GRAND FORKS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Growing together to enrich the world.

Grand Forks Public Schools

2025-2030 Strategic Plan

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Superintendent and Board Presidents' Acknowledgement

We extend our deepest gratitude to the dedicated members of the Strategic Plan Committee for their invaluable service to our school district. Your commitment, insight, and collaboration have been essential in shaping a vision that reflects both the needs of our community and the aspirations of our students.

Through thoughtful discussion, careful analysis, and a shared belief in the power of public education, you have laid the groundwork for a strategic plan that not only addresses today's challenges but also positions us to thrive in the years ahead. Your efforts ensure that our schools remain places where every student is empowered to learn, grow, and succeed.

As we move forward, we do so with confidence—knowing that this plan reflects the voices and values of our community, and with gratitude for the time, energy, and heart you brought to this important work. Thank you for helping us build a future of excellence, equity, and opportunity for all.

Dr. Terry Brenner, Superintendent

Dave Berger, School Board President, District 1

Michelle Shepperd, School Board President, District 140

Strategic Plan Committee

Sally Akerlind	Behavior Specialist	Darin King	Technology Manager
Andrea Altepeter	High School Literacy Coordinator	Christine Litzinger	Mental Health Coordinator
Kristopher Arason	Principal	Wendy Mankie	Director of Child Nutrition
Matt Bakke	Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools	Tiffany Mannausau	Instructional Coach
Amy Bartsch	Chief Academic Officer	Sherri Motherwell	Nurse Manager
Brandon Baumbach	Business Manager	Tyler Nelson	Athletic Director
Sara Berg	1915i Coordinator	Evan Pederson	Dean of Students
Michael Biermaier	Activities Director	Cassaundra Riewer	Associate Principal
Anthony Bina	Athletic Director	Eric Ripley	Executive Director of Career and Technical Education
Terry Brenner	Superintendent	Amy Rohlk	Secondary MTSS Coordinator
Bonita Butz	Teacher	David Saxberg	Principal
Elisa Diederich	Executive Director of Special Education	Michael Ternus	Deputy Director, 319th Mission Support Group
Jonathan Ellwein	Director of Buildings and Grounds	Ivona Todorovic	Multilingual Learner Coordinator
Catherine Gillach	Associate Superintendent of Secondary Schools	Toby Trontvet	Behavior Interventionist
Griffin Gillespie	Director of Human Resources	Lisa Vojacek	Instructional Coach & Title I Coordinator
Joan Huus	Teacher	El Walsh	Student
Tracey Johnson	Director of Head Start	Eli Zerr	Student
Emily Johnson	Teacher	Paul Zettler	Workforce Coordinator

Strategic Plan Writing Committee

Andrea Altepeter	High School Literacy Coordinator
Katie Arthur	AVID District Coordinator & Grand Forks Central Director of Interventions
Matt Bakke	Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools
Amy Bartsch	Chief Academic Officer
Catherine Gillach	Associate Superintendent of Secondary Schools
Christine Litzinger	Mental Health Coordinator
Amy Rohlk	Secondary Multi-Tiered System of Supports Coordinator

Introduction

Grand Forks Public Schools is deeply committed to providing every student with the best possible foundation for a successful future. Understanding the diverse needs and aspirations of nearly 7,900 students across 17 campuses and alternative learning settings, this strategic plan details our commitment to ensuring all students achieve high levels of learning and are well-equipped for the opportunities and challenges ahead. Built upon collaborative dialogue, careful analysis, and a deep commitment to an exceptional educational experience, this plan strategically prioritizes four interconnected pillars that are foundational to our work: Academic Excellence, Behavioral Health and Wellness, Shared Understanding, and Operational Excellence. These pillars are guided by our Mission, Vision, and Core Beliefs, which will drive our collective efforts.

Mission

Growing together to enrich the world

Our mission reflects our understanding that each student brings unique talents and perspectives. By cultivating these assets, we empower them to become active, engaged citizens who contribute meaningfully to society. This growth happens best together – students, educators, families, and the wider community working in partnership.

Vision

We provide diverse and meaningful experiences for all learners in a safe and supportive environment by fostering curiosity, inquiry, and innovation. We grow and learn together by embracing change and taking risks.

To achieve this, our vision is clear. It acknowledges the crucial role of diverse experiences to broaden horizons and prepare our students for future challenges and opportunities. It also acknowledges that growth requires embracing change and taking calculated risk – both for our students and for our district as a whole.

Core Beliefs

At Grand Forks Public Schools, we are committed to providing every student with the opportunity to succeed. These core beliefs guide our actions and shape our daily work as we strive to create a learning environment where all students thrive.

Equity

We believe that equitable access to a guaranteed and viable curriculum, delivered through effective and rigorous instruction, and supported by appropriate resources, is essential for high levels of learning for all students.

Engagement

We believe that cultivating a safe, supportive, and collaborative culture, centered around strong relationships, is our collective responsibility. This fosters consistent student attendance and engagement in learning, leading to the development of strong character and sense of belonging.

Collective Agency

We believe collective agency, driven by shared beliefs and mutual trust, is crucial for ensuring all students learn at high levels. Working together, we create a powerful force for positive change.

This strategic plan is a living document designed to evolve alongside the ever-changing landscape of education. It is not a static blueprint, but rather a commitment to continuous improvement, driven by current research and a focus on best practices for our students. The priorities outlined within these pages are the tangible steps we will take to ensure all students thrive.

Growing Together to Enrich the World

North Dakota Portrait of a Graduate and Choice Ready Framework

To realize our mission and vision, we build upon the North Dakota Portrait of a Graduate and Choice Ready Framework, which outline the essential skills and qualities our students need to be successful post-graduation. We envision graduates who are active, creative problem-solvers, and effective communicators. Through collaborative learning and meaningful relationships, we cultivate resilient, confident citizens prepared for any path. We commit to providing the tools and support students need to succeed and contribute meaningfully to the world.

NORTH DAKOTA CHOICE READY

The North Dakota ***CHOICE READY*** framework is a tool to assist educators to ensure all students successfully depart high school possessing the **ESSENTIAL SKILLS** necessary to be ready for life. The journey begins by ensuring students leave having the **ESSENTIAL SKILLS** to be successful for whichever path they choose. Students shall then strive to be **POST-SECONDARY READY, WORKFORCE READY,** and/or **MILITARY READY.**

ESSENTIAL SKILLS

Earn a **North Dakota high school diploma**

Complete a **9-week Career Education Course/Individual Counseling** (15.1-21-18), **Financial Literacy** (15.1-21-21), and pass **ND Civics Test** (15.1-21-27), **Computer Science/Cybersecurity Requirement** (15.1-21-02.2), and **four or more additional indicators:**

- 25 hours of Community Service
- Two or More Years in Organized Extra-Curricular Activities
- 95% Attendance (not counting school-related absences)
- Successfully Complete a Capstone Project
- Career Exploration Experience
- Successfully Complete an Online Learning Course
- Two or More Years in Organized Co-Curricular Activities
- Demonstrate Competency in 21st Century Skills
- Multicultural Awareness

Students shall then complete two or more of the *CHOICE READY* components below.

POST-SECONDARY READY

Complete a **Four-Year Rolling Career Plan,** and earn a **2.8 GPA or greater,** and complete one academic indicator set below:

ACT / SAT minimum or subsections scores:

ACT English – 18
ACT Reading – 22 | SAT Reading/Writing – 480
ACT Math – 21 | SAT Math – 530
ACT Science – 23

or

Two or more additional indicators:

- Advanced Placement Course (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)
- Dual Credit Course (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)
- Algebra II (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)
- Advanced Placement Exam (3+)
- International Baccalaureate Exam (4+)
- 3.0 GPA in core course requirement for NDUS admission
- CREAM (Eng./Math) Course (70% or greater)
- Complete three Fine Arts Courses (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)

WORKFORCE READY

Complete a **Four-Year Rolling Career Plan,** and complete two or more additional indicators:

- Complete three CTE courses or more (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)
- Complete Career Ready Practices (3.0)
- Dual Credit Course (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)
- WorkKeys (Gold or Silver)
- Technical Assessment/Industry Credential
- Workplace Learning Experience (40 hrs.)
- Work-based Learning Experience (Perkins V) (40hrs)
- NDSA (Reading/Math) Level 3 or greater
- Complete three World Language Courses (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2)

MILITARY READY

Complete a **Four-Year Rolling Career Plan** and obtain an **ASVAB score of 31 or greater** (as determined by branch), or acceptance into the military.

Quality Citizenship (No Expulsions/Suspensions)

Physically Fit (Successfully complete required PE courses (A, B, or C) or (4, 3, or 2))

and

Complete **two or more** additional indicators from the **Post-Secondary** or **Workforce** options.

or

Complete two credits of JROTC or Civil Air Patrol

or

Complete **two credits** in the Military Pathway Program, selecting from the following 1/2 credit courses:

- Intro to Military Careers
- Military Health & Fitness
- ASVAB Essentials
- Career Foundations in Military Leadership
- Military Leadership Capstone

Revised December 2024

The Foundation of Our Strategic Plan: Who We Are

Student Enrollment

2024-2025 Spring

Total Students Enrolled **7,900+ Students**

Pre-K: **273**	K-5: **3,592**
Middle School: **1,710**	High School: **2,326**

49 **Languages Spoken**

Number of Schools **19** total

11 Elementary | 4 Middle | 4 High Schools

Three Average Attendance Rate : 91.6%

Three Average Graduation Rate : 81%

ACT Scores

State			Grand Forks Public Schools		
21-22	22-23	23-24	21-22	22-23	23-24
19.61	19.51	19.28	20.33	19.92	19.68

North Dakota State Assessment

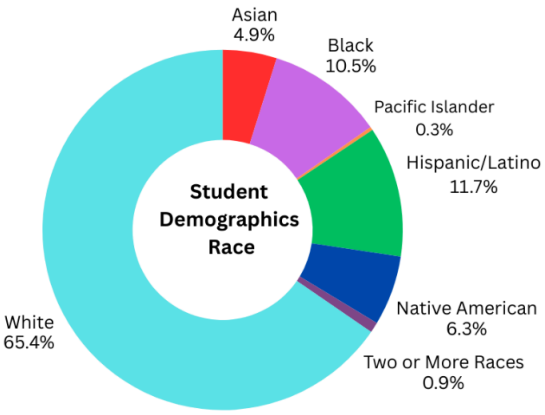
English Language Arts: Proficient and Advanced Proficient

State			Grand Forks Public Schools		
21-22	22-23	23-24	21-22	22-23	23-24
44%	44%	45%	47%	48%	50%

North Dakota State Assessment

Math: Proficient and Advanced Proficient

State			Grand Forks Public Schools		
21-22	22-23	23-24	21-22	22-23	23-24
39%	39%	40%	39%	40%	41%



Demographics on Student Enrollment

2025 Spring Enrollment

Free & Reduced: **38%**
Multilingual Learners: **490**
Students served on IEPs: **1,532**
Students served on 504s: **659**
Students in Temporary Living Situations: **163**
Students in Foster Care: **70**

Number of Certified Staff: **843** total

Number of Classified Staff: **901** total

Number of Administrators: **35** total

School Board Goals

To ensure consistent, high-quality education for all students, Grand Forks Public Schools has established a set of guardrails. These board-approved guidelines provide clear boundaries for district operations that align with state standards, maintain consistent evaluation practices, and promote data-driven professional development. By adhering to these guardrails, we safeguard the integrity of our educational programs and prioritize student success.

Guardrail #1

The Superintendent will not allow curricular resources other than those aligned with the ND State Standards and adopted by the school board to be used as the foundation for delivering instruction.

Guardrail #2

The Superintendent will not allow established, district-wide standards for classroom evaluations to go unmet.

Guardrail #3

The Superintendent will not allow Professional Learning Communities to function without the continuous analysis of student achievement data as well as an ongoing analysis of the curricular resources and their alignment with North Dakota State Standards.

These guardrails provide a crucial foundation for the work outlined in this strategic plan. By ensuring adherence to state standards (Guardrail #1) and the effective use of data in professional learning (Guardrail #3), these guidelines directly support our commitment to academic excellence. Similarly, consistent evaluation practices (Guardrail #2) contribute to a culture of continuous improvement that underpins all four of our strategic pillars.

Strategic Plan Overview

Strategic Plan

Academic Excellence

Academic excellence is the cornerstone of our district's mission, ensuring every student is equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to thrive in an ever-changing world. By focusing on rigorous, standards-referenced instruction, data-driven support systems, and inclusive learning environments, we commit to fostering a culture of high expectations and personalized pathways for all students.

Priority: Effective Instruction

- Deliver rigorous, relevant, and standards-referenced instruction using evidence-based instructional materials to ensure guaranteed and viable curriculum as approved by the school board.
- Implement student-centered instructional strategies that promote ownership and engagement in relevant learning.
- Leverage Professional Learning Communities by taking collective responsibility for the improvement of instruction and student learning.
- Engage in cycles of job-embedded professional development to support effective teaching, learning, and leadership.

Priority: Eliminating Opportunity Gaps

- Ensure equitable access to rigorous learning experiences and support systems so that all students can achieve academic, social, and vocational success.
- Act upon early-warning indicators to ensure all students learn at grade level or higher.
- Utilize a multi-tiered system of supports to provide core instruction, targeted instruction, and intensive interventions based on systematic screening, assessment, and ongoing monitoring.

Priority: Choice Readiness

- Utilize the Four-Year Rolling Plan, beginning in middle school, to monitor student progress and increase academic outcomes and opportunities for students after graduation.
- Create opportunities for students to engage in extra- and co-curricular activities, including student interest clubs, volunteerism, and civic engagement.

Measures of Success

Increase English language arts proficiency levels from 48% proficient or advanced in 2022-2023 to 56% proficient or advanced by September of 2028 as measured by the North Dakota Academic Progression of Learning and Understanding of students (ND A-PLUS).

Increase mathematics proficiency levels from 41% proficient or advanced in 2022-2023 to 49% proficient or advanced by September of 2028 as measured by the North Dakota Academic Progression of Learning and Understanding of students (ND A-PLUS).

Increase the Native American students' four-year graduation rate from 46% graduated in 2022-2023 to 80% graduated by September of 2028, as measured by graduation status.

Increase the number of students graduating "choice-ready" from 66% (2024) to 70% (2030) as measured by ND DPI's Choice Ready framework.

Behavioral Health and Wellness

Recognizing the foundational role of behavioral health and wellness in learning, We will implement an interconnected system for prevention, early intervention, and direct services across our schools. This integrated approach will cultivate safe and supportive environments, embed comprehensive wellness supports, and promote positive attendance practices. By prioritizing these areas, we aim to equip students with the tools to develop a stronger sense of self, resilience, and agency.

Priority: Positive Attendance Practices

- Systematize attendance policies, procedures, and monitoring.
- Identify root causes for absences and offer absence prevention and intervention support based on early warning indicators.
- Leverage school teams to engage families to support attendance for students as a shared responsibility.
- Emphasize the need for students to be on time and to remain in school for the entire day.
- Engage the community, including employers, to prioritize attendance for students.

Priority: Safe and Supportive Environments

- Cultivate collaborative teams focused on tiered interventions and supports to address shared challenges in student behavior and wellness.
- Foster a positive school climate that focuses on building connections, sense of belonging, and effective practices for bullying prevention.

Priority: Wellness

- Implement an integrated, tiered student service system to embed behavior support, social development skills, and mental health services.
- Provide professional development focused on evidence-based practices that

deepen staff knowledge, skills, and dispositions to support students' well-being.

- Maximize community and national partnerships that support behavioral health and wellness according to data-based indicators.

Measures of Success

Reduce the Chronic Absenteeism rate K-12 from 23% in 2023-2024 to 15% by the spring of 2030 as measured by the North Dakota Insights Dashboard.

Increase the Sense of Belonging measure percent favorable in grades 3-5 from 68% in Spring 2024 to 76% and in grades 6-12 from 38% in Spring 2024 to 46% by the Spring of 2030 as measured by the Panorama Student Supports + Environment Survey.

Increase the School Safety measure percent favorable in grades 3-5 from 66% in Spring 2024 to 74% and in grades 6-12 from 59% in Spring 2024 to 67% by the Spring of 2030 as measured by the Panorama Student Supports + Environment Survey.

Increase the Emotion Regulation measure percent favorable in grades 3-5 from 53% in Spring 2024 to 61% and in grades 6-12 from 53% in Spring 2024 to 61% by the Spring of 2030 as measured by the Panorama Student Well-Being Survey.

Shared Understanding

We strengthen partnerships in our district and community through authentic conversations about district priorities and actions necessary to ensure all students thrive. Prioritizing reciprocal communication and transparency will create trust, shared understanding, accountability, and continuous improvement.

Priority: Reciprocal Communication

- Drive mutual accountability and shared responsibility for achieving common goals by establishing clear expectations for instruction, maintaining professional standards, and directly addressing when expectations are not met to ensure collective success.
- Invest in targeted professional development that cultivates effective two-way communication and authentic collaboration skills.
- Strengthen family and community partnerships to actively contribute to student success.

Priority: Clarity

- Articulate clear expectations for all roles, responsibilities, and the application of best professional practices, ensuring this information is readily accessible to all stakeholders.
- Foster a clear understanding of district priorities by utilizing formal processes to implement and monitor for quality and fidelity.
- Conduct focused and systematic data reviews, sharing key findings and insights to drive continuous improvement efforts across the district.

Measures of Success

Increase staff perceptions of School Climate (rated as either “quite” or “extremely” positive) from 60% (Fall 2024) to 68% (2030) according to the Panorama staff perception survey on school climate.

Develop annual professional development plans at district and building levels to prioritize alignment with articulated strategic priorities and mandates.

Create decision-making matrices through collaboration with district and building leaders to clearly articulate, streamline and guide decision-making processes at the district and building levels. Matrices will be developed by Spring of 2026 and reviewed and updated annually.

Operational Effectiveness

To consistently deliver exceptional educational experiences, our district relies on a strong foundation of operational excellence. We are committed to strategically managing resources, modernizing infrastructure, and streamlining processes. These key priorities aim to enhance efficiency, transparency, and sustainability across departments, ultimately empowering our educators and students to maximize learning and growth.

Priority: Human Resources and Employee Success

- Attract and retain a high-quality, engaged workforce that supports student academic success and well-being.
- Strengthen employee support through improved benefits communication, expanded access to mental health and well-being resources, and proactive initiatives that foster a positive and healthy work environment.
- Implement and leverage technology to automate and standardize key HR processes to reduce administrative burden and improve efficiency.

Priority: Facilities and Operations

- Proactively maintain and improve the safety, functionality, and comfort of all school facilities and grounds to minimize disruptions and create environments conducive to focused learning and well-being.
- Deliver timely and effective custodial, groundskeeping, transportation, warehousing, and print services to ensure the seamless operation of schools and equitable access to essential resources for teaching and learning.
- Implement proactive maintenance, efficient resource allocation, and forward-thinking planning for facilities and infrastructure to ensure the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of the district's physical assets in supporting student success.

Priority: Responsible and Strategic Fiscal Management

- Implement a budgeting process that involves key stakeholders to ensure financial decisions reflect the district's priorities and needs.
- Identify areas for cost reduction and efficiency improvements across district operations annually, ensuring that resources are spent effectively without compromising the quality of education.
- Develop a long-term financial plan that includes strategies for addressing funding challenges, maintaining a healthy fund balance, and preparing for future financial needs.

Priority: Modernization of Technical Infrastructure

- Modernize the GFPS wired and wireless network infrastructure to support increased concurrent users, improved security, higher available bandwidth, and improved availability.
- Provide quarterly information security training to all staff to improve our ability to protect sensitive data, prevent cyber attacks, build a security-conscious culture, and support the effective use of technology in education.
- Establish a sustainable budget model that will support the replacement of technology every five years.

Measures of Success

Human Resources and Employee Success

- Retain 93% of certified and 70% of classified staff annually with a specific emphasis on first year support staff.
- Establish a baseline EAP and mental health resource utilization rate of 4.5% measured through EAP reporting, engagement data, and feedback.
- Yield an average daily absenteeism rate of 5% as measured by absence management data.

Responsible and Strategic Fiscal Management

By May 31, 2026, develop and implement a process, utilizing School ERP Pro, to provide monthly reports on efficiencies, budget allocations, and project progress to key stakeholders, achieving a 90% satisfaction rate from stakeholders regarding clarity and visibility.

Implement a district-wide review of contracts and services, with a goal of 10% of contracts renegotiated for better value by the end of year one.

Create a five-year financial projection to anticipate revenue and expenditure trends, updated annually.

Facilities and Operations

KPIs, Facilities Scorecard, Maintenance Reports

- Maintain a 7.25 average or greater on the facilities condition scorecard
    - Scorecard
    - Rubric
    - Assessment Tool
- Maintain a condition of “Good” or “Excellent” in 85% of schools
    - Scorecard
    - Rubric
    - Assessment Tool
- Reduce work order resolution time by 5%

- Reduce the costs of custodial supplies by 10.5%

Modernization of Technical Infrastructure
Systematic replacement of the GFPS wireless network infrastructure and supporting wired infrastructure with full implementation by August 2027.

Fully implement quarterly information security training with a 70% voluntary participation rate by staff.

Continual improvement in key metrics from the annual simulated phishing test. Key metrics are average click rate <15% and reporting rate >5% in the first 15 minutes.

Devices required for operations, teaching, and learning are replaced every five years or less.

Glossary of Terms

Choice Ready Framework: a North Dakota system to measure high school effectiveness in preparing students for success after graduation by assessing their readiness in post-secondary education, workforce, and military pathways, along with essential skills.

Chronic Absenteeism: the condition of a student missing 10 percent or more of their enrolled school days within a school year, regardless of the number of days attended.

Early Warning Indicators: academic, attendance, behavior, and social-emotional data used to identify students at risk and trigger early interventions.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP): a free, confidential service that helps employees manage personal or work-related issues like stress, mental health, or family problems.

4-Year Rolling Plan: a personalized educational plan developed by students in collaboration with educators and families to map out their high school coursework, experiences, and post-secondary goals over four years.

Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum: a clearly defined and essential curriculum that all students, regardless of their teacher, have the opportunity to learn within the available instructional time.

Key Performance Indicator (KPI): a quantifiable measure of performance over time for a specific objective.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS): a framework that integrates assessment and instruction to meet the academic, behavioral, and social-emotional needs of all students through a tiered system of support.

North Dakota Academic Progression of Learning and Understanding of Students (NDA +): a summative assessment designed to measure student achievement in English language arts, mathematics, and science based on the North Dakota State Standards.

Panorama: a comprehensive data analytics platform for K-12 schools and districts to understand and support students' academic, behavioral, and social-emotional learning by collecting and analyzing feedback from various stakeholders.

Portrait of a Graduate: a guiding vision outlining the key competencies, skills, and character traits that all students should develop by graduation to be successful in post-secondary education, careers, and civic life.

Professional Learning Community (PLC): collaborative educator teams focused on improving student learning through data analysis and shared practices.

Response to Intervention (RTI): a systematic, multi-tiered approach to providing targeted support and interventions to students at increasing levels of intensity based on their individual needs and progress.

Ultimate Kronos Group (UKG): a company offering HR, payroll, and workforce management software for businesses.