

20 | **NORTH DAKOTA**  
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**RETREAT**

## TIERED APPROACHES TO CHILD CARE QUALITY, AFFORDABILITY, AND AVAILABILITY

North Dakota is [home](#) to 64,000 children under five years of age, with around [10,000](#) babies born in the state every year. The years of early childhood present important opportunities and challenges for North Dakota policymakers. For children, the earliest years of life are a critical window of development with long-lasting implications for their success in school and life. For North Dakota parents and employers, however, lack of access to affordable, high-quality child care poses a threat to workforce participation. With [72 percent](#) of North Dakota’s parents in the workforce, the state [aims](#) to improve access to quality, affordable child care as part of efforts to remove workforce barriers across critical industries. The state is proposing expansions in [Best in Class](#), an early learning program for four-year-olds that utilizes quality-based tiers for child care assistance that will reduce income-based barriers to quality care, and rewarding completion of “above-and-beyond training” of early educators.

## The Child Care Gap

There are over [46,000](#) children under five years of age with all parents working, but there is an inadequate supply of child care. Table two shows the extent of the child care gap in the state. This estimate does not account for spaces in unregulated care, on which there is limited data.

## Affordability of Child Care

In addition to issues of access, working families face barriers due to the affordability of care. The median family income in the state is almost \$67,000, and the cost of care is expensive for single-income and two-income families while also exceeding the Department of Health and Human Services’ (DHHS) recommended ratio of seven percent of family income. Table three breaks out the cost of infant care, the most expensive level of care. Toddler and four-year-old care is less expensive, as staff-to-child ratios are higher as children get older.

**Table 1: [Children Under Five in North Dakota](#)**

Number of Children	Children with all parents working	Rural Children	Children living in poverty	Median family income
64,096	72%	42.7%	12%	\$66,519

**Table 2: [The Child Care Gap in North Dakota](#)**

Children under five with all parents working	Licensed capacity (child care spaces)	Child care gap	Child care gap (percent)
46,149	34,379	11,770	25.5%

**Table 3: [Price of Child Care in North Dakota](#)**

Price of infant care (center-based)	Price of infant care (Family Child Care)	Center-based infant care as a % of median single-income household	Center-based infant care as a % of median two-income household	DHHS recommendation
\$10,758	\$9,203	27.2%	8.7%	7%

## Recent Child Care Initiatives in North Dakota

North Dakota is committed to improving access to quality care to ensure that children achieve their early learning potential and parents have the support they need to continue working:

- To increase access to affordable care, North Dakota recently passed a bill applying a [sliding scale](#) that allows a family whose income exceeds 75 percent of the state median income (SMI) to receive child care assistance. Families whose incomes do not exceed 30 percent of SMI do not pay a fee.
- To expand high-quality early learning opportunities, North Dakota seeks to expand the Best in Class program, an early learning program for four-year-olds, by 1,800 slots a year.

To address parents’ concerns about access to quality care, the state [proposes](#) a tiered approach of providing Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) bonuses to providers at Tier 2, 3, and 4 of [Bright and Early ND](#), the state quality rating and improvement system (QRIS) to enable them to offer more spaces in their facilities. Currently, 65 percent of licensed, center-based providers are enrolled in QRIS, as are almost all family child care (FCC) homes. Very few providers are at the highest QRIS tier (level 4), although it is likely that many are at levels 2 and 3 and are eligible for grants under the plan.

## Policy Considerations

- ❓ Is there potential to expand free and subsidized child care to cover all eligible families in the state?
- ❓ In what ways can the state help providers advance to higher quality tiers of Bright and Early North Dakota so that more families have access to quality care through CCAP?
- ❓ Are there opportunities to expand the high-quality Best in Class program to all eligible four-year-olds in the state?

## NORTH DAKOTA’S EARLY CARE AND LEARNING WORKFORCE

Even though early educators are referred to as the “workforce [behind](#) the workforce,” as they enable parents to continue working, they are one of the lowest-paid groups in the nation. In North Dakota, the average hourly wage for an early educator is [\\$13.74](#). The average living wage for an individual in North Dakota is [\\$19.36](#). The low pay and demands of the work cause widespread burnout among early educators, leading to significant attrition. In 2022, the North Dakota early educator workforce reduced by [25 percent](#). Credentialing and career lattice programs tied to increased compensation can improve the quality and [resilience](#) of the early education workforce. Supporting existing early educators and opening the pipeline for new educators is essential to a thriving child care system that supports children, families, and the workforce at large.

**Table 4: Licensed Providers within the State Quality Rating and Improvement System**

	Licensed providers	Providers in QRIS	Number of spaces in QRIS	Providers at the highest QRIS tier
Center-based	403	262	22,075	7
FCC home	720	714	9,313	10

**Table 5: Staff-to-child Ratios in North Dakota**

Staff: Child Ratios	Infant	Toddler	Preschooler	Required
State ratios	1:4	1:5	1:10	Yes
NAEYC standards	1:4	1:6	1:10	Yes

## Quality and the Early Educator Workforce

When assessing the quality of early care and learning, a number of factors are taken into consideration including staff-to-child ratios and the credentials of the early educator workforce. Staff-to-child ratios in North Dakota meet or exceed the standards, table five, set by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), providing a solid foundation for early learning in licensed settings. Table six shows the minimum credentials and annual professional development requirements for early educators in North Dakota.

The quality of early care and learning can be [enhanced](#) by providing early educators with apprenticeships and educational opportunities, and by creating career lattices tied to salary increases that allow them to advance in their knowledge, as well as in their profession. According to [standards](#) developed by the Bipartisan Policy Center, state agencies should define child care leadership and teaching roles, attach clear competencies to each role, communicate these competencies, and establish

a monitoring system to ensure on-the-ground efforts embody the standards. Some states have also developed a [network](#) of higher education institutions to connect early educators seamlessly with higher education. North Dakota is undertaking important work to [strengthen](#) the early educator workforce through efforts to:

- Revise and strengthen career lattices
- Update and align competencies and standards
- Reward [completion](#) of above-and-beyond training

## Policy Considerations

- ❓ Supporting existing early educators and opening the pipeline for new educators is essential to a thriving child care system that supports children, families, and the workforce at large.
- ❓ Is there potential to develop partnerships with higher education institutions to establish early educator apprenticeship and credentialing programs?

**Table 6: Annual Qualifications for Professional Development for Early Educators**

Qualifications	Director	Teacher	Assistant Teacher	Required
<b>Minimum Credentials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Pre-orientation and Orientation</li> <li>■ Training online within 3 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Orientation</li> <li>■ Training online within 3 months</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Orientation</li> <li>■ Training online within 3 months</li> </ul>	Yes
<b>Annual Training Hours</b>	13 hours	13 hours	13 hours	Yes

- 2 What opportunities exist to address current gaps in wages and benefits and stanch attrition within the state’s early childhood workforce?
- 2 Are there innovative cost models that allow child care facilities to hire and retain well prepared early educators?

## HIGH QUALITY MATH INSTRUCTION

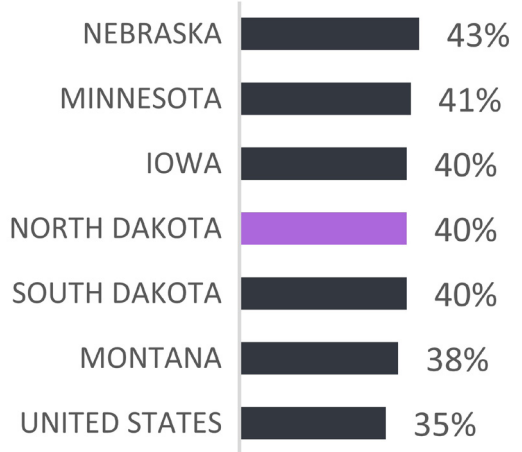
Mathematics proficiency serves as a benchmark to broadly measure the effectiveness of the United States’ education system. Over a 19-year period from 1990 to 2009, the national [average](#) for fourth-grade and eighth-grade mathematics proficiency has trended upward. However, in 2022 only 40 percent of North Dakota’s fourth-graders and 28 percent of eighth-graders demonstrated [proficiency](#) in math. Early math proficiency is a [predictor](#) of future success including meaningful employment opportunities and economic independence. High-quality math instruction focusing on the development of essential math concepts and skills is critical to achieving math proficiency. Additionally, higher math proficiency has been a [strong indicator](#) of the likelihood of earning a higher wage on average as an adult. Math proficiency can also predict future academic success in math, and among students of color, those who complete more advanced math courses are [more likely](#) to enroll and stay enrolled in college.

### North Dakota

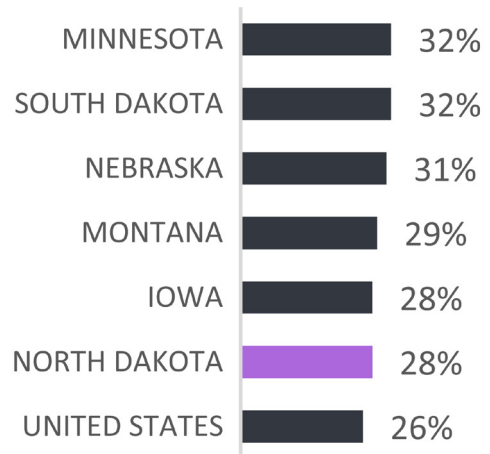
Through Elementary and Secondary Schools Emergency Relief funding (ESSER III), the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction (NDDPI) created the [Math in ND](#) program, to offer grants to support blended learning approaches in math classrooms for grades three through eight. Since mathematical concepts build on each other, gaps in learning from previous years can make it difficult for students to master new material and achieve proficiency. This program aims to close these

**Figure 1: National NAEP Proficiency Rates, By Region (2022)**

#### Grade 4 Math



#### Grade 8 Math



[Source](#)



gaps and boost math growth through blended learning, which combines both in-person instruction with online learning, utilizing technology to help educators assess students' prior knowledge, personalize academic paths for each student, and modify lessons.

The grant which was awarded to eight school districts across the state in 2023, creates a collaborative approach that involves resources and support from mathematics research firms, NDDPI, local >Math in ND teams from selected districts, and North Dakota Regional Education Associations.

## Evidence-aligned Math Instruction

There is a growing body of [research](#) combining objective evidence from cognitive psychology, education theory, and neuroscience to inform how math concepts and skills are learned. Traditional math teaching strategies rely on rote memorization and procedural training; however, these strategies do not foster deep mathematical understanding and problem-solving skills. [Research](#) indicates that students benefit from evidence-aligned math instruction that encourages active problem-solving, conceptual discussion, and application of math in real-world contexts.

### Preparing Teachers to be Effective Mathematics Instructors

Teacher education programs are pivotal in preparing educators to teach mathematics effectively, especially in light of the role mathematics proficiency plays in educational success and future opportunities. Mathematics knowledge is highly cumulative in nature and research [suggests](#) many elementary teachers lack confidence in their fundamental math abilities. As a result, an increasing number of undergraduate programs nationwide are allocating additional time for mathematics, aiming not only to equip future educators with teaching skills but also to foster a deeper conceptual understanding of math. By integrating [evidence-aligned](#) math instruction methodologies, including conceptual comprehension, procedural fluency, and real-world

application in their instructional approaches, these programs can equip educators with the knowledge and skills needed to facilitate meaningful learning experiences.

## Potential Outcomes of Effective Math Instructional Strategies

Evidence-aligned math instruction that encourages active problem-solving, conceptual discussion, and application math in real-world context prepares students to be adept thinkers. A deeper understanding of mathematical procedures enables students to approach new problems from a critical and creative lens and encourages using logic and reasoning to find solutions. Additionally, real-world applications build transferable math skills, while prioritizing [active](#) engagement leading to better retention of knowledge. States have the opportunity to [effectively](#) measure comprehensive learning growth by developing or utilizing assessments that span standards across multiple grade levels.

## Policy Considerations

- ❓ How can policymakers prioritize the adoption of evidence-aligned instructional strategies in mathematics education?
- ❓ How can North Dakota develop and fund professional development programs emphasizing the importance of balanced instructional strategies to integrate conceptual understanding with procedural fluency?
- ❓ In what ways can policymakers support the state's teacher preparation programs at colleges and universities in preparing educators to teach mathematics effectively?

## NORTH DAKOTA'S CONSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO CHARACTER EDUCATION

Supporting and guiding the nation's students as they develop the skills required to ensure a strong and successful future is a key tenet of public education. [According to the U.S. Department of Education](#), character education, "teaches the habits of thought and deed that help people live and work together as families, friends, neighbors, communities and nations." Over several decades, 22 states have enacted policies requiring character development education for their students. The North Dakota Constitution established the public education system's goal to develop, "a high degree of intelligence, patriotism, integrity and morality." North Dakota's commitment to character development is

codified in statute and requires teachers to complete professional development on youth behavioral health topics including trauma, bullying, and knowledge of behavioral health symptoms and risks.

### Implementation and Evaluation

Explicit guidance and language outlining specific values, traits, and expectations is key to implementing a successful character education program. Additional consideration should also be provided for the evaluation and measurement of the character education program's impact. Clear guidance to develop effective accountability metrics can reduce ambiguity and subjectivity in assessment. When considering evaluation, [research](#) suggests three legitimate purposes of evaluation in character education: school culture, effectiveness of character education strategy, and peer self-reflection.

**Table 7: Evaluating Effective Character Education**

Evaluation of Effective Character Education	
School Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This measure evaluates the effectiveness of a school's culture or ethos in supplementing the values students are being educated on.</li> <li>Schools can be self-audited or peer-audited against set criteria or standards enacted by the state or district.</li> <li>These evaluations would be dependent on the teacher's professional knowledge and judgment as the picture built up by the evaluation provides evidence as to the school's collective strengths and weaknesses, further highlighting where improvements can be made.</li> </ul>
Character Education Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This measure evaluates the overall effectiveness of the character education strategy as it pertains to activities and approaches.</li> <li>Methods include pre-intervention and post-intervention surveys, observations and interviews with students and teachers can be applied with some success to gain evidence about the impact of new and existing character education strategies or activities.</li> <li>Methodology should be carefully targeted at measuring only one or two components of virtue. Also important to triangulate data by using more than one source of evidence.</li> </ul>
Self-Reflection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This measure consists of students reflecting on their personal character and virtues they undertake. These might be recorded at regular intervals during a student's educational journey such as a journal.</li> </ul>

[Source](#)

## Educator Preparation

For educators to implement effective character education with fidelity in classrooms, they must be properly trained in strategies to address youth behavioral health within their respective schools. Within [North Dakota statute](#), it is required that school districts provide at least one full day of training educators and school administrators from elementary through high school on numerous youth behavioral health topics. Professional development training should include relevant topics like trauma, suicide prevention, and bullying. For accountability, school districts should report time spent in training related student behavioral health strategies to the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. The North Dakota Century Code requires schools to designate and staff an individual to act as the behavioral health resource coordinator. While North Dakota statute explicitly states training requirements, increasing the required training time would provide more opportunities for educators to better support students' behavioral health. Adequate educator preparation is imperative to successfully implement effective character education within the state of North Dakota.

## Policy Considerations

- ❓ How can character education curriculum standards be strengthened by policymakers through legislation to provide greater uniformity across the state?
- ❓ Which strategies can be used to provide more explicit guidance on the standards and expectations of character education? How can teachers and administrators be best trained and prepared to ensure effective implementation?
- ❓ In what other ways can character education be effectively evaluated to ensure accountability in programming and activities?

## ALIGNING EDUCATION INVESTMENTS TO STUDENT OUTCOMES

[Accountability systems](#) enable states to measure and hold districts, schools, and educators accountable for raising student achievement and providing education stakeholders with data on where additional support and improvements may be necessary. From 2002 until late 2015, states were held accountable to standards laid out under the [No Child Left Behind](#) (NCLB) Act, which emphasized student assessment scores and tied results to educator and school evaluation and measures of quality, leading to a culture of “high stakes” testing. The [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) (ESSA), which replaced NCLB, removed many accountability requirements tying student performance to teacher evaluation, leaving the decision on whether to do so largely up to the states.

Accountability systems are used to measure student outcomes and identify areas of growth for districts and schools. States design and implement their own accountability systems. For example, many states include measures for target student areas such as students with disabilities, multi-lingual learners, or students with low socioeconomic status. Once education leaders use this data to identify areas of improvement, stakeholders can make responsive financial decisions to address student needs. Leaders may consider providing additional funding for students in these areas or hiring additional staff to support target student groups. The most common [student success indicators](#) include chronic absenteeism, college and career readiness, and school climate or safety.

The variety of accountability systems reflects state priorities for education accountability. It is important to consider transparency when evaluating accountability systems because they are used by both education leaders and families to make strategic education decisions.



**Table 8: Accountability Systems by State**

Accountability System	Description	States
A – F Rating System	School accountability scores are converted to an A through F grade for each school and/or district	Indiana, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Utah
Descriptive	Varies from state to state, text-based labels are assigned based on performance indicators.	Delaware, Illinois, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Jersey, South Carolina, Vermont, West Virginia, Wyoming
Index Rating System	Varies from state to state, schools are typically given a composite score ranging from anywhere between 1-5 or 1-100	Alaska, Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Missouri, New Mexico, <b>North Dakota</b> , South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin
1 – 5 Stars	School accountability scores are converted to a score of 1 to 5 stars	Washington D.C., Kentucky, Maryland, Nevada, Rhode Island
Dashboard	California's unique <a href="#">dashboard system</a> utilizes speedometer-style charts and colors to display performance results on multiple indicators.	California
Federal Tiers of Support	Only schools which fall into the “lowest performing schools” category are identified as meeting federal requirements for intervening in low-performing schools. Other schools are not ranked.	Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Virginia

[Source 1](#); [Source 2](#)

## North Dakota

North Dakota utilizes an [index-rating system](#) for quantifying school quality and performance, in which schools receive “points” across a variety of metrics. This accountability system is made accessible to the public through a data dashboard linked to North Dakota’s Statewide Longitudinal Data System, [Insights.ND.gov](#), which contains K-12 education, career and technical education, college, and workforce data. North Dakota’s accountability system evaluates schools on the following metrics:

Accountability Metrics	
Graduation Rate	Completer Rate
English Learner Proficiency Growth	Student Engagement
Choice Ready Rate	School Support
Growth in English and Math	Student Assessment Proficiency

Source

### Outcomes Inform Investments

North Dakota’s data system enables strategic investment in education by measuring key areas of student and school performance. The accountability system is primarily focused on student proficiency and readiness for college and career with intentional transparency related to school support needs. North Dakota uses this data to support a cycle of continuous improvement and publishes metrics of [School Support](#) across the state. Currently, 466 schools receive general support, 15 schools receive general and comprehensive support, and 27 schools receive general and targeted support.

The 15 schools identified as receiving [Comprehensive Support and Improvement](#) (CSI) are low-performing, have low graduation rates, or consistently low-performing student subgroups. North Dakota offers a grant allocation to these schools with strategically identified improvement strategies to align education investment with student outcomes. Schools may [exit](#) from CSI once they improve their graduation rates to over 67 percent and meet interim goals for three consecutive years. Schools receiving [Targeted Support and Improvement](#) (TSI) consistently perform in the bottom 10 percent of schools. TSI schools are also supported by a 15-month grant cycle aimed at providing targeted intervention for strategic improvement strategies. Schools may exit from TSI once they are no longer considered consistently underperforming by the state’s accountability system.

### Policy Considerations

- ❓ Does the state accountability system present data in a way that is accessible and understandable to all stakeholders, particularly parents and families?
- ❓ Does the state accountability system account for multiple measures of success, and is it transparent around where equity gaps exist?
- ❓ Does the state accountability system balance support for student growth and proficiency to ensure all students are learning in a high-quality environment?

## PREPARING EDUCATORS THROUGH APPRENTICESHIP

Research [confirms](#) that a high-quality teacher is the [most significant](#) in-school determinant of student achievement. In fact, teachers are estimated to have nearly [three times](#) the effect of other school factors on student achievement.

Additionally, research shows that teacher diversity matters. Students of color who have teachers of a similar race or ethnicity, identity, and lived experience are [less likely](#) to be suspended, more likely to graduate high school, enroll in postsecondary education, and obtain a postsecondary degree and/or credential. [The benefits are most significant for students of color](#), though all students experience greater engagement, higher achievement, and cross-cultural interactions from having access to a diverse group of educators, including teachers, principals, superintendents, and other school-based personnel.

Modeled after medical residencies, Teacher Residency Programs offer one strategy for creating an effective and diverse teaching corps. [Teacher apprenticeships](#) combine coursework and on-the-job experience with the goal of reducing the cost of earning a teaching degree while providing candidates with necessary time in classrooms during their preparation. Apprentices earn a wage for their time in the classroom, unlike traditional student teachers, and ultimately earn a degree and/or teaching certificate. Apprenticeship programs are generally an expansion of the [teacher residency model](#), which provide teaching candidates with the opportunity to work alongside a mentor teacher for at least one year before becoming the teacher of record. Teacher residencies tend to attract people of color at [higher rates](#) when compared to the national teacher population due to the reduced cost compared to student teaching, and teachers prepared through residency programs tend to stay in the classroom [longer](#) than those who are not.

While apprenticeships are a relatively new concept for teachers, [evidence suggests](#) that the residency

model, which is similar to the apprenticeship model, can support higher employment rates and higher wages. Apprenticeships recognized by the United States Department of Labor are relatively new, with Tennessee, highlighted below, establishing the first federally registered program in [January 2022](#). The [National Center for Grow Your Own](#) is currently working with seven additional states to develop and pilot additional teacher apprenticeship programs. These states include California, Florida, Missouri, North Dakota, Texas, West Virginia, and Wyoming.

### North Dakota

North Dakota currently offers a [Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program](#) at five institutions of higher education as a part of the state's Grow Your Own model. North Dakota districts must opt-in to participating in the program and be able to support teacher apprentices and partner with educator preparation programs. Currently, candidates for the Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (RTAP) must be an employed paraprofessional or another school staff member who wishes to become a teacher. All candidates will earn a bachelor's degree while participating in the RTAP. The first cohort of apprentices in North Dakota began their program in [January 2023](#).

After approving the "K-12 Teacher" as an occupation eligible for apprenticeship in November 2021, the U.S. Department of Labor approved the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction application for the "K-12 Principal" as an occupation eligible for apprenticeship co-sponsored by the National Center for Grow Your Own and the Council for Chief State School Officers. The [registered apprenticeship for K-12 principals](#) is a competency-based program which requires 2,000 hours of experience as an assistant principal, and related technical instruction from a master's degree in school leadership.

**Table 9: North Dakota Apprenticeship Impact Data**

Apprenticeship Impact	
Participating Educator Preparation Programs	10
Projected New Teachers	610
Projected New Principals	11

[Source](#)

## Policy Considerations

- How can North Dakota ensure sustainable, long-term funding for teacher apprenticeship programs through federal, state, and local sources?
- What mentorship structures are necessary to provide ongoing support and feedback for apprentices?
- How can North Dakota partner with colleges and universities to align apprenticeship programs with teacher certification requirements to offer necessary training with clinical experience?

## THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY EXPOSURE TO POSTSECONDARY AND CAREER PATHWAYS

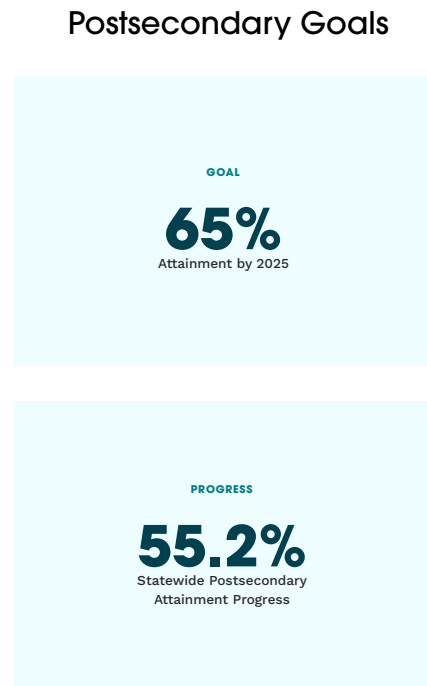
Early exposure to postsecondary and career pathways is vital for students as it lays the groundwork for their future endeavors and fosters a sense of purpose and direction from an early age. By providing opportunities for experience, engagement, and exploration early in their schooling, students begin to understand the multitude of pathways available to them beyond high school.

With an ever-increasing reliance on credentialing post-secondary schooling, the need for growing

exposure for students is imperative. Initiatives aimed at fostering such exposure, play a crucial role in shaping students' aspirations and preparing them for success in their chosen paths. These initiatives guide students in navigating their postsecondary plans and bridge the gap between the classroom and the workforce, aiming for a seamless transition into adulthood and the world beyond schooling.

With the modern economy typically requiring schooling or credentialing beyond the high school diploma, higher education continues to provide a critical role in ensuring the workforce is ready to meet the needs of business and industry. North Dakota aims for a statewide postsecondary attainment goal of 65 percent for residents aged 25-64 by 2025. Yet, the current statewide progress towards this attainment goal stands at 55.2 percent of individuals having obtained a postsecondary degree or credential.

**Figure 2: North Dakota Attainment Goal and Progress**



[Source](#)

## North Dakota’s Postsecondary Landscape

Against this backdrop, the state of North Dakota faces challenges in maintaining its on-time graduation rates. Since 2020-2021, on-time graduation rate dipped from 87 percent to 83 percent in North Dakota. This statistical downturn hinted at a broader stagnation or, in some cases, regression in graduation rates across the state.

Digging deeper into the educational journey of North Dakota’s students, another statistic emerged regarding Career and Technical Education (CTE) students. Ninety-six percent of CTE students graduate with a high school diploma and 68.5 percent of CTE secondary students pursue postsecondary education. Of those students who go on to postsecondary education, 82.3 percent are placed in employment, military service, or apprenticeships within six months of their postsecondary enrollment. These trends indicate the need for further CTE expansion to assist in reaching the attainment goal set for North Dakota, and the importance of CTE being a space to grant access to early exposure for career pathways.

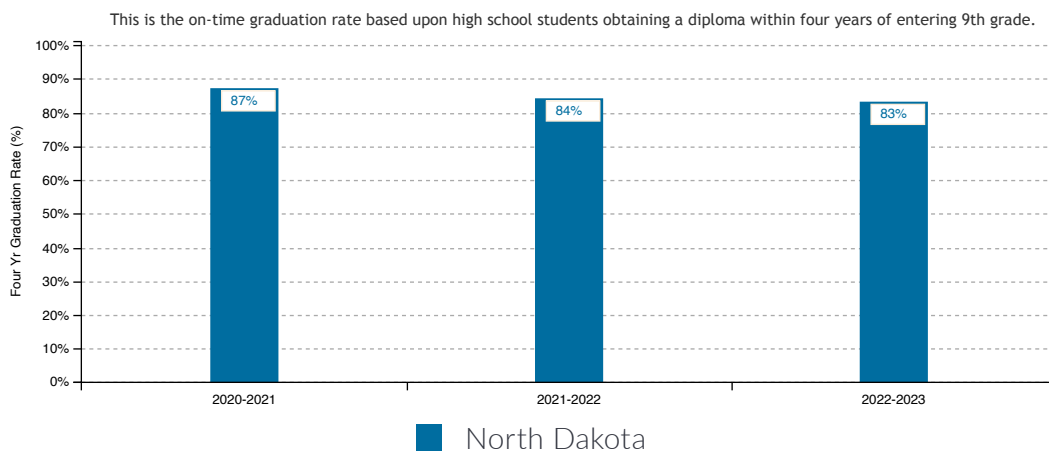
## National Context

In looking at the national context, it is reported that non-white school districts face a funding disparity, receiving \$23 billion less in school funding than white districts serving the same number of students. This inequality translates into unequal access to resources and opportunities for minority students. Further, access to advanced coursework remains uneven, with white and Asian students significantly more likely to have such opportunities compared to black students. This disparity perpetuates educational inequalities and limits the academic and career prospects of minority students.

Moreover, black and Hispanic students are disproportionately underserved in terms of school counseling focused on higher education preparation, further exacerbating the barriers they face in accessing postsecondary opportunities.

To achieve the 2025 postsecondary attainment goal, there must be intentional action to close the racial equity gaps in attainment. Over 30 percent of North Dakota’s student population identifies as American Indian or Alaskan Native. As a result, North Dakota is home to five Tribal Colleges and Universities, or institutions of higher education, that are being controlled and operated by federally recognized American Indian tribes. Studies have shown that Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) are drivers of

**Figure 3: North Dakota Four Year Graduation Rates: 2020-21 through 2022-23**



**Figure 4: CTE Fast Facts for North Dakota**

**Fast Facts**

**3,676**

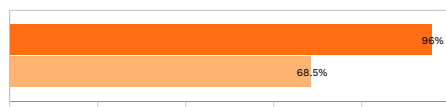
Associates Degrees & Certificates Awarded

**28.4%**

of All Degrees & Certificates Awarded Statewide

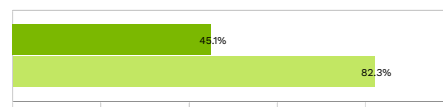


**CTE Secondary Concentrators**



- Graduation Rate
- Go on to Postsecondary Education

**CTE Postsecondary Concentrators**



- Earn a Postsecondary Credential, Certificate, or Diploma
- Placed in Employment, Military Service or Apprenticeships Within Six Months

Source

economic mobility, as low-income students attending an MSI have two to three times higher economic mobility rates than students at non-Minority-Serving Institutions.

**State Examples**

- [New Jersey Plan for Higher Education](#): Commitment to exploring college options and career paths in middle school and high school, experiential learning before high school graduation, fee-free college prep programs.
- [Indiana’s Tuition-Free Training Grant](#): The Indiana Commission of Higher Education offers the [Next Level Jobs Workforce Ready grant](#) for Indiana residents who have completed their high school diploma but have not attained a postsecondary degree or credential.

- ❓ In what ways can policymakers support implementation of college and career exploration into secondary school curriculums?
- ❓ How can policymakers expand Career and Technical Education and work-based learning in high schools to fit regional workforce needs?

**Policy Considerations**

- ❓ How can policymakers further support partnerships between secondary schools and dual-enrollment/vocational programs to create a college/career-going culture in schools?





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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