



bulletin



MAY 2014

Excellence in North Dakota public education through local school board governance ■VOL XXXIX ISSUE 5

Two North Dakota School Districts Shift to Four-day Weeks

Republished with permission from *The Bismarck Tribune*

Two public school districts in North Dakota will be shifting to four-day school weeks this fall in an effort to save money and increase student and staff morale.

While more than a quarter of schools in bordering South Dakota run on four-day schedules, the districts in Dunseith and East Fairview will be the first two in North Dakota in several years. The Department of Public Instruction approved the switches in April.

Pat Brenden, superintendent at the 425-student Dunseith Public School District, said they've seen dramatic decreases in federal funding in recent years, which led them to consider the modified schedule.

The district is made of a large portion of non-taxable public trust land and to make up for fewer property taxpayers, the district relies heavily on Federal Impact Aid Funding. But two years ago the district saw a \$600,000 decrease in funding. Officials were able to balance the budget, but had to cut four positions and consolidate bus routes. Brenden said knowing more cuts were coming pushed them toward making a change.

"We just really can't cut staff any more without really affecting programs," he said.

Brenden said the district hopes to save close to \$250,000 as a four-day schedule decreases energy costs and

expenses such as running the school cafeteria.

Dunseith is following the pattern of other schools nationwide that rely on Federal Impact Aid Funding and have gone to four-day weeks in the wake of cuts, Brenden said.

Dale Wetzel, a spokesman for the Department of Public Instruction, said the department won't approve schools to switch to four-day weeks solely for financial reasons. Districts have to show the department they will increase the education quality for students.

Brenden said studies of the approximately 120 schools around the country that run on four-day weeks have shown that morale and attendance have increased in students and staff.

Weeks will run Monday through Thursday at Dunseith. Friday will be development days and time that students can get extra help. And because they're lengthening their classes by ten minutes each, Brenden said Dunseith students will actually be in school more over the course of the year than those at schools with traditional schedules.

Dunseith said 95 percent of parents surveyed said they supported the change if it meant teachers could keep their jobs and the quality of the education wouldn't be negatively affected. A few also mentioned the issue of child care on Fridays.

Derek Gackle, the principal of East

Fairview Elementary, has seen the changes firsthand in his two children that attend Fairview Elementary across the border in Montana. Fairview began running on a four-day schedule this year. He said his kids are more upbeat knowing they have a shorter week.

"Hey, it's four days, we can get through it," he said, describing his kids' attitudes.

East Fairview is changing their schedule to mirror Fairview's, where North Dakota students attend high school.

Gackle said the shorter schedule will also allow staff to have more development days. The state currently requires two per year.

"Now we'll actually have 10," Gackle said.

Steve Willard, the superintendent at Belle Fourche Public Schools in South Dakota, said freeing up Fridays allows teachers more development time, gives struggling students more time to get specialized attention and mitigates how much school time student athletes have to sacrifice.

About a quarter of schools in South Dakota, including Belle Fourche who switched in 2003, run on a four-day school schedule.

Data from South Dakota's Department of Public Education shows that about 40 schools — or 26 percent — run on four-day weeks. Brenden said they found there are about 120 nationwide.

NDSBA Membership Dues Statements Sent

NDSBA dues statements have been sent to district business managers. School districts in North Dakota have long benefited from the support, training, information, and legislative advocacy provided by the North

Dakota School Boards Association. When public school boards join together, they make a difference in their own effectiveness and overall support for public education.



from the director's chair

■ by Jon Martinson, NDSBA Executive Director

Education Reform and the Nasty Debate About The Common Core

Education has a long history of reform. We keep trying to improve and enhance the system. Some efforts have had significant impact while others have not. In reality, most have not. That's probably why we keep searching for the ideal. We still use Carnegie units (seat time), but there is interest in moving toward mastery of content. As an example, we care more that the pilot of our plane has mastered the complexities of flying than we do about how long it took to do so.

Equity-based reform in the 1960s and 1970s, was a federal government effort to develop programs and policies that would improve educational equity for minority children, poor children, children with disabilities, children with limited

English proficiency, and women and girls.

That was followed by the school choice movement that is based on the idea that parents ought to choose, at public expense, the school their child attends. In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative For Educational Reform*, thought to be a landmark event in modern American educational history. The report contributed to the assertion that American schools were failing and it started a wave of local, state, and federal reform efforts.

The late 1980s ushered in the standards-based reform movement, the purpose of which was to identify what students should know and be able to do at specific grade levels and to measure whether they were mastering that content.

States were at various levels of implementing standards and aligned tests when President Bush proposed the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) in 2002. The Act prescribed more extensive grade-level testing by setting a deadline of 2014 for all students to be proficient in English language arts and mathematics. If students did not pass the annual state accountability tests, their schools would be labeled as "failing" because of the penalties prescribed by NCLB. In 2011, nearly half the schools in the U.S. did not meet their state targets for student proficiency.

Furthermore, there were difficulties due to having different standards in each of the 50 states. This led the nation's governors and chief state school officers to develop Common Core State Standards in English language arts and

mathematics.

So here we are today. The Common Core. The new set of national education standards in math and English language arts that brings a single set of standards throughout the country and replaces what we had: a mess. It has also brought a firestorm of controversy.

What concerns me most about the Common Core discussion is the level of viciousness, vitriol, and personal attacks that it has generated in North Dakota. People have resorted to exaggeration, interpretation, divisive politics, personal smear attacks, and name calling as a substitute for honest debate based on the standards themselves. Let's get a focus. What is the real debate?

We all have an investment in our children's education. People on both sides of this issue have legitimate concerns and those concerns should not be simply dismissed as though they don't mean anything. Both sides are trying to achieve something good. Diverse perspectives are helpful and can lead to great results. But to do that, people need to express ideas and concerns in a reasonable, logical, and fact-based manner without personal attacks, paranoia, and fear-mongering.

Dr. Duke Pesta, a homeschooling advocate, was invited to Bismarck by those who oppose the Common Core to express his "truth." He believes the Department of Public Instruction is holding back information from the public such as:

- Common Core was put together behind closed doors by an unholy alliance between the federal government and crony capitalists
- Common Core joins weak pedagogy with blatant sociological indoctrination to separate children from their families.

These statements by Pesta are merely his opinion masquerading as truth. Furthermore, phrases in those statements like "unholy alliance" and "blatant sociological indoctrination" are explosive and are used to bait the public. This does not advance sound, logical, reasoned debate. Rather, it stirs

Continued on page 3

bulletin

The Bulletin is the official newsletter of the North Dakota School Boards Association. It is published twelve times each year and is mailed as third class mail from New Salem, North Dakota.

EDITOR Annette Bendish

PUBLISHER

North Dakota School Boards Association
PO Box 7128
Bismarck, ND 58507-7128

TELEPHONE 1-800-932-8791

LOCAL (701)255-4127

FAX (701)258-7992

WEB SITE www.ndsba.org

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Jon Martinson, Bismarck

OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Greg Allen, Jamestown

VICE PRESIDENT

Jim Rostad, Minot

PAST PRESIDENT

Angela Korsmo, West Fargo

DIRECTORS

Ben Auch, Mott/Regent

Jennifer Johnson, Larimore

Jim Johnson, Fargo

Mike Lautenschlager, Berthold

■ From the Director's Chair

Continued from page 2

passion, emotion, and suspicion. And frankly, that's not helpful.

State Superintendent Baesler's role is to implement the Common Core which was approved for the state by then Governor John Hoeven and former state superintendent Wayne Sanstead. Ms. Baesler didn't write, develop, or approve North Dakota's Common Core State Standards. Yet, she is being held accountable and any misstep by the Department of Public Instruction (real or imagined) is her fault ... and it's become personal. Very personal. Regarding an issue this week, bloggers write:

- Talk about losing one's credibility. Ms. Baesler needs to come clean, apologize to all concerned including the citizens of North Dakota.
- Look for her on the next episode of "Pretty Little Liars."
- Time for some new leadership in DPI. Very disappointed to see Ms. Baesler engage in low handed tactics.

Let's redirect the focus of debate to the actual Common Core standards. Which ones, specifically, are objectionable and why?

Supporters of education are fighting with each other at a frantic level—as though some major catastrophic shift will come about and irreparably change the outcome of education for the foreseeable future and harm a generation of students. When is the last time that happened in the United States? The reality is, despite education reform efforts, the needle does not move very far from the middle.

Our focus needs to be on the core standards themselves (i.e., what students need to know and be able to do at grade level throughout the country) and the impact those standards have on student achievement. Then let's also provide a challenging curriculum, hire and retain outstanding teachers, and employ dedicated administrators to ensure this latest reform is successful—all in an effort for graduating students to be well prepared to succeed in college, career, and in life.



Room Reservations

Remember, the 2014 NDSBA Annual Convention is schedule for Thursday and Friday, October 23 and 24. If you have a room reservation for Friday night, you need to cancel if you are not planning to stay. Contact Ramkota Hotel reservations at 701-258-7700.

Jack Levin Scheduled as Convention Keynote

Friday morning's opening session at NDSBA's Annual Convention will feature Northeastern University Professor of Sociology and Criminology Jack Levin. The session will begin at 8:00 a.m. Dr. Levin will discuss juvenile violence and school shootings.

NDSBA School Law Seminar to Feature U.S. Attorney Tim Purdon

U.S. Attorney Tim Purdon will present at the 2014 School Law Seminar. Mr. Purdon will address issues that he sees in the United States Attorney's Office that are relevant to public schools in North Dakota.

Mark your calendar for **October 23 and 24**. More information will be provided in upcoming issues of the *Bulletin*.



Glenburn School District

Superintendent
Contact: Jon Martinson
e-mail:
jon.martinson@ndsba.org
(701)255-4127
Deadline: Open until filled

South Heart School District

Superintendent
Contact: Kristine Mehrer
e-mail:
Kristine.Mehrer.1@sendit.nodak.edu
(701)677-5671
Deadline: Open until filled

Powers Lake School District

Superintendent/Secondary Principal
Contact: Anne Puckett
PO Box 346
Powers Lake, ND 58773
e-mail:
anne.puckett@sendit.nodak.edu
(701)464-5432
Deadline: May 31, 2014



The North Dakota School Business Manager Certification Program is now

accepting applications for new students. The application deadline is **June 20**, and applications can be downloaded by clicking on "handbooks and forms" at www.ndsbmcp.org. Orientation will be held July 17-18 at the Radisson in Bismarck.

Interested in presenting at the 2014 NDSBA Annual Convention? A Clinic Session Proposal form is available online at www.ndsba.org. Deadline for clinic proposals is **June 15, 2014**.

Have a suggestion for a clinic session topic or speaker? Please email ideas to jon.martinson@ndsba.org by **June 15, 2014**.

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



**North Dakota Century Code Reminders
15.1-09-15. School district election - Declaration
of winner.**

On the sixth day after the election, the school board shall meet to canvass all election returns and shall declare the result of an election and, in the case of a tie, within three days from the determination

of a winner. However, if the election is held under an agreement with a city or county pursuant to sections 15.1-09-22 and 15.1-09-24, the returns must be canvassed and the winners declared as set out in the agreement. The individual receiving the highest number of votes for an office must be declared elected. The board shall record the result of the election.

15.1-09-25. School board members - Affirmation or oath of office.

An individual elected as a member of or appointed to a school board **shall take and file with the school district business manager an affirmation or oath of office within ten days after receiving notice of the election or appointment and before commencing duties.** If the individual refuses to take the affirmation or oath of office required by this section, the individual's action is deemed to be a refusal to serve and a failure to qualify for the office pursuant to section 44-02-01.

Voter Identification Requirements Have Changed

Identification must include the voter's name, residential address, and date of birth.

For more information about acceptable forms of identification please visit the North Dakota Secretary of State's website at <https://vip.sos.nd.gov/IDRequirements.aspx>