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Excellence in North Dakota public education through local school board governance ■ VOL XLVIII ISSUE 10

Bismarck's Sheila Peterson named ND Teacher of the Year for 2024

North Dakota State School Superintendent Kirsten Baesler and Lt. Governor Tammy Miller announced at the end of September that Sheila Peterson, a physical education teacher at Wachter Middle School in Bismarck, has been named as North Dakota's 2024 Teacher of the Year.

While introducing her successor, 2023 North Dakota Teacher of the Year winner, Ivona Todorovic said of Peterson, "our Mrs. Yes, always open to new challenges and opportunities."

Since 2010, Peterson has been a physical education teacher, athletics coach in basketball, volleyball, and track, and reading strategies educator at Wachter. Prior to her current position, she taught physical education in Huron SD and Chamberlain SD.

"I have no doubt that Mrs. Peterson educates everyone she encounters, whether intentional or not," says



Sheila Peterson (middle) announced as 2024 ND Teacher of the Year by North Dakota State School Superintendent Kristen Baesler (left) and Lt. Governor Tammy Miller (right) at the end of September.

Wachter math teacher, Erik Hanson, in his recommendation letter of Peterson. "She draws people in, makes them feel safe, heard, (and) understood, and guides them in whatever way she is able. Education is not solely her career; it is who she is as a person".

Baesler and Miller made the announcement in the state Capitol's Memorial Hall, a ceremony held to celebrate Peterson and the three other Teacher of the Year finalists: Andee Mattson, a music teacher and choir director at Rugby's Ely Elementary School; Trisha Schaefer, a sixth-grade math teacher at Ramstad Middle School in Minot; and Megan Wasness, an English teacher at Devils Lake's Central Middle School.

At the Thursday ceremony, Peterson urged North Dakota educators to have high expectations for all of their students. "Give them opportunity, even when you know they might let you down sometimes," she said. "Think about how you can impact their lives and empower them to believe in the beauty of their dreams." Congratulations Mrs. Peterson, the 2024 TOY finalists, and to each of their school districts!



Annual Convention Registration

Registration for the 2023 NDSBA Annual Convention is still open.

Reminder: North Dakota Century Code § 15.1-09-32 requires new school board members to attend an in-service training workshop hosted by the North Dakota School Boards Association or its designee within one year of assuming office. NDSBA will host a seminar for new board members on October 26, 2023.

Information on and registration for the 2023 Annual Convention, New Member Seminar, and School Law Seminar is available at <https://www.ndsba.org/wp/ndsba-events/annual-convention/>

2023 NDSBA Annual Convention Program Now Available

We are excited to release the final schedule and program for the 2023 NDSBA Annual Convention! You can view both at <https://www.ndsba.org/wp/ndsba-events/annual-convention/>.

Convention information is also found on the webpage. If you have any questions, please contact Taylor at taylor.lassiter@ndsba.org.



Legal Spotlight

It's That Time of Year Again: Superintendent Evaluations

by Lexie Bergstrom, NDSBA Staff Attorney

One of the most important functions of a school board is the evaluation of its superintendent. Evaluating the superintendent is the key to documentation of unsatisfactory performance and is required in order to pursue nonrenewal of the superintendent's contract, if desired. An extremely important fact to keep in mind, however, is that evaluations are most effective when they are designed and used for improving existing performance and communicating future expectations, not simply for punitive reasons and reviewing past performance. The statutory evaluation requirements reviewed below should be viewed as minimum, not maximum, standards. Done correctly, an evaluation is a useful governance tool that helps drive school improvement. In fact, a high-quality evaluation process helps develop positive school board-superintendent relationships, clarifies leadership roles, creates common understandings, and provides a mechanism for satisfying the public's desire for accountability.

A quality superintendent evaluation process provides benefits not only for a school board and its superintendent but also benefits the school community and the community at large by:

- allowing school board members to follow school district progress and learn about a superintendent's ongoing professional development;
- providing input, feedback, and support for a superintendent to help them improve throughout the school year;
- creating and establishing a climate of trust and collaboration;
- providing the school community and the community at large with assurance that their priorities are being addressed; and
- providing oversight and assurance that a school board's vision, priorities, and policies are being implemented as intended.

Under North Dakota Law (NDCC § 15.1-12-02), all

superintendents must receive two written performance reviews each year based on the terms of their contract, their job description, and any other performance standards established by the board. The first evaluation is treated by most boards as a formative evaluation of the superintendent's performance and must be completed and adopted by a majority vote of the school board on or before **November 15**. The second evaluation is treated by most boards as a summative evaluation of the superintendent's performance and must be completed and adopted by a majority vote of the school board on or before **March 15**. The purpose of the first evaluation should be to place the superintendent on notice as to deficient or unacceptable performance and areas for improvement, while the second should document the continued existence or correction of those deficiencies. North Dakota law does not make this distinction between the two required evaluations; however, some boards may do so by policy and/or practice.

While every evaluation process will include some degree of subjectivity, using effective tools and procedures will make the process more objective. The components listed below are key in any quality evaluation process.

- **Documentation.** An evaluation is more than a checklist – it requires careful consideration of supporting documented evidence to decide whether expectations are being met. School board members and their superintendent should work together to reach consensus on the evidence to be used, keeping in mind that school districts already produce a variety of annual reports, curriculum studies, budget printouts, contracts, meeting minutes, etc., all of which could be used to document a superintendent's progress and accomplishments relative to the established goals.
- **Criteria and Ratings.** An effective evaluation requires school board

members to rate performance through the use of criteria that are mutually agreed upon, understandable, realistic, and measurable.

- **Written Comments.** Written comments are essential as they offer school board members the opportunity to provide specific constructive praise and criticism, and they provide the superintendent with useful information that he/she can use to continually improve.
- **Evaluation Conferences.** Face-to-face meetings between a school board and its superintendent are essential. Meetings should occur to discuss evaluation criteria, establish goals, determine the evaluation instrument and process, present supporting evidence, and discuss the results of the school board's formative and summative evaluations.

Another important aspect of ensuring an effective review process is creating a clearly defined job description. Having a job description that both the superintendent and board can easily reference and review will ensure a common understanding of expectations. NDCC 15.1-14-01 lists the duties of a superintendent, which can help guide the creation of an appropriate description. The job description should be revisited at least every evaluation cycle to confirm it remains consistent with school board expectations.

In terms of the process of evaluation, each board member should individually evaluate the superintendent in a range of substantive areas as set by the board and reflected in the job description. NDSBA recommends that the board president give an evaluation instrument to each board member at least one month prior to the evaluation deadline to allow board members adequate time to complete the evaluation. Board members should rate the superintendent's performance as

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either satisfactory or unsatisfactory in each area of performance identified in the job description. If a board member rates the superintendent as unsatisfactory in any area, the board member should provide an explanation and recommendations for improvement in the evaluation. Even in areas where a board member rates the superintendent as satisfactory, it is appropriate to provide comments and recommendations for improvement, if any.

Individual ratings and comments from each board member should be compiled onto one collective evaluation form prior to discussion of the evaluation at an upcoming meeting of the board. The evaluation must be voted on by members of the board. Any discrepancies among board members about the superintendent's rating in any of the performance areas evaluated should be discussed during the open meeting and a decision reached through roll call vote. If an unsatisfactory rating is given by the board in any area, the board should detail its findings

and provide recommendations for improvement. If an improvement plan or professional development plan is needed, this can be done after the evaluation is completed and approved by the board. The improvement plan should detail each area that needs improvement and provide recommendations and goals for improvement. Even in areas where the board evaluation rates the superintendent as satisfactory, the board is encouraged to provide comments and recommendations for improvement or areas of focus. The board should also vote on whether individual board member comments should be incorporated into the evaluation. Once included in the final evaluation, the comments become board comments.

Approval of the evaluation must be by a simple majority vote of the board at the open meeting at which the evaluation is discussed. The board **SHOULD NOT** give the superintendent an overall rating. Upon approval of the evaluation, the board president shall present it to the superintendent. A copy of both the formative and summative

evaluation should be placed in the superintendent's personnel file and a copy should be provided to the superintendent. After receiving the evaluation, the superintendent may provide a written response to the board. The superintendent's response must be placed in the superintendent's personnel file along with the evaluation.

Superintendents are encouraged to engage in an annual self-evaluation of their progress toward meeting performance goals and/or to reflect on their professional experience. Self-evaluation provides a structure for considering future goals and determining strategies for achieving them.

NDSBA recommends adoption of a policy on superintendent evaluation to guide boards through this process. NDSBA has established template policies in this regard, as well as a sample job description and evaluation instrument for use by our member districts. Please feel free to contact NDSBA for additional information and guidance as you tackle the important task of evaluating your superintendent.

Superintendent Evaluations

North Dakota law requires that school boards complete a formative evaluation of superintendents **ON OR BEFORE NOVEMBER 15** [NDCC § 15.1-14-03]. In the September issue of the *Bulletin*, the incorrect date of November 19 was printed. Please note that November 15 is the correct date. This evaluation must take

place at an open public meeting. One purpose of the November evaluation is to highlight areas of performance in need of improvement and provide an improvement plan a timeline for expected enhance performance. The law regarding superintendent evaluations states that if the superintendent is found to be unsatisfactory in any area, the

board shall detail its findings in the report and make recommendations. This process allows opportunity for professional growth before the superintendent's formal evaluation, which must be complete **ON OR BEFORE MARCH 15, 2023**. A sample evaluation form is available on NDSBA's website and www.ndsba.org under RESORUCES.



NDSBA Seeking Student Artwork!

NDSBA is seeking holiday-themed student artwork to be featured on our holiday cards. Artwork should be landscape-oriented and 5.5x4.75 inches. The student whose artwork is chosen will be recognized in the December issue of the *Bulletin* and receive a \$50 Amazon gift card. NDSBA will also make a \$200 donation to the student's classroom.

Artwork can be submitted in two ways:

1. Original artwork can be mailed to NDSBA, 1224 West Owens Ave., Bismarck ND 58501.
2. High quality scans (300 dpi or greater) of original artwork can be emailed to taylor.lassiter@ndsba.org.

All submissions should include the name and grade of the student, the name of the student's teacher, and the school district. Artwork must be received in the NDSBA office **by Tuesday, December 5**.



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Bismarck, ND 58501

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2023 NDSBA Annual Convention

October 26-27, 2023
Bismarck Hotel, Bismarck

2024 NDSBA Negotiations Seminar

February 1-2, 2024
BSC National Energy Center of
Excellence, Bismarck



Minot School District

Contact: Dr. Paul Stremick, DLS
Phone: 701-520-5963
Email: paul.stremick@outlook.com
Website:
www.dakotaleadershipsolutions.com
Deadline: November 27, 2023
position Begins: July 1, 2024



CANDIDATE FOR PRESIDENT



Patti Stedman - West Fargo

Patti Stedman is a graduate of Carrington High School and received her Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education from Minnesota State University Moorhead. She has been a regular participant at state and national school board conventions.

Patti was elected to the West Fargo School Board in 2008. She has been an active member of various committees including planning and development; governance; long-range facility; negotiations, including lead negotiator; and more. For the past 15 years, she has served on the board of directors for the South East Education Cooperative (SEEC) REA, Education Standards & Practices board (ESPB), and on the CTE board as president.

Patti has been married to her husband Brad for 32 years, and they have three children who previously attended West Fargo High School – Alyssa, Dustin and Kylie. She is currently self-employed and works with her husband in West Fargo.

Patti currently serves as NDSBA's President. Prior to that, she served as Vice President since 2020 and as the Southeast Director since 2016.

CANDIDATE FOR VICE PRESIDENT



Lucas Greff - Mott/Regent

Lucas Greff has been on the Mott-Regent School Board for eleven years. He currently serves as president and vice president before that. He has also served on the policy, building, and curriculum and finance committees in that time. Lucas has testified at the state legislature about the importance of state funded low interest loans to small school districts to build new and modernize existing structures to improve education.

He is currently serving as the president for the Roughrider Area Career and Technical Center (RACTC)--a role he has held the past eight years.

Lucas grew up on his family farm and graduated from Regent Public School in 2000. He attended college at Valley City State and Dickinson State. He joined the North Dakota National Guard in 1999 and is currently a serving member.

Lucas has been married to Angela since 2003 and they have seven children ranging from infancy to 16. He currently ranches on the family farm and is Active Duty Military for the National Guard out of Dickinson.



CANDIDATE FOR SOUTHWEST DIRECTOR



Michelle Orton - Dickinson

Michelle Orton is the current President of the Dickinson Public Schools School Board, which she has served on since 2018. Some of the board committees she serves on are activity director’s advisory, teacher evaluation instrument, wellness, and teacher negotiations. She has also served on NDSBA’s government affairs committee.

Michelle started her career as an educator and coach and has been involved in community programs for more than two decades. She has worked with every age! group from kindergarten to college students and worked in the human service sector for eight years before beginning her career at Bravera. Michelle has been a Best Friends Mentor since 2015, serves on the Dickinson Dream Board, and DPS Booster Board.

Originally from Los Angeles, Michelle has lived in Dickinson since 2007. She earned her master’s in exercise physiology from Adams State College in Alamosa, CO, and is currently pursuing her MBA through Dickinson State University.

CANDIDATE FOR NORTHEAST DIRECTOR



Marlana Knudson - May-Port CG

Marlana Knudson has served on the May-Port CG School Board for seven years and is currently president. She has also served as a representative for her alma matter, Rasmussen University, on the Fargo-Moorhead Chamber of Commerce; the NDSBA’s legislative committee, nominating committee, and government affairs committee; has led several fundraising programs to feed the hungry; and is the website administrator for Portland Lutheran Parish.

Marlana is the financial controller for Alton Grain Terminal, located four miles south of Hillsboro, ND. As somebody who has been involved in accounting and finance for the last twenty-three years, she has a passion for analyzing numbers and budgeting. Marlana is also passionate about helping others achieve their educational and business goals, and throughout this process has become a Level I Certified Learning and Resource Aid. Throughout her career, she has gained the ability to lead and to follow; to participate and to listen; to ask questions and to answer them; to act on fact and not emotion.

Marlana has two children: a junior in college and a senior in high school. She enjoys spending as much time as she can with them and her husband, Kipp.

THE 2023 NOMINATING COMMITTEE:

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