The strides we have made as a State School Boards Association over the last 17 years are indeed impressive!

On behalf of the board and all of our association members, I wish to extend a huge THANK YOU to Jon for his service. Through his outstanding leadership, Jon will leave us much stronger than when he joined us. As

he begins the next chapter in his life journey—a well-deserved retirement—we offer our best wishes.



**mark**  
your calendar

**2017 NDSBA Annual Convention**  
October 26-27, 2017  
Ramkota Hotel, Bismarck

**2018 NDSBA Annual Convention**  
October 25-26, 2018  
Ramkota Hotel, Bismarck