

## A Historical View of Funding and Picus Recommendations in North Dakota

There is tremendous history that has brought North Dakota and our schools to their current method of operation. Significant improvements were made in the equity of school funding through the passage of SB2200 in 2007 and HB 1400 in 2009. The key system for delivering this equity is reflected in the weighting factors which, when multiplied times the per student payment, should theoretically reflect all of the added costs for certain categories of students.

HB 1400 also addressed the issue of school funding adequacy by bringing the states support for K-12 education up to the level recommended by Allan Odden and Lawrence Picus, two nationally recognized authorities in school funding adequacy. Several of the funding recommendations presented in their report, "Funding Schools Adequately in North Dakota," were adopted in HB 1400.

The Picus report also recommended that these additional financial resources be used to improve student performance through several initiatives in student support, professional development, curriculum, assessments, and scholarships. Through thorough investigation, North Dakota legislative leadership made decisions on pieces that would be a good fit for North Dakota students. New funding was provided for licensed tutors in grades K-3, instructional coaches, and a new subcategory of counselors called "career advisors". Curriculum was strengthened at the core by requiring three years of mathematics, three years of science, and three years of focused electives emphasizing foreign languages, fine arts, and career and technical education. A total of 22 units is now required for a North Dakota high school diploma.

New scholarships were created and have been enhanced over time for students pursuing either an academic path or a career and technical education path, provided the students attained a 3.0 grade point average and received a 24 on the ACT or a 5 on three WorkKeys assessment units. Eligible students receive \$750 per semester up to a total of \$6000.

Opportunities for professional development were strengthened by adding four early dismissal days - with two hours each time for teacher collaboration. Every district is to provide feedback data Superintendent of Public Instruction.

In addition, funding was expanded for a mentorship program designed to assist first-year teachers. The Education Standards and Practices Board administers this teacher mentor program. Funds were also provided to assist teachers who pursue National Board Certification.

In order to improve student performance, certain assessments were required. All students in grade 11 will take the ACT or 3 Work-Keys assessments. Students in grades 7-10 must take a "career interest inventory" once in grades 7-8 and once in grades 9-10. Students in grades 2-10 must be given a formative or interim assessment at least once each year.

The legislature supported the installation of a Longitudinal Data System to track the progress of students from Kindergarten through grade 12 and on into college or the workplace. This system is needed to determine which student performance strategies are producing the best results and what education policy changes may be needed in the future. The core element of this system at the K-12 level is PowerSchool, the states required student information program.

This multifaceted approach of adequate funding and new performance strategies were put in place to ensure improvement in student performance in North Dakota in the coming years and ensure that students are prepared to maximize their opportunities in postsecondary education or in the workplace.

Essentially at the end of the day, in 2007, 2009 the North Dakota Legislature trended toward looking at the Picus report for North Dakota as being a way for our state to check in on the dollar amounts that may be adequate for North Dakota to provide for a student's educational experience. Additionally, some elements of the model that North Dakota thought would be valuable to our students are mentioned above and have been carefully implemented in partnership with legislative funding and school district effort to benefit our students. While some elements have been implemented, many of the recommendations made by Picus both in the past and currently have been determined to not be a good fit for North Dakota for a variety of both research based and fiscal reasons. This means that we must look at elements of the model very carefully. When statements are used by Dr. Oden such as "we should already be doing that – it is in the model" – that is not quite the case, as North Dakota has made deliberate decisions to have *our* model be something different that is a better fit for our state.

In North Dakota we greatly value the economic drivers in our state and nation and are very conscientious of implementation of programs to remain in concert with our business community. It is critical that we ensure we are providing our students the best possible education to enable them at the top of a very competitive job market. In North Dakota, we have supported and are beginning to see the true benefits of strong electives. Great examples of this are the recent results we've seen for students who have spent time in CTE coursework, STEM coursework and others. Additionally we are seeing tremendous benefit in the strong Middle School model of education. Many schools have adopted this model and other schools are closely investigating and are adopting pieces of the middle school model such as Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to ensure timely collaboration takes place to maximize the opportunity for student growth. These are examples things that are well supported in North Dakota are not well supported in the Picus Model.

It is commendable that in North Dakota we are focused on our future and the well being of our students. As educators, we appreciate greatly the support that has been given to our students and to our schools to ensure the best opportunity possible is in place. That being said, one of the largest obstacles toward becoming great – becoming the best – is resting on being *good*. Additionally as we proceed as partners in our educational success in North Dakota, we should do so with some basic understandings in place. We are

looking for results. When a group looks for results, what is really being sought out is change. If this is true, it might make sense to proceed with the research based in personal and organizational change in mind.

A quarter of a century ago Walter Sykes, a social psychologist laid out some basics of such change (Sunrise Seminars, Volume 2, NTL Institute, Arlington, Virginia, 1985). This early understanding is repeatedly cited and repeated in modern research.

1. You must know what something is before you try and change it.
  - A change agent must have a sound, internalized understanding not only of the “facts,” but also the feelings important to the change process.
2. Because all human change takes place in systems or organic units, you cannot change just one isolated element.
  - Everything in a system is ultimately connected... one must understand the total impact of the proposed change on all parts of the system so as to reduce the chances of unwanted and unpredicted side effects.
3. People resist punishment
  - Change generally generates discomfort ... People tend to consider alterations in a system a form of punishment.
4. People are reluctant to undergo temporary discomfort for long-term gain.
  - Learning a new skill, whether it is technical or behavioral, at the least causes one to undergo the pain of feeling incompetent for a time ... we prefer to polish, refine and rely on familiar behaviors and already mastered skills than to develop new, possibly better skills.
5. Change generates stress.
  - Change induces stress and the change we feel we cannot control is the most stressful.
6. Participation reduces resistance.
  - Probably no principle of social psychology has been studied or confirmed more fully than the concept that one may increase people’s acceptance of an innovation by getting them involved in setting goals and devising strategies for achieving these goals.
7. Behavioral change usually comes in small steps.
  - Few individuals or organizations are willing or able to make dramatic, sweeping changes in a hurry.... Realistically, we must realize that abrupt changes in behaviors are rare – and probably even unhealthy – and that we must allow adequate time for change to take place.

So with those things in mind, how do we go about creating a system that can show you as legislative leaders that we are making the progress that you desire while ensuring that we are bringing in real and valuable change that genuinely impacts student success and is more than just a number? Educational leaders around North Dakota are and have been hungry to do what it *really* takes to make a *big* difference for kids. The

challenge is...this is a bit different than the model that we all grew up in. This is a bit different than the types of "reform" that easily are repeated and talked about. These are investments in education.

Michael Fullan is a man credited with transforming the Canadian province of Ontario into one of the most effective school systems in the world. He visited with North Dakota educational leaders this past April and his recommendations echoed sentiment that exists with many of those strong leaders. His recommendations would put North Dakota and any other state on a sharp march in the opposite direction of the rigidity that our federal government has led education through in the last decade.

That forced march has been toward a more punitive system, one that stifles creativity and creates fear in order to drive educators to change. Fullan has long held the belief that educational reform is led by "Drivers." *"'Whole system reform' is the name of the game and 'drivers' are those policy and strategy levers that have the least and best chance of driving successful reform."* Fullan has long believed that the public education system in the U.S. is being steered in the wrong direction, through the use of the wrong drivers. When led by the wrong drivers, the success that is desired will not likely be seen.

*"A 'wrong driver' is a deliberate policy force that has little chance of achieving the desired result, while a 'right driver' is one that ends up achieving better measurable results for students. Whole system reform is just that - 100 per cent of the system - a whole state, province, region or entire country."*

### **What Drives Us to Change?**

Does positive change happen because of rules and accountability? Rules and accountability *are* getting educators to change their practices. Unfortunately those practices do not seem to foster any real sense of creativity. Or, does change happen when people are intrinsically motivated to do so? People who are intrinsically motivated are more likely to find their own professional development and take risks that will benefit their students.

Fullan writes, *"As an advance organizer, I suggest four criteria - all of which must be met in concert- which should be used for judging the likely effectiveness of a driver or set of drivers. Specifically, do the drivers, sooner than later,*

- *Foster intrinsic motivation of teachers and students;*
- *Engage educators and students in continuous improvement of instruction and learning;*
- *Inspire collective or team work; and*
- *Affect all teachers and students - 100 per cent?"*

To many educators this may seem like common sense. However, if you've been paying attention over the past decade you have noticed that the change in public education has not been driven by common sense practices in most states. The changes have been driven by accountability.

Accountability was probably once an appropriate word used in conversations. Unfortunately, accountability means something very different in our present system. It is less about inspiring teachers to engage in high quality teaching and learning, and more about blaming teachers and administrators for not doing their jobs.

Fullan agrees that the wrong drivers for far too long have driven public education. The wrong drivers that Fullan believes are pushing our system in the wrong direction are:

*"The culprits are*

- *Accountability: using test results, and teacher appraisal, to reward or punish teachers and schools vs. capacity building;*
- *Individual teacher and leadership quality: promoting individual vs. group solutions;*
- *Technology: investing in and assuming that the wonders of the digital world will carry the day vs. instruction;*
- *Fragmented strategies vs. integrated or systemic strategies."*

What is unfortunate is that through all of this "reform" three of the four wrong drivers have gone from being a part of positive change to being the culprits of negative change. In most cases, accountability, teacher and leader quality, as well as technology would have been viewed as common sense elements to improve in our present system. Fullan writes, *"Although the four 'wrong' components have a place in the reform constellation, they can never be successful drivers. It is, in other words, a mistake to lead with them."* He continues by writing, *"The four 'wrong drivers' are not forever wrong. They are just badly placed as lead drivers. The four 'right drivers' - capacity building, group work, pedagogy, and 'systemness' - are the anchors of whole system reform."*

<b>Right Drivers</b>	<b>Wrong Drivers</b>
<b>Capacity Building</b>	<b>Accountability</b>
<b>Collaborative Work</b>	<b>Individual teacher and leadership quality</b>
<b>Instruction</b>	<b>Technology</b>
<b>Systemness</b>	<b>Fragmented Strategies</b>

Hence, as an educational professional and a representative and a partner in the success of our North Dakota students, I look forward to our future discussions on how we can partner over the next few years to do some outside-of-the-box things that can really bring about the greatness that we all desire. Instead of North Dakota figuring out what has worked in other states and trying to implement it, let's brave the process to pave our own road and allow all the other states to call us to ask how we drove such positive change and great results. These types of results take time and partnership, trust and belief, patience and support. We are extending our hands requesting the partnerships and are excited about our potential and future that we can create together.