Interest in Teaching Continues to Drop Among High School Students

High school students are less and less interested in becoming teachers—a trend that's picking up speed at an “alarming” rate, the ACT said recently. An ACT survey of high school graduates who took the ACT college-entrance exam shows that among the class of 2015, only four percent said they planned to become teachers, counselors, or administrators. In 2014, five percent said they had such plans, and in 2010, seven percent did. Twenty years ago, nine percent of high school students who took the ACT said they were planning education careers.

Since the 1960s, the Iowa-based test maker has surveyed college and career plans of students who take the ACT and go on to graduate from high school. About 1.9 million such students are represented in the most recent survey. Of that number, only 87,653 indicated that they were aiming for careers in education.

The ACT found a continuation of another disturbing trend in the survey as well. Students who plan to become educators are lower-than-average achievers. That finding is based on the proportion who met ACT college-readiness benchmarks, i.e., ACT scores that correlate with a good chance of getting at least Bs or Cs in college courses. At a time when good teachers in the STEM field are in great demand, ACT found that students who said they aspired to be educators were particularly weak in mathematics and science. [Catherine Gewertz, Education Week, July 6, 2016]

Alyssa Martin Leaving NDSBA

After ten years of service to NDSBA, Alyssa Martin has accepted a position as Assistant to the Vice President of Academic Affairs at the University of Mary in Bismarck. She begins her new position on August 1. A superbly gifted and talented individual, Alyssa has been invaluable to the success of the association. In her capacity as Director of Policy Services, Alyssa has assisted board members and superintendents with their policy questions on a daily basis. As a gifted writer and researcher, Alyssa has authored our monthly publication, Policy Ponderings, a timely and rich resource for school boards. Due to Alyssa’s insight and initiative, she fostered a partnership with the North Dakota Association of School Business Managers to develop the School Business Manager Certification Program. The program, now in its fourth year, provides professional development to school business managers by offering classes taught by the most experienced education experts in North Dakota.

Alyssa’s contributions have been a great benefit to NDSBA and she will be deeply missed. We wish Alyssa the very best and the greatest of success in her future career.

North Dakota Joins Other States in Challenge of Federal Transgender Bathroom Mandate

Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem joined Attorneys General from nine other states in filing a complaint in federal district court challenging the recent federal mandate pertaining to bathrooms and locker rooms used by transgender students. “This [mandate] is yet another example of federal overreach. The federal government does not have the authority to mandate that North Dakota schools require students to share locker rooms and bathrooms with children of the opposite sex,” said Stenehjem.

In the complaint, states allege that the federal mandate purports to supersede school district authority in addressing student issues on an individualized, professional, and private basis.

“North Dakota school districts, not Washington bureaucrats, are in the best position to make decisions that affect our students. In North Dakota, the local schools already review these isolated cases as they occur, to establish, on a case-by-case basis, the appropriate measures to protect student privacy,” said Stenehjem.

In addition to North Dakota, the plaintiff states are Arkansas, Kansas, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, Ohio, South Carolina, South Dakota, and Wyoming.
NDSBA Director Of Policy Services – Vacancy

The North Dakota School Boards Association seeks an individual to provide administration of the NDSBA Policy Services Program in Bismarck. This full-time position involves policy review, research, and development; responding to phone calls and emails from NDSBA membership on a daily basis; presenting sessions on policy and other topics at NDSBA seminars and convention; administering the North Dakota School Business Manager Certification Program; and reviewing and writing NDSBA handbooks and other publications. Background in human resources, school administration, and/or state or local government is helpful. Starting salary range is $65,000-$70,000 based on experience and includes a benefit package. Bachelor’s degree is required; education and experience in a related field preferred. **Apply by August 15, 2016.** Background checks will be conducted on applicants selected for an interview. Application materials/job description available at www.ndsba.org or call 701-255-4127.

NDSBA Seeks Candidates for Board of Director Positions

The NDSBA Board of Directors is comprised of seven individuals: four regional directors and three officers (president, vice president, and past president).

NDSBA Vice President Ben Auch has decided not to seek the office of president due to a significant increase in commitments at work. As a result, Southeast Director Jim Johnson will be running for the office of NDSBA President and Northwest Director Mike Lautenschlager will be running for the office of NDSBA Vice President. Southwest Director Lawrence King was not re-elected to the Bismarck School Board at the June election so there will be an opening for Southwest Director.

As a result of these three vacant positions, letters have been sent to school board members in the Southeast, Northwest, and Southwest Districts indicating these positions on the board of directors will be up for election at the NDSBA Annual Convention in October. Anyone interested in serving on the board of directors from these regions is encouraged to complete the Candidate Information Form enclosed with the letter. The form must be received in the NDSBA office by **Monday, August 15, 2016.**

According to NDSBA bylaws, the Nominating Committee will review applications and select candidates to be placed on the ballot for the election on Friday, October 28, 2016, in Bismarck. Candidates slated for election will have time to make brief comments at the first business session on Thursday afternoon, October 27, 2016.

Are Hotel Rooms Taxable in North Dakota?
The Answer Depends on Who Pays and How

Recent queries regarding school district liability for taxes on rooms occupied by school sports teams prompted NDSBA to consult the North Dakota Office of State Tax Commissioner. Under North Dakota law, if a hotel or motel room is rented in North Dakota for fewer than 30 consecutive days, a sales tax is imposed. This tax applies not only to a sleeping room, but also to meeting rooms, conference rooms, banquet rooms, and swimming facilities.

The United States government, state government, and all political subdivisions, including school districts, are exempt from the payment of sales tax. However, individuals who represent these governmental entities are not exempt.

If a school sports team travels to another city and rents hotel rooms, and those rooms are paid “directly by government warrant, check, or a government issued credit card that is centrally billed to and paid by the issuing agency,” the tax does not apply. On the other hand, if employees, such as teachers or administrators, go to a conference, pay for their own lodging, and then submit a claim for reimbursement by their district, the sales tax must be paid.

South Dakota Schools See Fewer Teacher Openings

A monthly survey of teacher job openings in South Dakota shows that the number of teacher vacancies is continuing its downward trend, dipping below last year’s numbers for the sixth consecutive month. In June, the South Dakota Teacher Placement Center reported 186 openings, as compared to 215 during the same month last year. South Dakota school districts employ approximately 9,600 teachers.

The South Dakota Legislature earlier this year approved a one-half cent sales tax hike in order to raise more than $60 million for new education funding, including increases in teacher pay.
What are the statutory requirements regarding school district insurance reviews?

North Dakota Century Code section 15.1-09-59 requires that each school district work with its commercial property insurance carrier, at least once every six years, to ensure that all school district buildings, facilities, and contents are properly inventoried and accurately valued.

Annually, each school district must review the sufficiency of its insurance policies so that in the event of a loss, there is full coverage for repair or replacement of the district’s buildings and facilities, and for their contents. The Superintendent of Public Instruction must verify each district’s compliance with this section.

The school board is in the process of hiring a new business manager. Who provides administrative oversight with respect to the business manager?

North Dakota Century Code section 15.1-07-20.1 provides that the school board “shall exercise administrative oversight” with respect to the business manager. If the board wishes to delegate that oversight to the superintendent, the board must define the supervisory structure in policy and represent that structure in the school district’s organizational chart.

A student who was a victim of violence while attending school in another district seeks to transfer to your district under open enrollment provisions. Your school board has already determined that your district will not accept applications for open enrollment. Can the student be denied open enrollment?

While the North Dakota Century Code allows the board of a school district to determine that applications for open enrollment will not be considered, it requires that an exception be made for a student who was the victim of violence, provided the application for enrollment concerns a student in a contiguous district and one of the following conditions is met:

- The violence that occurred was documented;
- The Superintendent of Public Instruction has declared the school in which the student was enrolled to be an unsafe school; or
- The Superintendent of Public Instruction has identified the school in which the student was enrolled as one that has required program improvement for six consecutive years.

You have been asked for a copy of a public record. Does the request have to be written or can it be oral? Can you charge the requestor?

North Dakota Century Code section 44-04-18(2) states that the request does not have to be made in person and it does not have to be written. Phone call requests, e-mail requests, fax requests, and in-person requests are equally valid. You may charge up to 25 cents per page and you may charge for postage needed to mail the document. You may also require payment before you provide the document.

In addition, the North Dakota Century Code allows you to charge up to $25 per hour, excluding the initial hour, to locate records and excise confidential material from the records.

Education Standards And Practices Board Under New Leadership

The Education Standards and Practices Board selected Dr. Rebecca Pitkin to serve as its new executive director. Dr. Pitkin holds a baccalaureate degree in elementary education from Gordon College, Wenham, Massachusetts; master’s degrees in curriculum and instruction and in educational administration from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; and a doctoral degree in educational leadership and policy studies from Iowa State University. Dr. Pitkin has been a classroom teacher in Virginia, Hawaii, Nevada, and Massachusetts, and most recently was a principal at Jefferson Elementary School in Dickinson, North Dakota. She was also a tenured faculty member at Dickinson State University, where she taught education courses and supervised preservice teachers. Dr. Pitkin has served as an advisor and consultant on a variety of state and national education projects and initiatives.

Dr. Pitkin will succeed Dr. Janet Welk, who served as the executive director of the Education Standards and Practices Board for the past 18 years.

Competency-Based Education Training

Kirsten Baesler, Superintendent of Public Instruction, has announced a one-day training opportunity for school districts interested in pursuing competency-based education. The training, which is free of charge, will take place in the Brynhild Haugland Room, on the ground floor of the State Capitol, from 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. on Monday, August 15, 2016. For registration information, please contact Gail Schauer, Director of the Office of Teacher and School Effectiveness, at gschauer@nd.gov or (701) 328-2755. Information on competency-based education, including a recorded one-hour webinar, can be accessed on the Department of Public Instruction website at https://www.nd.gov/dpi/SchoolStaff/TSE/initiatives/CBE/.
One Key to Reducing School Suspension: A Little Respect

“R-E-S-P-E-C-T: Find out what it means to me.” In schools working to reduce suspension rates, teachers could take a cue from Aretha Franklin. Considering how young people view respect can greatly improve classroom management, new studies show.

A one-time intervention to help teachers and students empathize with each other halved the number of suspensions at five diverse California middle schools and helped students who had previously been suspended feel more connected at school, according to Stanford University research published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. “Changing the mindset of one teacher can change the social experience of that child’s entire world,” said Jason A. Okonofua, a Stanford University social psychologist who led the experiments.

In- and out-of-school suspensions have come under increasing scrutiny as a discipline tactic. One recent study from the University of California, Los Angeles, estimates that because suspensions are so closely linked to later school dropout and referrals to law enforcement, cutting the 16 percent nationwide rate for all 10th grade suspensions by even 1 percentage point could save taxpayers $691 million over students’ lives.

In a series of experiments, the Stanford researchers found teachers often view respect in terms of cooperation and compliance. For students, respect involves a basic recognition of humanity, including remembering a student’s name and pronouncing it correctly, not speaking down to students or embarrassing them in front of their peers, and expressing interest in their perspectives. Both college- and middle-school-age students reported losing respect for teachers who disciplined students in a dismissive or punitive way, and said that they would be more likely to misbehave in such a teacher’s class.

Feeling respected can change how hard students are willing to work in class, too. Research shows that just a short, encouraging note on a highly marked-up essay could change the way students considered their teachers’ critiques. Adding a note saying “I’m giving you these comments because I have high standards and I know you can reach them” significantly boosted students’ willingness to rewrite the paper from 62 percent to 87 percent for white students and from 17 percent to 71 percent of black students.

“The most interesting and inspiring part is that we only intervened with one of the students’ teachers, and it affected their interactions with every other teacher. Just having one better relationship with a teacher at school—just one—can serve as a buffer for all the other struggles and challenges at school,” Okonofua said. The researchers plan to repeat the study with a larger group of schools next year, as well as follow up in more detail on how students’ and teachers’ feelings of respect for each other change over time.

[Sarah D. Sparks, Education Week, July 19, 2016]