HAPPY Valentine’s Day

Upcoming Events

Feb 10th- Gearing Up for Kindergarten 6:00 PM
PTO Mtg 6:30 PM

Feb 14th- School in Session- Storm Makeup Day

Feb 17th- No School

Feb 18th- Board of Education Mtg 5:30 PM

Feb 19th- 2-hour late start- 10:30 AM

Feb 21st- CTE Fair

Feb 24th- Gearing Up for Kindergarten 6:00 PM

March 2nd- PTO Mtg 6:30 PM

March 2nd, 6th- Missoula Children’s Theatre Book Fair

NOTE:

When emailing the school regarding your child’s bus plans, please make sure to include the bus/route # or the driver’s name to eliminate the office staff having to look it up when they contact the driver.

Samsung Solve for Tomorrow Challenge

Northern Cass 6th-12th graders had the opportunity to participate in the Samsung Solve for Tomorrow competition where students could submit a solution to a community problem. The Samsung Solve for Tomorrow Contest encourages educators and learners to solve real-world issues in their community using classroom skills in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM). The community problem a group decided to address was carbon monoxide poisoning. Living in North Dakota, we are more susceptible to carbon monoxide poisoning because of the snow and ice that can block our pipes and in turn trap carbon monoxide in our homes. After countless hours, we have a group of 7th grade girls that have been announced as state winners. This is a huge accomplishment as there were thousands of submissions and only 100 winners throughout the U.S. We were the only group from North Dakota to get chosen. By winning state, McKenley, Maleah, and Brooklyn won $15,000 in technology for Northern Cass.

McKenley, Maleah, and Brooklyn are in the process of preparing their submission for nationals. They are hard at work preparing for this next step. Please join me in congratulating them in this amazing accomplishment and cheering them on as they progress.
From Steiner:

At Northern Cass, we believe every learner can change the world; therefore, we will provide a world class education. To be able to do this, we follow our Collective Commitments which guide the daily behavior of educators. These commitments are ‘what’ we do at Northern Cass.

- ‘We are dedicated and passionate about relationships, teaching & learning, self-reflection, acknowledging greatness, and support of the Northern Cass community’
- ‘We are driven toward continuous improvement’

For this newsletter, I would like to share some thoughts from a book I recently finished: *What You Do Is Who You Are: How to Create Your Business Culture* by Ben Horowitz. The book was enlightening, and it caused me to self-reflect on many levels.

1. Your own perspective on your organization’s culture is not that relevant. He certainly didn’t mean your perspective isn’t important. However, he did feel we often put too much ‘stock’ in what we believe and that often fails to capture a realistic view of our organization. It links to the Stockdale Concept (*Good to Great*). You must confront your reality in order to move your organization to greatness. When an organization assesses its culture, it must do so in a comprehensive manner which gathers feedback from all stakeholders.

2. Define the qualities you seek in your employees. In the book, a story is shared about Uber’s CEO (Travis Kalanick) and the qualities he sought in employees. He believed vision, quality obsession, innovation, fierceness, execution, scale, communication, and super-pumpedness were key. These are not your typical qualities. Uber has issues not because they are looking for workers with these qualities, but because these qualities are in opposition to their cultural code. Culture will trump everything. Even if an employee possesses these qualities, the culture will not allow the application of them. For example, they had a cultural believe of the best idea wins. This created competition which led to rules not being followed and a toxic culture was created. Quality and culture go hand in hand.

3. Virtues are what you do while values are what you believe in. This was eye-opening. In organizations, we often use the terms synonymously. They are not the same and the distinction is important. It is like the old cliché ‘your actions speak louder than words’. Virtues are actions and values are words. In organizations, we often speak about values. When organizations struggle, it is when virtues and values no longer align. A great organization must understand the difference and be deliberate in making sure they are aligned.

4. Suresh Khanna (AdRoll) believed people who were smart, humble, hard-working, and collaborative were most important to the success of an organization. This isn’t anything we don’t know. However, the one word that made me reflect was smart. He believed smart meant you were ‘disposed’ towards learning. People who are smart are committed towards continuous improvement. It has little to do with IQ and more to do with willingness. He also said hard work was important. However, didn’t believe you needed to work 80 hours per week and abandon your family and personal life. He believed you should work as hard as necessary to ‘do the best work of your life’. If you leave your job each day and know you did the best you could, people will respect you and your culture will benefit.

I’m committing to reading two books/month for the rest of the year. I’m going to focus on business books related to culture. Although public education is not a business, there are many things we can learn from how they operate. As we transform our district, culture has dipped. This was expected as this is common with 2nd order change. Therefore, it is important to understand our current culture from a variety of perspectives in order to rebuild and reimagine a culture which is truly world class.
One Day at a Time Fundraising Update

This fundraiser is to help achieve our ‘Big Hairy Audacious Goal’ of any learner who wants to attend college getting one year ‘free’. If we fill the board (pay the amount for the day of the year), we would make $66,000. It is an opportunity to provide our learners with college courses to help them become the best version of themselves. If your child has benefited from this opportunity, please consider donating to this great cause. If your child will be taking dual credit courses in the future, please consider donating to this great cause.

We have raised $7,505. In order to help us achieve our goal of filling the ‘board’, let’s complete February. For examples, February 1st is $32. Each day beyond adds to that total.

February: 1 ($32), 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28

Please contact me at Cory.Steiner@northerncassschool.com to purchase your day.

Citizen’ Committee Update

The committee held its community meeting on Thursday, January 30th at Northern Cass. They shared who was on the committee, the process utilized, key data, the proposed plan, the tax impact, why now, and engaged in round table discussions. The presentation is available on-line as is a recording of the event. There is also a tax calculator which can help you estimate the impact on your taxes. Finally, the plan is to increase 5 mills to fund this project. The previous project needed 24 mills. The impact on taxes has been reduced by 75% and the cost of the project has been lowered from $9.1 million to $6.2 million. The committee will meet soon and prepare a recommendation to the Board of Education. Stay tuned for an update after the board meeting on February 18th.
2020 Speech Results

North Sargent – Jan 25th

Natalie Tegtmeier – 8th in Serious Prose, 5th in Persuade
Silver Anderson – 8th in Entertain
Angela Brayton – 8th in Storytelling
Natalie and Silver – 1st Place in Serious Dramatic Duo – State Qualifying

Next Tournament is Feb 8th in Enderlin.

Dance

Congratulations to the Northern Cass Rosettes on their performance at State Dance. The team placed 2nd in Hip Hop, 3rd in Jazz, and 3rd in Pom.
**WACKY WINTER WEEK**

Wacky Winter Week is February 18th-21st. The dress up days will be as follows:

Tuesday Feb 18th- PJ Day  
Wednesday Feb 19th- Fandom Day  
Thursday Feb 20th- Music Day  
Friday Feb 21st- Celebrity Day

The Snowball dance will be Friday Feb 21st from 9-11 PM. $5 entrance fee for the dance.

**Donkey Basketball**

Thank you to all community members who helped support the Donkey Basketball fundraiser. This event was planned by the Northern Cass Sports and Entertainment Marketing class, and the funds raised went to help fund Dollars for Scholars, DECA and ASU courses.

**Date Night BINGO!**

Come join us for Date Night Bingo on Saturday February 22nd at the Harwood Community Center. $50 ticket includes a meal, drink and 20 bingo games with prizes totaling nearly $8,000 (each prize is valued between $200 - $500). There will also be a wine pull and silent auction. Social hour starts at 5:00 PM, dinner at 5:30 PM and bingo at 6:30 PM. All proceeds will be donated to the Northern Treks Jaguar Treks for their trip to Europe in June 2020. Bring your date or come alone! This is a 21 and over event. To purchase a ticket or for more information, please email angiemessner1@gmail.com, Hovland.heather@gmail.com or call Jane Matejcek @ 701-238-7749.
Pancake Breakfast and Bake Sale

Come join us Sunday February 23rd from 8:00 AM to 12:00 PM at the Argusville Community Center for a Pancake Breakfast and Bake Sale. Proceeds will benefit the Choir Trip to Tennessee.

Poetry Out Loud

On January 16th, Northern Cass welcomed Jessie Veeder, a writer and performer from Watford City, ND. Jessie visited several high school classrooms, offering the students some creative insight, performing several original pieces, and challenging students to create and recite their own poetry.

Jessie’s visit was sponsored by a North Dakota Council on the Arts “Poets in Schools” grant. This project is affiliated with the annual Poetry Out Loud competition which takes place each January in classrooms throughout the United States. Winners at the school level advance to state competitions. Poetry Out Loud culminates in a national contest held in Washington, D.C.

Northern Cass students have been participating in Poetry Out Loud since 2009, sending several students to the state competition over the years.

The Northern Cass Poetry Out Loud Recitation Competition wrapped up on January 30th. Learners in grades 9-11 competed first at the classroom level, reciting one poem from the Poetry Out Loud website. Nine students moved on to the school final. At the school final, the students presented two poems. Kylie Howatt won the competition and will be representing Northern Cass at the POL State Competition on February 24th in Bismarck.

Back Row (L to R) Samantha Bosch, Kylie Howatt, Mary Jodock, Forrest Deltener, Landon Nicholas
Front (L to R) Silver Anderson, Natalie Tegtmeier, Sherise Eagen
Not Pictured: Kyle Froehlich
3rd Grade Art

Mrs. Margerum's learners loved learning about the art of printmaking from Mrs. Glaser (Northern Cass's High School Art Educator). They were able to work collaboratively with their peers using the tools needed to make their art!

DECA

Congratulations to the DECA team on a great performance at the Emerging Leaders Conference in Valley City-VCSU on Wednesday January 29th.
NURSES’ CORNER: SLEEP REQUIREMENTS

A good night’s sleep is crucial to feeling and performing well during the day. Children from 3 to 5 years need approximately 10 to 13 hours of sleep a day, while children 6 to 13 need 9 to 10 hours daily, children 14 to 17 years need 8 to 10 hours a day and young adults 18 to 25 need 7 to 9 hours a day.

Suggestions for helping your child get enough sleep include.

♦ Establish a set bedtime hour and stick to it, even on weekends
♦ Develop a ritual associated with going to bed, for example a warm bath, a story, cuddling with Mom or Dad, etc
♦ Start "winding down” about 1/2 hour before bedtime; try to avoid strenuous activities, scary movies, electronic devices, etc
♦ Tell your child in advance when bedtime is and give reminders, such as: 1/2 hour till bedtime, 20 minutes till bedtime, 10 minutes till bedtime, etc
♦ Remove TV’s, computer and other “gadgets” from the bedroom

If you have questions or comments, please contact your school nurse or other health care provider.

UPSTART Opportunity

State Superintendent Kirsten Baesler sent out a memo November 25th regarding the UPSTART Kindergarten Readiness Opportunity for all North Dakota Children entering Kindergarten in 2021. She was also featured in a video explaining the UPSTART Kindergarten Readiness Opportunity for North Dakota.

Video Link: North Dakota Superintendent Kirsten Baesler & UPSTART

As the North Dakota UPSTART Director, I wanted to reach out and ask for your help in spreading the word about the program to your families in your school and community. There are no eligibility requirements other than living in North Dakota and starting Kindergarten fall of 2021.

In working closely with Superintendent Baesler, Assistant Superintendent Lori Maztke, other Directors at DPI and School Administrators across the state; July 2019 marked the first class of UPSTART! We began with over 200 North Dakota children participating. These children will graduate UPSTART in July 2020 and will be Kindergarten ready!

Registration is now open at https://www.waterfordupstart.org/ for children to begin UPSTART this August with over 500 open slots to fill. I am also happy to provide you with more information about UPSTART as well as hard copy or e-copy flyers to hand out to parents and families.

FREE to both families and school districts, this program is funded through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education called Education, Research, and Innovation (EIR).

WHAT FAMILIES WILL RECEIVE

♦ Research-based, efficacious, award-winning reading and math/science instruction delivered to each child for 15-20 minutes daily
♦ Weekly family support through a family education liaison to encourage the family through literacy knowledge, preparation for supporting a school-age child, and usage tracking. This personalized support is available in over 20 languages.
♦ All necessary hardware, software, and infrastructure for each family (including a dell laptop for each family, software, and internet when needed).
♦ Software licenses for all children in the home, including those who are not participating in the program directly, but may require additional reading, math, and science support.
♦ Pre/Post Assessment and efficacy research.

If you have any questions, please give me a call or zip me an email. You may also reach out to Superintendent Baesler’s or Assistant Superintendent Maztke’s office. I am looking forward to helping serve the children and families of North Dakota!
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<td>Chicken Alfredo, Peas, Peaches</td>
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<td>Teriyaki Chicken, Brown Rice, Broccoli, Pineapple</td>
<td>Corn Dogs, Baked Beans, Pears</td>
<td>Breaded Chicken Leg, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans, Apricots</td>
<td>Barbecues: Corn, Applesauce</td>
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<td>Turkey Sausage Frittata, Toast, Fruit, Milk</td>
<td>Cinnamon Roll, Cheese Stick, Fruit, Milk</td>
<td>Breakfast Sandwich, Fruit, Milk</td>
<td>Pizza, Salad Bar, Fruit</td>
<td>Valentine's Day</td>
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<td>Taco Salad, Refried Beans, Corn, Lettuce, Cheese, Tomatoes, and Chips, Pears</td>
<td>Chicken Strips, Mashed Potatoes, Green Beans, Tropical Mixed Fruit</td>
<td>Pulled Pork on Bun, Baked Beans, Coleslaw, Peaches</td>
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<td>Hamburger on a Bun, Fries, Sliced Tomato, Sliced Onion, Apples</td>
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<td>Popcorn Chicken, Mashed Potato, Broccoli, Peaches</td>
<td>Chili, Caramel Rolls, Apples, Carrots/Celery, Dinner Rolls</td>
<td>Chicken Patty on Bun, Green Beans, Peas</td>
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<td>French Toast, Fruit, Milk</td>
<td>French Toast, Fruit, Milk</td>
<td>Jumbo Muffin, Fruit, Cheese Stick, Milk</td>
<td>Ash Wednesday</td>
<td>Scoops, Fruit, Cheese Stick, Milk</td>
<td>Egg Bake, Toast, Fruit, Milk</td>
<td>Pizza, Salad Bar, Pineapple</td>
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<td>Sweet &amp; Sour Chicken, Brown Rice, Peaches, Mixed Veggies</td>
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<td>Lasagna, Lettuce Salad, Applesauce</td>
<td>Yogurt Parfait, Fruit, Toast, Milk</td>
<td>Grilled Cheese, Tomato Soup, Carrots, Celery, Apples</td>
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Milk, Whole Grain Bread, Fruit and Vegetables available on a daily basis

Menu subject to change
NAME: Ms. Samantha Baumgartner

CO-TEACHER/CONTENT AREA: 7th and 8th grade English with Mrs. Briceland

HIGH SCHOOL: Century High School (Bismarck, ND)

UNDERGRAD COLLEGE & DEGREE: Associate of Liberal Arts from North Dakota State College of Science (NDSCS) Bachelor of English Education from North Dakota State University (NDSU)

JOBS: Nanny for two families for the last three years (occasionally in the year and all throughout summer) NDSU Dining (2017-2019) Twisted Taco on NDSU campus (currently)

HOBBIES: Love to hang out at Barnes and Noble Love to watch Hulu/Netflix Love to read (mystery and psychological thriller) Love music and going to concerts in downtown Minneapolis (First Avenue is my favorite venue)

FAMILY: When I was 15, my father passed away from cancer and my mom is about to remarry her fiance of 7 years next year. I have a brother who is about to graduate high school, which makes me feel quite old. I’ll have two older step-brothers and younger step-brother and sister, which took me a while to get used to, but we are a big, happy, mixed family. We also have two cats that are constantly taking pictures of.

ONE INTERESTING FACT: I had a poem published in a book, Acclaimed, when I was in 9th grade.

NAME: Miss Kelly Cahoy

CO-TEACHER/CONTENT AREA: High School Mathematics with Mr. Kosel

HIGH SCHOOL: Fargo South High School

UNDERGRAD COLLEGE & DEGREE: Valley City State University; Mathematics Education with a certificate in STEM Education

JOBS: Direct Support Professional at the Open Door Center in Valley City, ND

HOBBIES: Cooking Gardening Hunting Playing with my dogs

FAMILY: I have one older sister, one younger sister, two nieces and a nephew. They all live in Fargo, and so do my parents. My boyfriend and I have two dogs, Rocky and Reese. We live on a ranch with a lot of other animals!

ONE INTERESTING FACT: I am in the ND National Guard as a 31B Military Police.
Level 4 Holiday Donation Project

By Calt, Aurora, and Brooks – Level 4 Learners

Level 4 learners all participated in this year’s Holiday Donation Project. We first met as a class and learned about non-profits and researched places in the area we could help. Every learner was assigned an area of our project to work on. We got to place our name into a bag for our top three choices which included: Non-profit, marketing, food service, photographer, travel and budget, and public speaking. Throughout the month of December we worked in our assigned areas to prepare a field trip to deliver donations to The Ronald McDonald House and 4 Luv of Dogs.

At our December Greatness Celebration elementary learners brought in donations for each of the organizations. Afterwards, we left for Fargo to volunteer and deliver those donations.

At Ronald McDonald House we had a very nice lady who showed our group around the place and shared about their work. They told us about a tradition they do every year for a fundraiser in February. It was our job to color wooden hearts that would decorate the trees at the fundraiser and for people to take home if they wished. We even got to see a room called the magic room. It only opened with a password - which was Jags. Inside the room was toys for all the children who stayed at the Ronald McDonald House who were sick.

At 4Luv of Dogs we met a lady who talked about how they run fostering and adopting of dogs. We even got to meet one of the dogs and pet him. They money donations were super helpful because a lot of their dogs are sick or need medical treatment.

Overall, we were able to work together to help two organizations who provide good deeds or services for families whose children are sick and dogs needing a new home. Thanks for helping us provide donations for these great organizations.

SEL Music Grant

Northern Cass was awarded a $4,000 social emotional learning (SEL) music grant. Miss Vetter, the elementary music educator, will be working with Miss Ellenson, MSUM counseling intern, this semester in kindergarten music to incorporate more SEL skills within their music class – mindfulness, yoga, using music to understand emotions, using instruments to express feelings, and so much more.

In addition, Miss Vetter will be using grant funds to support music in elementary learning centers and enhance the use of SEL skills in her PK-4 music classes.
EDUCATING THE WHOLE CHILD
NORTHERN CASS COUNSELING GROUPS

In partnership with North Dakota State University, the counseling department will again be running groups starting the week of March 2nd. We typically run around 15-20 groups servicing around 100 learners PK-12. Groups are designed to be a safe place to learn, listen, and grow together focusing on a common skill or concern. If a learner or parent believes one of the following groups would be beneficial, please contact one of the school counselors for more information.

Ashley Krinke (PK-5) ashley.krinke@northerncassschool.com
Keira Oscarson (6-12) keira.oscarson@northerncassschool.com
LeAnn Wahl (6-12) leann.wahl@northerncassschool.com

Social Skills
Learners will develop further awareness of their own thinking and social behaviors and learn strategies to help them develop better self-regulation across a range of behaviors. Possible topics may include:
- Peer relationship; Friendship Skills; Boundaries

Healthy Relationships
Learners will identify components of healthy relationships, as well as develop skills related to setting boundaries and addressing conflict.
Possible topics may include:
- Choosing good friends; Setting boundaries; Handling peer conflict

Self-Esteem
Learners will develop confidence in own worth or abilities, develop self-respect, and learn assertiveness.
Possible topics may include:
- Self-confidence; Assertiveness

Family Dynamics
Learners will be able to work through challenging issues and changes that occur within their family unit in a safe, confidential group. Learners will learn positive coping skills.
Possible topics may include:
- Divorce; Death; Conflict; Sibling conflict; Family dynamic changes

Self-Regulation
Learners will be provided strategies to become more aware of, and independent in controlling their emotions and reactions. They will learn problem solving strategies to use when faced with tough situations.
- Emotion regulation; Problem-solving

Stress Management
Learners will become more self-aware, increase their ability to self-regulate, manage emotions, learn to focus and calm self, and reduce stress and anxiety.
- Yoga and Mindfulness; Focus; Stress reduction; Anxiety

Growth Mindset
Learners will be able to practice a growth mindset, which is a lifelong skill that enables each person to be flexible and strive to be better even when things don't go their way or during challenging moments.
- Resilience; Flexible thinking

Academic Success
Learners will learn strategies that promote positive academic success and be able to work through challenges that arise within the education setting.
Possible topics may include:
- Organization; Study skills; Self-advocacy
STEAM Camp
Save the Date

Medical Mystery
June 15-18, 2020
Current Grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-8
Registration Opens in March

NEED SERVICE HOURS?

COME PLAY WITH US!

We will need Tournament Volunteers for the March 28 DI Tournament to be held at Northern Cass: Photographers, Video, Registration Desk, Concessions, Set Up, Clean Up and more!

Email mary@creatend.org to get involved.
SOLUTION SATURDAY

Destination Imagination teams will meet to work on their Solutions. Please contact your Team Manager to see if/when your team will meet.

SATURDAY
FEBRUARY 22
9:00AM - 2:00PM

INSTANT CHALLENGE WORKSHOP

MONDAY
FEBRUARY 10
6:30 PM

ALL DESTINATION IMAGINATION TEAMS INVITED TO SOLVE THE CHALLENGES!!
The Missoula Children’s Theater will be at Northern Cass the week of March 2-7. They will be presenting Beauty Lou and The Country Beast! Auditions will be after school March 2 for any K-12 learners that would like to be involved. After rehearsals all week, the learners will perform on Friday, March 6 at 7:00pm and Saturday, March 7 at 10:30am.

Watch for a note sent home with details about auditions!
Audition Notice

Who: Any student in grades K-12.
What: Speaking and non-speaking roles in the MCT production, *Beauty Lou and the Country Beast*
When: Monday, March 2, 2020
   2-hour Group Audition from 3:45 to 5:45PM.  
   (Must stay entire two hours.)
Where: PTO will provide snack in the commons at 3:30 for all who try out.

Also needed: Students willing to work as assistant directors and on stage and lighting crews. These students must participate in the audition, too. Adults are also needed to assist with costumes and make up.

Although many parts are available, not everyone is guaranteed a role in the play. Those students who are cast MUST clear their after-school schedules for the rehearsal week. Each student in the play will receive two free tickets to the production.

Fees?: There are no fees to participate. Snack is provided for all who audition on Monday, and all cast members that stay after school during the week-long rehearsals. A light supper will be provided for the few (usually older) cast members that remain for the later rehearsal on Monday. A half-hour supper break is scheduled from 5:45 to 6:15 on Tuesday through Thursday, where some cast members need to provide their own sack supper. Friday’s supper will be provided by NCS Booster Club.

Performances are 7 PM on Friday, March 6th & 10:30 AM on Saturday, March 7th.

COMPLETED FORM (below) MUST BE RETURNED TO STUDENT’S TEACHER prior to audition, or student will be sent home on the bus.

**PLEASE RETURN BY February 25th!**

___ YES!! My child will be staying after school on Monday, March 2nd for the MCT Audition.

Parent Signature ____________________________  Parent Phone ____________________
(child’s signature)

I, ________________________________, understand that if I get a part in “*Beauty Lou and the Country Beast,*” I will attend every required practice and performance. Quitting is not an option.

Child’s Full Name ________________________________

Child’s Grade & Teacher: ________________________________
Northern Cass Data Snapshot
Winter Testing Report: aimswebPlus & STAR (2–5)
2019–2020

Percentile is a norm-referenced score that provides a measure of a learner’s reading or math ability compared to other learners in the same grade nationally. The percentile rank score, which ranges from 1 to 99, indicates the percentage of other learners nationally who obtained scores equal to or lower than the score of a particular learner. For example, in a group of 100 learners, the learner who obtains a percentile rank score of 85 performed as well as or better than 85 other learners in the same grade (Renaissance STAR, 2019).

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<th>50&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;–74&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Percentile</th>
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## Northern Cass Data Snapshot
### Winter Testing Report: aimswebPlus & STAR (2-5)
#### 2019-2020

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Brave before Perfect: Transforming Learning in Rural North Dakota
Practitioner’s Guide to Next Gen Learning

Northern Cass School District in North Dakota makes quick wins—not quick fixes—to personalize learning.

_Northern Cass has emerged as an incredible bright spot for transforming learning and adopting good practices from across the nation. I think they are going to be the shining star for the rest of North Dakota._ — Barry Sommer, director of advancement at Lindsay Unified School District, Lindsay, CA

Communities may call it next gen learning, deeper learning, personalized learning, or something unique to their local context, but the will to redesign education is gaining traction. Schools and districts are transforming themselves to place students at the center of their learning and provide equitable opportunities to develop skills and knowledge for lifelong success. With numerous exemplars available to learn from, more and more educators are asking, _We know what we want learning to look like at our school, but how do we make the change?_

In response to questions like this, NGLC is committed to exploring not only what next gen learning can look like but also what next gen change can look like. This month’s edition of _Friday Focus: Practitioner’s Guide to Next Gen Learning_ focuses on one district’s transformation story—the journey toward personalized, competency-based learning at Northern Cass School District 97 in Hunter, North Dakota.

Barry Sommer from Lindsay Unified School District, Northern Cass’s mentor district, describes Northern Cass’s progress as “remarkable.” According to Barry, who was featured in _this Practitioner’s Guide story_ from 2018 about Lindsay Unified’s own decade-long learning redesign, “Northern Cass is only in their second year of implementation of personalized learning, but they are rocketing forward at all levels with significant support from all stakeholders. Already, every learner is being impacted by a very well thought out system.”

To tell Northern Cass’s transformation story, I spoke to Cory Steiner, the district’s superintendent, along with director of personalized learning Tom Klapp and personalized learning coach Jessica Stoen, to find out how such significant change unfolded in the district, including:

- Shifts in adult mindsets
- Key changes in educator practice
- Assets that enabled the change

A Monumental Shift in Thinking about School
_Shouldn’t every kid get meaningful learning? And if it’s good for every kid, then we have to blow up school. Total transformation. This is not the school it was two years ago._ — Cory Steiner, superintendent of Northern Cass School District 97

At Northern Cass the transformation began when educators grappled with powerful ideas through book studies, including texts from outside the field of education. For example, Tom credits reading _Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap...and Others Don’t_ by James C. Collins as a “monumental event” that helped educators “find our why for change and get away from the kind of mission statement every school has and never refers to.” For Jess and 20 of her colleagues participating in a teacher leadership academy, the seminal book was _Inevitable: Mass Customized Learning: Learning in the Age of Empowerment_ by Chuck Schwahn and Beatrice McGarvey.

According to Jess and Tom, discussions of books about organizational change, leadership, cultural trends, and the structural changes required to meet all learners’ needs prompted educators to ask the question, “_How do we make our learning environment meaningful for all kids?_” Tom adds, “It was just an activity in a class. It was never intended to go this far, but those discussions led to a sense of ‘we have to do this.’”

At about the same time, Cory had the opportunity to visit _Lindsay Unified School District_, where he first met Barry and saw performance-based learning in action. “It was a game changer,” he recalls. “It allowed us to see what could be.”
Like many schools and districts in the NGLC community, a key early step at Northern Cass involved rethinking the district’s graduation requirements to reflect the skills, knowledge, and dispositions learners need to thrive in a changing world—what Northern Cass calls “choice-ready skills.” According to Barry, however, the process they used to develop the Northern Cass Portrait of a Graduate also required new ways of thinking about the role learners should play in all aspects of their learning.

Today, Barry reports that Northern Cass “shines in learner agency,” but Cory recalls that early iterations of the new graduate profile were “one hundred percent created by adults, and kids were not invested. So we got kids involved and redesigned it. As part of our strategic planning, we held community events and talked about [the portrait of a graduate] with higher ed, the community, and the students. They can speak powerfully about what they learn and how they learn. A real learners’ mindset came out of that work.”

Not only did learners co-create the graduate profile, they continue to define the choice-ready skills and rise to what Cory calls “the challenge to make it part of the daily life” at school. For example, Jess describes Northern Cass’s “first ten” approach in the elementary grades: “For the first ten days each year, we focus on choice-ready skills. Learners choose their own words to define them, being intentional about what skills like leadership and accountability mean and the different ways they could show them.”

**Practices for Personalization**

Personalization, learner agency, and proficiency-based grading are key practices Northern Cass has adopted to enable all learners to develop choice-ready skills. Learners co-create a personalized learning plan to learn, practice, and demonstrate content proficiency at their own pace. Self-pacing, according to Tom, “is one of the things that comes up loud and clear from kids as meaningful to them.”

Jess illustrates with the story of how, at a convening of educators, one learner described the experience of self-pacing. She recalls how “a guest asked the panel of Northern Cass students, ‘What has personalized learning done for you?’ and the learner answered that ‘as a special education student, I have always felt I held other learners back, but with self-pacing I don’t feel that way anymore.’” According to Jess, “it was very emotional for us adults and vulnerable for him. But that is why we are doing what we are doing.”

To support a self-paced approach, Northern Cass uses flexible grouping strategies instead of traditional age-based grades. Learners are assigned to learning levels based on their current level of academic proficiency, which may vary by subject area. “It’s very fluid,” Tom explains. “Cohorts are regrouped every few weeks based on level. No one is ever just stuck for a year.”

Even very young learners in Northern Cass School District 97 exercise agency around where and how they learn. (Courtesy of Northern Cass School District)
Although self-pacing is a notable example, flexibility seems to be a recurring theme in the descriptions Cory, Jess, and Tom provide about adult practice in Northern Cass schools. In addition to the pace of learning, learners exercise considerable agency in determining how and where they learn. According to Cory, it’s a common occurrence to hear “pre-K students explaining not only how they are learning but why and what’s best for how they learn.” Jess observes that learners as young as six years old are “not only choosing where they work, they are also thinking about why they would choose that place.”

According to Cory, flexibility around where and when learning can take place includes authentic learning outside of the school—from archeological digs for dinosaur bones to internships and industry certifications. For example, when one learner at the high school level wanted more music classes than her small school could provide, Northern Cass educators helped organize independent learning to support her love of music. Cory explains, “Now she is creating a capstone based on composing and performing music in a public concert and taking college courses to do it.”

Tom cites similar stories of personalized, passion-driven learning experiences, such as a learner whose independent study involves writing a novel and working with a publisher, a group of learners interested in education who use their school’s learning management system (LMS) to design coursework using authentic tools, and another learner who designed an advanced project, “not just in English or math but in all content areas. We co-designed a project that accomplished 12 standards at once.”

Tom sums up Northern Cass’s learner-centered approach this way: “We hear what our kids want and do whatever we can to make it happen.” What is more, Cory adds, designing learning is a collaborative effort, with learners and educators working together. “It’s not a ‘we vs. them’ mindset. There’s a lot more of ‘us’ now.”

Working in tandem with personalized learning at Northern Cass is proficiency-based grading, which Tom identifies as another key lever for transforming learning in the district. In place of letter grades, educators use proficiency scales to measure learner progress, from Level 1 (Emerging) to Level 4 (Extended), with Level 3 indicating proficiency in a standard or choice-ready skill.

“Personalized learning and proficiency-based grading go together well,” Tom says, “because it’s not about getting some arbitrary point value. We focus on learning. When kids focus on that and not just getting things done to get an A, that’s when it transforms learning in the building.”

Northern Cass “Jag Ambassadors” answer questions about personalized learning at the North Dakota Personalized, Competency Based Learning (NDPCBL) convening in December 2019. (Courtesy of Northern Cass School District)

Assets and Challenges

“Brave before perfect” is the mindset. Just do what’s best for kids. It’s not easy but being hard is not evidence that it’s wrong. — Cory Steiner

The Northern Cass educators I spoke to are committed to proficiency-based grading as an essential pillar of their model, but they acknowledge that the shift away from traditional grades presents more of a challenge than other changes. Tom reports, “The mindsets around grading have been around for a long time. Proficiency-based grading is an odd concept to throw at them. It's not so much opposition as a lack of understanding.”
Fortunately, Northern Cass has partners in the effort to transform the way educators, learners, and parents talk about learner achievement. One of these partners is the Mastery Transcript Consortium (MTC), an organization dedicated to rethinking the high school transcript to reflect learners’ unique skills, strengths, and interests. Northern Cass serves as a beta site for MTC’s transcript prototype. With MTC’s support, Cory explains, the district “is trying out a proficiency-based transcript. Developing something that gives information and evidence on what students can do is a piece that we need. We are talking to universities and sharing what our transcript means. The universities have been supportive, and we plan to strengthen those partnerships.”

Finding new and better ways to communicate the full breadth of young people’s learning, Tom adds, “can give higher ed or an employer a clearer picture of who the kid is and not a random number that says what they are worth. There is so much more to each human being that will make them successful and valuable to your organization.”

Another key partner is Lindsay Unified School District, which supports Northern Cass’s systemic change through their Lindsay Leads initiative, with funding from the Bush Foundation. Barry recalls Cory’s first school visit this way: “We met [Northern Cass leaders] and knew right away we would like to support, connect, and learn from these folks.”

“Lindsay Unified has worked really closely with us and given us lots of real-time support. Our kids are even connecting via Zoom and Instagram,” says Cory. “Barry has been amazing.” Tom adds, “They’ve been kind of a big brother to us, very open and willing to share resources. We try to do the same and pass on our knowledge. It’s a ripple effect.”

It’s clear from talking to Barry and the educators at Northern Cass that human capital has been the greatest asset in the effort to transform district schools. Barry gives quite a bit of credit to Cory. “I have to highlight that a significant part of their success has been skilled leadership,” he says. “Cory is a real visionary for second-order change.”

Cory, for his part, praises the educators in his district, saying, “It takes a lot of effort and empathy to put aside what’s best for adults—to be truly learner centered—and boy do our people work. There are lots of other schools up the road in Fargo where they could teach. There are easier options, but they have not taken them. Teachers stay here because the right work is always the right work.”

---

Attention Youth Sports Parents:

Screaming ‘Call the foul, ref!’ serves absolutely NO positive purpose. None.

Even if a foul was missed... you yelling it DOES NOT HELP IN ANY WAY.


2) You are unconsciously teaching your child that it is OK to make excuses, to blame someone else, and to complain when things don’t go their way. This breeds entitlement and lower performance.

3) Referees are human beings. They have feelings. Giving them a hard time actually DECREASES the chance of the ‘next call going your way.’ Referees have unconscious biases just like you do.

---

Having been involved in youth sports as a player, coach, and parent - I recognize how well intended, but severely misguided, many parents are.

Their behavior is taking the fun out of the game and we are seeing kids drop out of sports at an alarming rate.

Please read ♥️ 🧵
HARWOOD BASEBALL
2020 SEASON

Please mail registration form and payment to:
Mark Uggerud
4724 37th Ave N
Reiles Acres ND 58102

DATE OF BIRTH

AGE AS OF May 1st 2020

NAME
Last       MI       First

ADDRESS

CITY/ST/ZIP

PARENT #1 NAME

Parent #1 Cell

Parent #1 EMAIL ADDRESS

PARENT #2 NAME

PARENT #2 Cell

PARENT #2 EMAIL ADDRESS

BOY______  GIRL______

GRADE FALL OF 2020

DEADLINE: February 28, 2020. Take $10 OFF registration if paid by February 7th!!!

Please Check the Appropriate Level

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****The board will reserve the right to move kids up a level if needed for number of players on a team, with parent permission.

Pre-Squirts - This beginner level focuses on participation, skills and fun. It is for boys and girls. Coaches will toss the ball underhand to players unless tee is needed. If this is your child’s first year or you need a new T-shirt and/or hat, please indicate below.

T-shirt needed: Yes $10  No $0  Size: YS  YM  YL

Hat needed: Yes $10  No $0

Squirt, PeeWee, Rookie, and Babe Ruth level—If this is your first year above pre-squirts, or you need a new jersey or hat, please fill out the next section. Besides the jersey and hat, uniforms will consist of grey pants, purple socks, and a purple belt. Parents are responsible for purchasing these items. Scheels carries all of these items. The jersey will have both a number and a name on the back.

Hat needed: Yes $10  No $0

Jersey Needed: Yes $30  No $0

Jersey Size: YS  YM  YL  AS  AM  AL  AXL

If new to program or want new number:
First Choice Jersey #___________  Second Choice_____________  Third Choice_____________

If you want a new jersey with the same number: Jersey #____________
Only Pewee and Rookie levels will be required to participate in the pizza fundraiser!!

FUNDRAISER: We will be conducting a pizza sale fundraiser at the beginning of the baseball season. The fundraiser will be used for field and equipment improvements, paying umpires, and league fees. One participant per family will need to sell 15 pizzas. Two participants or more per family at Pewee and Rookie level need to sell 25 pizzas. Because league fees and paying umpires do not apply to Pre-squirts and Squirts, those players will not be required to participate in the fundraiser!

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: HARWOOD BASEBALL

*****You MUST read and sign the waiver on this registration form to participate in Harwood Baseball*****

Important to Note:

- No refunds of registration fees will be made unless the family moves from the area or the player is medically incapable of playing the first game.
- For more information e-mail muggerud@far.midco.net.

I understand that baseball is a physical game in which injuries can occur. To induce Harwood Baseball to accept registration and permit my child’s participation, I, as parent or guardian, hereby give my consent and agree to release, indemnify and hold harmless Harwood Baseball, its officials, coaches, officers and directors from any claim arising out of injury to my child.

SIGNED_________________________________________ DATE ____________________

(PARENT OR GUARDIAN)

The Harwood Baseball Board is looking for new members! If this is something you are interested in please fill out the following information and we will contact you soon. Thanks!

Name____________________________________ Phone Number __________________________

For Office Use Only

Date Received _______ Fee Paid ________ Check #_______