



# The Bulletin



**NDSBA**  
NORTH DAKOTA SCHOOL  
BOARDS ASSOCIATION

VOL LI ISSUE 6  
JUNE 2026

Excellence in North Dakota public education through local school board governance

## NDSBA Southeast Regional Meeting: Changing the Message on Education Funding

When Nathan Berseth of Richland School District was elected president of the NDSBA Board of Directors last October, one of his first priorities was to create more opportunities for school board members, administrators, and business managers to connect directly and talk about their challenges and the future of public schools. To that end, NDSBA has started holding regional meetings. The first was held on April 30 in Valley City. More than 50 people attended, including leaders from 20 school districts, plus county commissioners and local legislators.

"I especially appreciated the legislators and the open discussion around school funding," said Berseth. "These conversations are critical, and it was encouraging to see thoughtful, productive dialogue taking place in a collaborative setting."

### EDUCATION FUNDING

The meeting was a town hall-style gathering where property tax caps, school meals, bus driver shortages, health insurance - and state funding for K-12 education in general - were

major topics of concern.

"There is fear, I think, and anticipation of this next legislative session and the impacts that (lawmakers') decisions can have for us on our own school districts - and education as a whole across the state of North Dakota," said Valley City Schools Superintendent Josh Johnson.

"I don't think anybody is feeling good about public education funding right now," shared Jennifer Bollingberg, Barnes County North School Board president.

Representative Karla Rose Hanson from Fargo encouraged attendees to not wait until the legislative session to contact their local legislators with their funding concerns - do it now.

"Reach out to the members of the appropriations committees, because the details get hammered out in those committees," Hanson said. "Tell them that a 2.5% each year increase in the per pupil formula isn't going to cut it when our health insurance costs go up 15% ... and gas prices are going up. Because you're giving us only 2.5%, we're going to have to cut elsewhere."



Fifty people attended the NDSBA SE Regional meeting.

### CHANGE THE MESSAGE

State Superintendent Levi Bachmeier urged attendees to change their messaging about K-12 funding altogether.

"We need to stop talking about the per-pupil payment as a marginal percentage increase," Bachmeier said. "The K-12 funding formula is deeply complex, and most legislators, frankly, don't understand it at a very deep level. The message I'm going to be using is, 'How much of our total budget is going into K-12 education? If the state budget was a hundred dollars, how much do you think should go to public education?'"

Bachmeier said, right now, that number is about 12. His magic number is 20.

### SCHOOL VISITS

Representative LaurieBeth Hager from Fargo told school leaders to prioritize inviting local legislators to their schools before the next legislative session.

*Continued on page 2...*



NDSBA Board President  
Nathan Berseth



Rep. Karla Rose Hanson,  
District 44, Fargo



Jennifer Bollingberg, Barnes  
County North School Board  
President

## UPCOMING REGIONAL MEETINGS

Save the date for a meeting in your region!

- Southwest Region: Thursday, July 16, 3:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. (MDT)  
Biesiot Activities Center on the campus of Dickinson State University,  
398 State Ave. N., Dickinson
- Northwest Region: Thursday, Aug. 13, 3:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
(location TBD)
- Northeast Region: Thursday, Sept. 10, 3:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.  
(location TBD)

Watch for more details coming soon!



NDSBA Executive Director Amy De Kok

"We do have a great public education system in our state, and we want to keep it that way," Hager said. "One of the ways we do it is to tell that story – we have successful kids in our state. Sometimes the numbers



Rep. LaurieBeth Hager,  
District 21, Fargo

that we get from the Department of Public Instruction don't show that. I think it's the qualitative stories that tell the successes and the outcomes we have in the state."

### MORE MEETINGS

The Southeast Regional Meeting was the first NDSBA will hold leading up to the 2027 legislative session.

"Any opportunity to network and learn from each other is terrific," said Kindred School Board Member

Kali Heyen. "And to get time with the legislators and with Superintendent Bachmeier and feel heard is a really big deal."

"We want to understand what our members are experiencing locally," said NDSBA Executive Director Amy De Kok. "The feedback will help NDSBA develop a strong platform as we advocate for our members and public education in North Dakota during the next legislative session. Your voice shapes what comes next."

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR NDSBA DUES: MEMBERSHIP VS. POLICY SERVICES

It's time to submit your district's dues payments for the 2026-27 school years. A reminder – NDSBA no longer sends dues statements by mail. Instead, all statements are made available through the online membership portal at [www.ndsba.org](http://www.ndsba.org), where you can securely access, view, and print your statements as needed. Payment must be made by check.

There are two types of NDSBA dues – Membership and Policy Services. Both are important, but they serve different purposes, and your office will receive two separate payment notices for these dues. To help avoid confusion, here's a quick summary to clarify the difference:

**Membership Dues** support your district's participation in the NDSBA as a whole and funds the core work of the association. We have sent an email to district business managers with Membership Dues payment instructions and an overview of updated membership benefits. **Payment is due by Aug. 1.**

**Policy Services Dues** are specific to districts that subscribe to NDSBA's Policy Services program. Your payment covers the development, maintenance, and updates to your district's policy manual. We will send another email later this month to district business managers with payment instructions for Policy Services Dues. **This payment is due by Aug. 31.**

If you have questions or need assistance, please contact the NDSBA office.

The *Bulletin* is the official newsletter of the North Dakota School Boards Association. It is published 12 times each year and is mailed as third class mail from Bismarck, N.D.



**EDITOR**  
Marcie Narum

**PUBLISHER**  
North Dakota School  
Boards Association  
1224 West Owens Avenue  
Bismarck, ND 58501

**EDITING/DESIGN**  
Clearwater Communications

**TELEPHONE** 1-800-932-8791  
**LOCAL** 701-255-4127  
**FAX** 701-258-7992  
**WEBSITE** [www.ndsba.org](http://www.ndsba.org)  
**TWITTER** @ndsba

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**  
Amy De Kok, Bismarck

**OFFICERS**  
**PRESIDENT**  
Nathan Berseth, Richland 44  
**VICE PRESIDENT**  
Michelle Orton, Dickinson

**PAST PRESIDENT**  
Patti Stedman, West Fargo

**DIRECTORS**  
Lynn Carlson, Finley-Sharon  
Nikkie Gullickson, Fargo  
James Vannett, Nedrose  
Carrie Zachmann, Beach