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ISSUE BRIEF
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FUNDING HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND LEARNING

Early childhood is a critical period for cognitive, social, and emotional development. [Research](#) shows that disparities in learning and development emerge as early as infancy, particularly for children from low-income or marginalized backgrounds. [High-quality early care and education](#) (ECE) programs can help close these gaps, leading to long-term benefits for individuals and society. There are approximately [64,096 children](#) aged five and under in North Dakota with [72 percent](#) having all parents working. The average [cost of child care](#) for an infant is \$10,758 for center-based care and \$9,203 for home-based care. The [child care gap](#) in the state is estimated at 26 percent, affecting 11,780 children. In North Dakota, access to affordable, high-quality early learning opportunities [varies](#) across rural and urban communities, affecting equitable opportunities for the state’s youngest residents. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services considers child care affordable when it costs no more than [seven percent](#) of a family’s income. However, infant care in North Dakota could utilize up to [11 percent](#) of a family’s income. This financial burden forces difficult choices between high-quality care and other essential expenses.



Cost Modeling in Early Childhood Systems

North Dakota, like most states, has relied on [market rate surveys](#) to set child care subsidy reimbursement rates—a method that ties public assistance to what private-paying families can afford. This approach has contributed to the ongoing instability in the child care sector, as market rate surveys fail to account for the actual expenses of running a high-quality program. As a result, a growing number of states are adopting [cost modeling](#), a data-driven alternative to traditional market rate surveys, to determine the true cost of delivering high-quality early childhood care. Unlike market surveys, which reflect what the current market can bear, cost modeling calculates the baseline funding needed to sustain operations, pay staff living wages, and ensure program quality. This approach gives policymakers a clearer understanding of the investment required to stabilize the child care sector, expand access, improve outcomes, and address longstanding inequities in early childhood education.

Table 1: Program-Level Cost Modeling

Costs	Revenue Streams
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Space ■ Safety and Health Requirements ■ Educational Materials ■ Salaries ■ Benefits ■ Professional Learning Opportunities ■ Administrative Costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tuition and Fees by age group for enrolled children (size of business) ■ Subsidies ■ Other Public Funding (e.g., food program) ■ Business Partnerships ■ Donation ■ Grants

[Source](#)

Cost modeling helps assess not only the comprehensive cost of care for providers and families but also informs system-level funding strategies. By analyzing expenses and revenues, policymakers can use cost models to design targeted programs and funding streams, such as:

- Salary supplementation to improve workforce retention
- Incentive programs to attract providers to underserved areas
- Quality guidelines with financial support to meet standards
- Shared services networks to reduce overhead costs for individual programs

By grounding funding decisions in actual costs rather than market constraints, states can build a more equitable and sustainable early childhood education system.

State Models for Funding Early Childhood Education

Recognizing the critical importance of early childhood education, states have developed a wide array of funding models to support these vital programs.

- **New Mexico** | The state has emerged as a national leader by fully transitioning from market rate surveys to a cost-of-care model. Subsidy rates are based on actual program expenses, including staff wages at 150 percent of the minimum wage, benefits, curriculum materials, and facility costs—with higher reimbursements for programs meeting quality benchmarks. This shift, enabled by a historic \$1 billion [Early Childhood Trust Fund](#), has increased provider stability while expanding access for low-income families.
- **Oklahoma** | A [cost estimation model](#) is utilized in Oklahoma to inform their child care subsidy rate increases in recent years. The model considers the true cost of providing quality care, including staff wages, benefits, and classroom materials,

rather than relying solely on market rates. This approach allowed Oklahoma to adjust its subsidy rates to better reflect what it actually costs providers to deliver care that meets state quality standards.

- **Washington** | In 2021, Washington implemented a progressive cost estimation model that calculates rates based on regional cost variations, staff qualifications, and quality standards. The state's "[Fair Start for Kids Act](#)" established tiered reimbursements that cover 75-100 percent of true care costs, with additional funds for programs serving infants/toddlers or operating in high-cost areas. This approach has reduced child care deserts while improving workforce compensation.

Policy Considerations

- ❓ In what ways might federal Child Care and Development Block Grant funds be leveraged to pilot cost modeling in child care deserts or high-need regions before expanding statewide?
- ❓ What policy mechanisms can be implemented to utilize program-level cost modeling data to establish the true cost of providing care to help stabilize the child care sector?
- ❓ How can policymakers support child care funding that prioritizes underserved populations, including rural areas, low-income families, and children with special needs?



INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

According to the Hunt Institute’s [Across the Aisle Survey](#), 62 percent of voters believe additional counseling or social, emotional, and mental health support will help students develop academically and personally. Additionally, 61 percent of voters believe individualized learning plans based on each student’s needs would help student progress in these areas. Across the nation, states and districts are leading innovative policy and practices that improve student mental and behavioral health and academics.

North Dakota

To achieve North Dakota’s vision of ensuring students graduate ‘choice ready,’ it is essential that the state leverage personalized and targeted instruction that improves all students’ outcomes.

Whole-child learning improves students’ individual academic, social, emotional, and cognitive development using evidence-based practices to allow students to thrive in school and their future. [Choice Ready](#) is a framework created to ensure students are prepared for life post-graduation and is part of North Dakota’s accountability system. The [framework](#) includes essential skills which seniors are expected to earn with options to prove post-secondary, workforce, or military readiness. In 2021-2022, [61 percent](#) of graduating seniors were Choice Ready, a 16 percentage point increase from the year prior.

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) partnered with [KnowledgeWorks](#) in 2018 to complete the [Personalized, Competency-Based Learning Initiative](#) (PCBL). Three districts and one high school participated in the five-year study across both rural and urban contexts. KnowledgeWorks and NDDPI [assisted](#) districts

Table 2: North Dakota Choice Ready Framework

Requirement	Description
Essential Skills (Required)	Earn a high school diploma, complete a 9-week Career Education Course/ Individual Counseling, Financial Literacy, pass Civics Test, Computer Science/ Cybersecurity Requirement, and four of more indicators (completing 25 hours of community service, completing a capstone project, etc.)
Students also chose two or more of the following components:	
Post-Secondary Ready	Complete a Four-Year Rolling Career Plan, earn a 2.8 GPA or higher, and earn a minimum ACT/SAT score OR two or more indicators (passing an AP/IB test, earning dual-credit, etc.)
Workforce Ready	Complete a Four-Year Rolling Career Plan and complete two or more indicators (completing three CTE courses, passing the AP WorkKeys, etc.)
Military Ready	Complete a Four-Year Rolling Career Plan and earn a ASVAB score of 31 or higher OR accepted into the military AND complete two or more Workforce Ready or Post-Secondary Ready indicators OR two credits of JROTC/Civic Air Patrol OR two credits in the Military Pathway Program

[Source](#)

through personalized leadership coaching, targeted professional learning, and monthly check-ins. The [study](#) found small negative effects on academic achievement, small positive effects on attendance, and no effect on graduation rates. Furthermore, the percentage of Choice Ready graduates and the number of graduates enrolled in post-secondary education were [similar](#) between PCBL and non-PCBL districts. Because this study took place during the [COVID-19 pandemic](#), more data is needed to evaluate the true impact of PCBL. In 2023, this cohort was renamed the [North Dakota Network for Personalized Learning](#) and is now led by educators. This network [consists](#) of 300 members, five higher education institutions, and 16 districts, and [hosts](#) learning cycles, district site visits, and workshops to implement personalized learning in districts.

NDDPI conducted a 2021 study with the North Dakota Regional Education Association (NDREA) focusing on two rural districts in the state with Multi-Tier System of Supports (MTSS), Socio-Emotional Learning (SEL) skills and curricula, and restorative practices. The [study](#) found the districts had a greater understanding of student needs, built community trust, relationships, and resilience, and strengthened workforce and future-ready skills.

State Examples

- **New Mexico** | New Mexico [Community Schools](#) are designed to utilize whole child learning to advance student learning and development. The state has [150](#) community schools that use non-profit, private, and public partnerships to provide health, nutrition, shelter, and other services for students. Community Schools have [six practices](#): family engagement, collaborative leadership, culturally enriched learning, community-connected instruction, a culture of belonging, and integrated systems of support. The New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) offers three [grants](#) for community schools: a one-year planning grant, three annual implementation grants, and one-year renewal grants after the three-year implementation.
- **Tennessee** | The Tennessee Tiered Supports Center currently assists over 60 schools in implementing MTSS to provide specialized [assistance](#) to students. The center uses a [three-tier model](#) for universal, targeted, and intensive instruction and intervention. [Support](#) includes community events, [modules](#), [materials](#), training, coaching, and ongoing assistance. The Tiered Support Center provides additional [assistance](#) for autism, intensive behavior, preschool, tiered support, family engagement, assistive technology, secondary transition, and special education. The [center](#) is funded through a grant from the state and in partnership with the [Tennessee Technical Assistance Network](#). [Regional assistance teams](#) from the University of Tennessee – Knoxville and Vanderbilt University also provide services to counties. With coaching, the center has [improved](#) tiered support in 100 percent of participating districts and 93 percent of participating schools.
- **Washington** | In 2021, the Washington State Legislature passed [a bill](#) mandating juvenile courts and school districts to establish community engagement boards to help prevent chronic absenteeism. Community engagement boards, comprised of local residents, are trained to identify barriers to school attendance and recommend interventions, such as community services, family therapy, or alternative education programs. An [evaluation](#) of the long-running West Valley Community Truancy Board, a collaboration between the Spokane County (WA) Juvenile Court and the West Valley School District, found that participating students were more likely to graduate high school or earn their GED than comparable students who did not have access to a similar intervention.

Policy Considerations

- ② What role can strategic partnerships and cross-sector collaboration play in enabling districts across the state to effectively scale and implement individualized and whole-child approaches in the state?
- ② Through what mechanisms can the state integrate Choice Ready standards across elementary and middle school curricula, creating a continuum for individualized and whole learning?
- ② How can North Dakota utilize data and measures on school climate, behavior, absenteeism, and student well-being to create targeted approaches that benefit student learning?



SCHOOL CHOICE – BALANCING ACCESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

School choice refers broadly to families' ability to "choose" the school their child attends and draw on public funding to do so. This includes public options like charter schools, magnet schools, and district transfers, as well as private options such as vouchers, tax credits, and education savings accounts. Proponents argue that school choice empowers families, encourages innovation, and offers options for students who thrive in different learning environments. Critics caution that it may divert students and resources from traditional public schools and create systems that benefit only the most engaged families. Other experts emphasize the importance of expanding access to high-quality education for all students regardless of school setting.

North Dakota

School choice in North Dakota includes inter-district [open enrollment](#), allowing some students to attend public schools outside their home district, and [homeschooling](#), which over [5.8 percent](#) of students pursued in the 2023-2024 school year. The state also supports virtual learning through the [North Dakota Center for Distance Education \(CDE\)](#), the only state-sponsored online school. CDE partners with all 174 public school districts to offer asynchronous, supplemental or credit-bearing courses. Students can enroll at any time, and public schools cover the enrollment cost for their students.

In 2024, Senator Axtman partnered with The Hunt Institute to convene an [Educational Opportunities Task Force](#) of key education stakeholders and school choice experts to learn more about the options available to meet the education needs of the students in the state. Two bills were presented during the 2025-2027 legislative session focused on establishing school choice options, one passed:

■ **Senate Bill 2241:** Enacted in April 2025, establishes public charter schools in North Dakota, which must be tuition-free, non-sectarian, and open to the public. This bill outlines state frameworks for launching charter schools via an approval process through the NDDPI, acting as the charter school authorizer. This bill also requires charter schools to meet or exceed academic and graduation benchmarks set by the state and be accountable through an oversight process. Charter schools enjoy greater operational autonomy than traditional public schools in areas such as staffing, curriculum, and time. In exchange, charter schools face greater accountability requirements - they must meet the expectations included in their charter contract, or face closure from their authorizer.

is strongly influenced by implementation and measurements of accountability, all of which differ by state.

■ **Florida | Charter School Accountability |** Established in 1996, charter schools in Florida have become an increasingly popular school choice option with over 730 schools in the state as of the 2023-2024 school year. Over 400,000 students are enrolled in a charter school in the state. The majority of charter schools across the country are required to comply with state laws and regulations regarding accountability, student assessment, school grading systems, provision of services to students with disabilities, civil rights, and student health and safety. Florida requires additional charter compliance with statutes highlighted in Table 3 below.

Promising Practices in School Choice

North Dakota now joins 47 other states with school choice options. The effectiveness of these options

■ **Table 3: Florida Charter School Compliance**

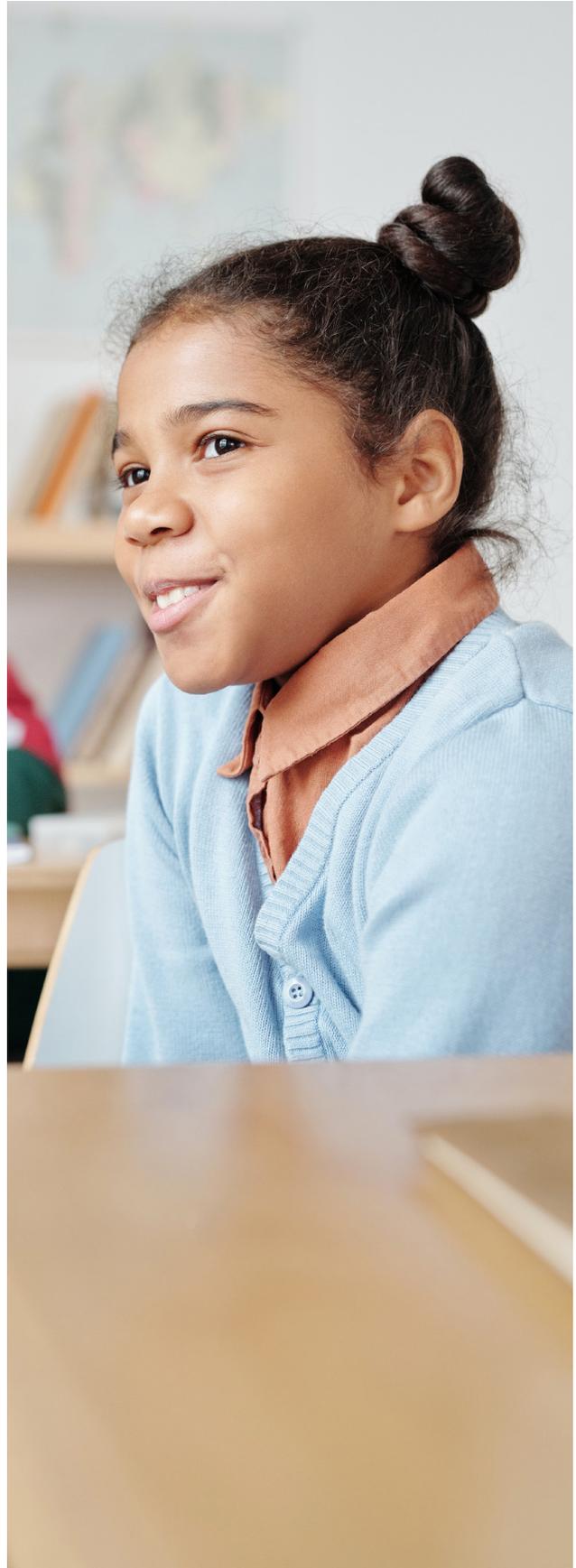
Category	Specifications
Finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Compensation and salary schedules ■ Financial record-keeping and reporting
Transparency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Public meetings and records, public inspection, and criminal and civil penalties ■ Public Records
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Safe-school officers ■ Threat assessment teams ■ School Environment Safety Incident Reporting ■ Florida Safe Schools Assessment Tool ■ Adopting an active assailant response plan ■ Mobile suspicious activity reporting tool
Students & Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maximum class size ■ Workforce reductions ■ Contracts with instructional personnel hired on or after July 1, 2011 ■ Substantive requirements for performance evaluations for instructional personnel and school administrators ■ Youth mental health awareness and assistance training

Source

- **Indiana | School Scholarship Tax Credits** | The [Indiana School Scholarship Tax Credit](#) provides a 50 percent tax credit for individuals and corporations that donate to nonprofits that offer scholarships for private schools, also called Scholarship-Granting Organizations (SGOs). The tax credit scholarship is universal, with 98 percent of students eligible for the scholarship. Indiana does not have a minimum or maximum award amount for [SGO Scholarships](#). This program creates additional funding streams for school choice models without redirecting money from public school budgets.
- **North Carolina | Regulating Homeschool** | Homeschool regulation varies widely by state. Most parents choose home education options to increase control over curriculum and learning modalities for their students. However, it is still important for states to ensure all students have access to a quality education. North Carolina recognizes homeschools with similar autonomy to [private schools](#) with a few modifications. This allows high levels of curriculum control with no subject or testing requirements, although families are required to have test scores available if requested by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Parents who homeschool their children are required to submit a one-time notification form with DPI and maintain attendance and immunization records.

Policy Considerations

- ❓ How can consistent accountability standards for school choice options ensure that all students have access to high-quality education and that parents have the information necessary to make informed decisions about their children's schooling?
- ❓ In what ways can school choice funding mechanisms be strategically employed to support target student groups and close existing opportunity gaps?
- ❓ What requirements should be consistent for students across school choice options so officials can ensure all students have access to quality education?



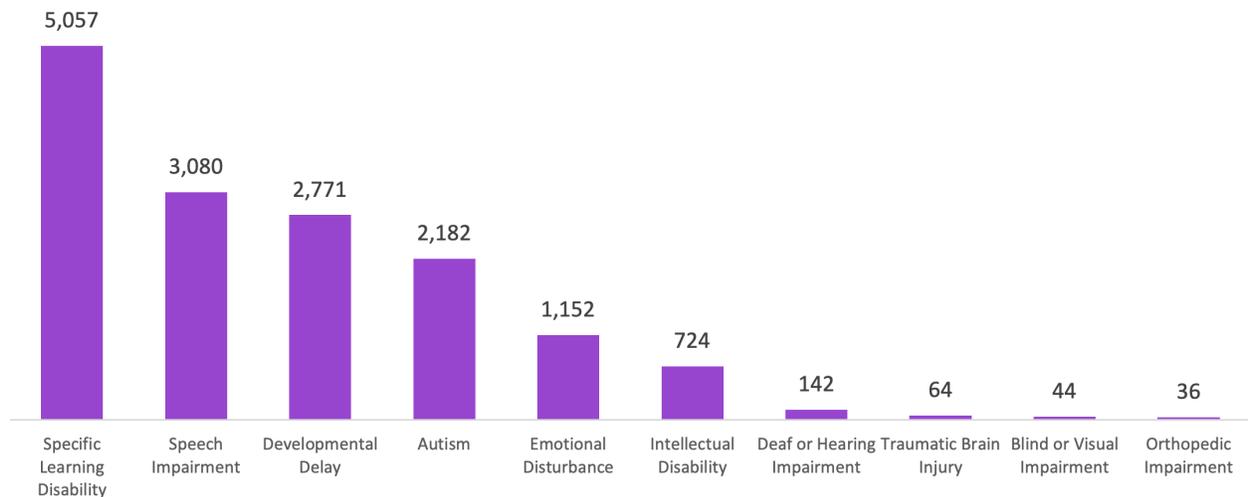
SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

The federal [Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (IDEA), enacted by Congress in 1975, ensures that students with disabilities have the right to a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) tailored to their individual needs. This requires states to provide special education services, support early intervention for infants and toddlers, and gives federal funding to states for the provision of these services. IDEA is currently administered by the U.S. Department of Education. Students who benefit from IDEA experience a wide range of disabilities, from physical, sensory, intellectual or developmental, mental or behavioral, and learning disabilities. It is important to note that many disabilities, including autism or other specific learning disabilities, are genetic. In contrast, other disabilities may be related to environmental factors or occur later in life, such as traumatic brain injuries. Additionally, other disabilities may be caused by either genetic, environmental, or experiential factors, such as hearing or visual impairments.

Students with Disabilities in North Dakota

The NDDPI oversees special education programs in North Dakota, including the design and implementation of policies and procedures for complying with the requirements of IDEA. North Dakota currently has over [18,400](#) students identified with a disability. The NDDPI complies with IDEA by producing an [annual report](#) on key indicators for students with disabilities, including testing performance, attendance rates, graduation rates, and more. North Dakota received over [\\$34 million](#) in federal IDEA funding for the 2024 fiscal year, which was distributed across public school units using a formula based on total student enrollment and enrollment of students with disabilities. IDEA funds must [supplement](#) state and local dollars rather than supplant state and local funding.

Figure 1: Student Disabilities in North Dakota – December 2024



Source

Promising Practices for Supporting Special Education

With anticipated changes to funding at the federal level for students with disabilities, state control over funding and resources for special education will be increasingly important. Therefore, exploring promising practices at the state level may offer insight for additional support for diverse student needs.

- **New Mexico** | New Mexico established a statewide [Multi-Layered System of Supports \(MLSS\)](#) framework to support all students, especially those with special education needs. In public schools, MLSS provides early intervention and evidence-based support to struggling students and removes administrative barriers so teachers and administrators can respond quickly and strategically. To assist schools in implementing MLSS, New Mexico offers a [comprehensive guide](#) on MLSS goals, practices, and recommendations. Another key component of the MLSS framework is the ability to utilize state education data for analysis in policy decisions. New Mexico stands out for its efforts in data collection and publication. The state maintains a public [dashboard](#) on school improvement plans, provides district-level data on [special education](#), and considers academic, non-academic, and perceptual [data](#) in its policy decisions.
- **New Jersey** | New Jersey is one of the [most supportive states](#) for students with disabilities. With the highest education department spending on student services like guidance, health, and attendance, the state's commitment to providing comprehensive care to students is evident. New Jersey monitors student support via strong data reporting systems including the [State Performance Plan](#), which requires each district to submit a [Local Special Education Profile](#) including testing performance, disciplinary discrepancies, parental involvement, transition and graduation data, and developmentally appropriate preschool indicators.

- **Tennessee** | In [Fall 2021](#), Tennesseans had the chance to give input in over 1,000 opportunities, including public town halls and local match conversations. These [conversations](#) aimed to explore how to prioritize students, increase parent involvement in their child's education, improve student outcomes, ensure all students are served equitably, and prepare students for post-secondary plans. In May 2022, the [Tennessee Investment in Student Achievement Act \(TISA\)](#) was signed into law, transitioning their funding to student-based while investing \$9 billion in state education. Every school gets [base funding](#) from the state for students and weighted funding for low-income students, high-poverty areas, English Learners, students with disabilities, students with dyslexia, or small populated areas. [TISA](#) also allocates direct funding for students in key priority areas for early literacy, career, CTE, and post-secondary readiness, as well as additional funding based on student achievement. Tennessee implemented this formula using a hold harmless agreement in which no district would lose money under the proposed formula. This formula allows for flexibility in funding for students with disabilities while ensuring that students with additional needs are provided with the capital to do so.

Policy Considerations

- ❓ What specific information should policymakers prioritize to make well-informed decisions about supporting students with disabilities, and what practical mechanisms exist to integrate this information into current accountability measures?
- ❓ In what ways can existing stakeholders be leveraged to support students with disabilities in North Dakota and how can those relationships be strengthened?
- ❓ What contingencies are needed should federal funding for IDEA and students with disabilities change over the next few years?

EXPANDING PATHWAYS TO THE WORKFORCE

As North Dakota continues to experience economic growth yet workforce shortages across key industries, there is growing recognition that a four-year degree is not the only path to a rewarding, high-wage career. Expanding and aligning multiple education-to-career pathways—including career and technical education (CTE), dual credit programs, work-based learning, and apprenticeships—can better support student aspirations while meeting the evolving needs of employers across the state.

North Dakota is uniquely positioned to lead in aligning secondary and postsecondary education with the demands of a changing workforce. The state has laid an important foundation with its [Choice Ready](#) framework, which prepares high school graduates for college, careers, or military service through a personalized approach to readiness. Many districts have also implemented CTE programs and regional career academies that connect students with in-demand skills in fields such as healthcare, energy, agriculture, and information technology.

However, access to high-quality CTE and dual credit opportunities remains uneven—particularly in rural areas—and programs are not always aligned with regional labor market needs. While [nearly 30 percent](#) of North Dakota high school students participate in at least one CTE course, few complete a full pathway that culminates in an industry-recognized credential or seamless transition to postsecondary education or employment.

Expanding and aligning career pathways through CTE, dual credit, and apprenticeship models can directly support Lumina Foundation’s [updated national postsecondary attainment goal](#), which calls for 75 percent of adults to hold a quality credential or degree by 2040—and includes short-term certificates and industry certifications that lead to well-paying jobs.

To close these gaps, the state must continue to invest in flexible, stackable credential pathways that meet learners where they are—whether that means earning college credit in high school, completing a short-term program after graduation, or pursuing a registered apprenticeship that leads to full-time employment. These approaches not only increase educational attainment but also help meet the talent needs of North Dakota employers who are increasingly seeking workers with skills-based competencies over traditional degrees.

State Examples

States across the country are investing in innovative models to strengthen education-to-career connections.

- **Arkansas** | In 2025, Arkansas passed the [Arkansas Access Act](#), requiring every high school to offer at least one career pathway that leads to an industry-recognized credential.
- **Colorado** | Students can earn [dual credit through apprenticeships](#) that count toward both high school graduation and postsecondary credentials. These efforts demonstrate the value of creating multiple on-ramps for career success without limiting future educational opportunities.
- **Missouri** | Since 2017, the [Missouri Innovation Campus \(MIC\) Program](#), a collaboration between the University of Central Missouri, Lee’s Summit R-7 School District, Metropolitan Community College, and more than 70 Kansas City area businesses, is transforming how students obtain a bachelor’s degree while also providing career-ready skills.
- **Tennessee** | [Tennessee’s Future Ready CTE](#) initiative aligns high school pathways with regional labor market needs and incentivizes cross-sector collaboration.

Policy Considerations

- ❓ How can North Dakota expand equitable access to high-quality career pathways, including in rural and underserved communities?
- ❓ What policy tools (e.g., outcome-based funding, employer incentives, cross-agency data systems) can support scalable work-based learning and apprenticeships?
- ❓ In what ways can policymakers ensure alignment across K-12, higher education, and workforce systems to support seamless transitions for learners?



ALIGNING HIGHER EDUCATION TO WORKFORCE NEEDS

As North Dakota faces increasing pressure to fill workforce gaps in key sectors, aligning postsecondary degrees and credentials with the [evolving needs of business and industry](#) has become a critical priority. Traditional four-year degree pathways continue to serve many students well, but a growing number of learners, particularly adult learners and working professionals, require shorter, more flexible, and career-focused programs.

Credentials, ranging from degrees and certifications to badges and microcredentials, serve as indicators of an individual's skills and competencies. The true value of postsecondary education lies in personal development and its relevance to the labor market's demands for a skilled and ready workforce. Research indicates that [72 percent of jobs](#) will require additional education beyond high school by 2031, emphasizing the need for postsecondary education to meet the needs of the workforce.

North Dakota

North Dakota's labor market is shaped by both opportunity and constraint. Employers across industries report persistent shortages of qualified workers, especially in [healthcare, energy, skilled trades, and emerging technology sectors](#).

Meanwhile, fewer students are pursuing traditional college paths, and thousands of North Dakotans—especially adults—hold some college credit but no credential.

Recognizing this, the North Dakota University System (NDUS) has begun implementing flexible credential pathways, including certificates and associate degrees, designed to meet immediate workforce needs. Programs like [TrainND](#), the state's workforce training initiative through community colleges, offer customized learning for industries ranging from construction to healthcare. Still, institutions and regions coordinate unevenly, and employers continue to cite a mismatch between graduates' skills and job requirements.

Importantly, the Lumina Foundation and other national leaders are redefining postsecondary attainment to include short-term credentials, non-degree certificates, and industry-recognized microcredentials. In this expanded vision, workforce-aligned credentials—when designed to lead to family-sustaining wages—are viewed as essential tools for both individual advancement and state economic competitiveness.

Currently, North Dakota’s postsecondary attainment rate is [approximately 59 percent](#), with gaps for rural, Indigenous, and adult learners. Raising that number will require better alignment between education providers and the labor market. Building stronger, data-informed partnerships with employers can help institutions design programs that meet current and projected workforce demand—and ensure that more residents earn credentials with real career value.

State Examples

Across the country, states are investing in innovative models to better connect postsecondary credentials to workforce outcomes:

- **Colorado** | [Colorado’s Career Advance Colorado initiative](#) funds tuition-free training programs at community and technical colleges in high-need sectors like early childhood education, manufacturing, and nursing.
- **Ohio** | [Ohio’s Individualized Microcredential Assistance Program \(IMAP\)](#) provides funding for low-income, unemployed, or underemployed residents to complete short-term credentials in in-demand fields. The credentials are developed in partnership with employers and regional workforce boards.
- **Tennessee** | [Tennessee Reconnect](#) supports adults returning to college by covering tuition and fees at community and technical colleges, and includes a growing focus on employer-aligned certificate programs.

Policy Considerations

- ❓ In what ways can policymakers facilitate or incentivize education institutions and local businesses to collaborate in aligning credentials to local workforce needs?
- ❓ What funding or policy mechanisms can help expand access to short-term, workforce-aligned credentials for adult learners, particularly those with some college credit but no degree?
- ❓ How can North Dakota better integrate labor market data and employer feedback into institutional decision-making around degrees, credentials, and program approval?





Established in 2001, **The Hunt Institute** honors the legacy of James B. Hunt, Jr., the former governor of North Carolina who distinguished himself as an ardent champion of education.

The Hunt Institute brings together people and resources to inspire and inform elected officials and policymakers about key issues in education, resulting in visionary leaders who are prepared to take strategic action for greater educational outcomes and student success.

In 2016, The Hunt Institute became an independent, nonprofit entity and joined forces with Duke University's Sanford School of Public Policy to pursue research, educational partnerships, and events related to improving education policy.

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