

# North Dakota Invests Federal Funds in Establishing Innovative and Sustainable Programs Throughout the State

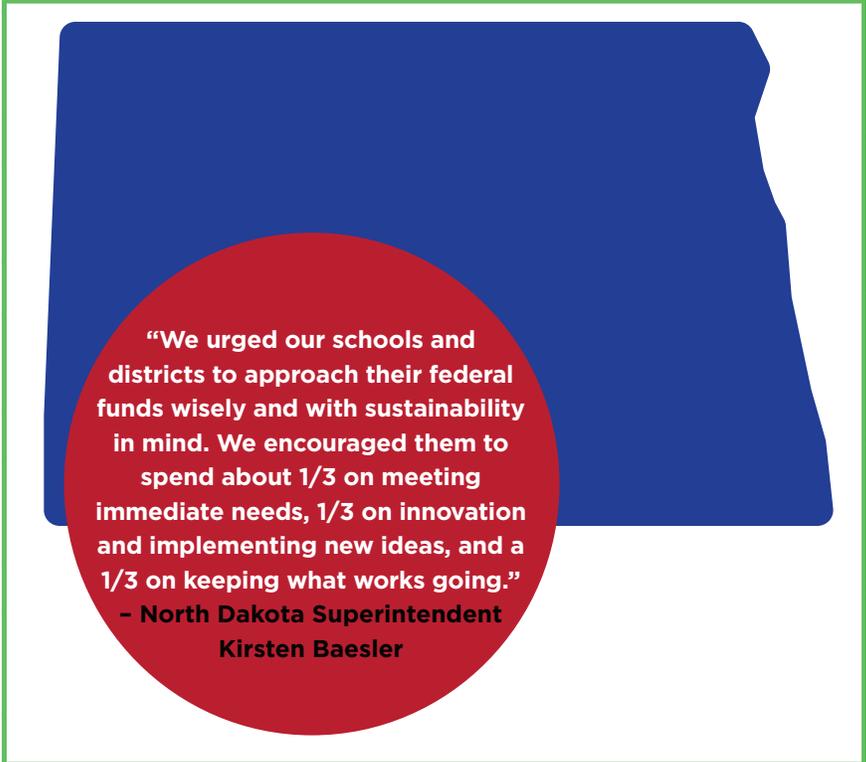
## State Strategy & Vision:

Amid national uncertainty regarding allowable uses and timelines for recovery spending, NDDPI knew it would be helpful for school districts to have a vision and guide for spending that they could trust. NDDPI developed a concrete spending model, aligned to its vision for recovery and applied to its own use of state set-aside funds, that all school districts could choose to follow.

Sequenced over three years, the model recommended that school districts allocate 1/3 of their ESSER funds in the first year on the expansion of programs that directly impact student success – including hiring more tutors, expanding summer school, and increasing after-school program enrollment. In the second year, the state recommends that districts and schools spend the next 1/3 on innovative and new programs that could aid student learning. The third year is meant to evaluate which efforts have had the greatest impact on learning, with the remaining 1/3 of funds then targeted to scale successful efforts and build a sustainable system of funding supported by permanent federal, state, and local funds. The agency also made big bets to address learning loss by both providing a free diagnostic assessment system statewide and targeting specific districts with comprehensive literacy grants.

## What They Did:

The NDDPI invested \$1.38 million to provide the Exact Path system, free of charge, to schools to help ensure they had the tools needed to address student learning loss due to COVID-19 disruptions. This online, adaptive diagnostic assessment helps pinpoint student strengths and weaknesses and helps teachers target and tailor curriculum for individual students. The districts that committed to implementing the system are seeing promising growth for their students and have had a consistent tool to support learning either in-person or virtually.



**“We urged our schools and districts to approach their federal funds wisely and with sustainability in mind. We encouraged them to spend about 1/3 on meeting immediate needs, 1/3 on innovation and implementing new ideas, and a 1/3 on keeping what works going.”**

**- North Dakota Superintendent  
Kirsten Baesler**

NDDPI reserved ESSER III funds to provide seven districts with a System-Wide (Birth through Grade 12) Literacy Improvement Grant. The competitive grant application will target districts that have not received federal Comprehensive Literacy Grants within the past five years. Funding will support a literacy audit to identify areas for improvement, professional development to address the district's specific literacy instruction needs, acquisition of curricular resources and supplies, and technical assistance to achieve system alignment. The state's focus on literacy came as pre-pandemic concerns about flagging reading abilities intensified during school closures and disruptions.

And to help schools and educators maximize their collaboration with parents amid disrupted learning conditions, the PK-12 Alliance, in partnership with NDDPI and the Center for Innovation in Education, designed a series of resources and strategies called the [Family Partnership Strategy Playbook](#). The strategies specifically focus on helping educators communicate to families how and why interventions and accelerated learning techniques can be needed and beneficial for learners. Alliance members designed the resources with feedback and input from educators, caregivers, and students and hope that the tools will help schools engage stakeholders who have not been effectively engaged in the past.

### **Why We Like It:**

The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction set out a strategic vision and directive for how state and local entities should spend their federal relief funds. This type of guidance and leadership is welcome as districts and local leaders struggle to make smart decisions with a large influx of funds, especially as they emerge from the pandemic. In addition to their leadership and direction, the state is investing in the use of data and systemic improvements to literacy in areas that need it the most. We appreciate the great lengths the state agency has gone to work with various relevant stakeholders to develop strategies that best served the communities most affected by COVID-19. The commitment to funding what works, encouraging a space for innovation, and creating suitable, data-driven funding streams for their most successful programs is a model to be followed.

North Dakota laid out a clear vision for how to strategically spend federal relief funds to help ensure all students will graduate ready to be successful in life.

### **About EduRecoveryHub**

The Collaborative for Student Success is proud to partner with the Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) and the Edunomics Lab at Georgetown University on a new effort to identify innovative education practices. Our goal is to lift up and focus attention on practices that have the potential to help schools recover stronger and all students benefit. Learn more at [EduRecoveryHub.org](https://EduRecoveryHub.org)