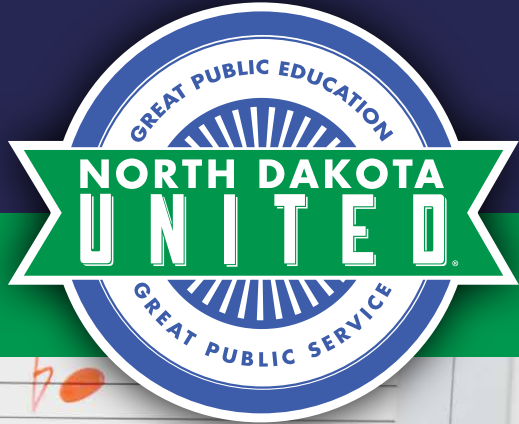


UNV



UNITED VOICES
VOL. 9 NO. 4





President's Post

By Nick Archuleta, nick.archuleta@ndunited.org

Looking Back at Legislature

United Voices

June 2023 – Vol. 9, No. 4



United Voices is published in the interest of public education and public services. Educators and public employees will always find its columns open to discussions and questions of vital concern to them. For more information about North Dakota United, visit our website at www.ndunited.org.

PRESIDENT
Nick Archuleta

VICE PRESIDENT OF EDUCATION
Alicia Bata

VICE PRESIDENT OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES
Gary Feist

NEA DIRECTOR
Brenda Seehafer

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Chad Oban

EDITORIAL STAFF
Kelly Hagen –
Communications
Director

Sarah Keiser – Special
Projects Coordinator

ADDRESS
North Dakota United
301 N Fourth St
Bismarck, ND 58501

03
President's Post

04
2023 Legislative
Wrap Up

12
Executive Director
Perspective

14
TikTok Teacher

18
Teacher Retention
Issues

22
Leadership Academy
Commemorating
Ruth Meiers

24
Delegate Assembly
2023

26
NDU Professional
Development
Opportunities

28
County Teachers
of the Year

United Voices is the official member publication of North Dakota United (NDU), an affiliate of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. It is published four times per year, with publishing dates in September, December, March and June. Postmaster: Send address changes by mail to North Dakota United, 301 N Fourth St, Bismarck, ND 58501.

To inquire about advertising in *United Voices* or to share your concerns, questions or news tips, contact UV editor Kelly Hagen by e-mail at kelly.hagen@ndunited.org or call **701-557-0206**.

Our members made their voices heard like never before at the Capitol during a difficult session.

The 68th North Dakota Legislative Assembly finally adjourned sine die a few weeks ago. As you know, our Legislature meets for 80 days every two years. The more cynical among us might prefer that it meet for two days every 80 years, but not me. I am the consummate optimist. I believe that people run for office with the intention of doing what's right for their constituents and the state of ND. Of course, what one believes and what actually happens can be two very different things. Here are some highlights and lowlights of the 2023 legislative session:

- Tip O'Neil famously said that "all politics is local." If that were ever true, it certainly is not now. The North Dakota Legislature is fully immersed in the culture wars that are being waged in statehouses across the country. Bills regarding teacher autonomy, the types of conversations that are allowed on university campuses, book banning, how transgender students should be treated, and using public funds to pay for parochial education all had hearings and votes in this session. Many of those bills were not written by ND legislators. They were boilerplate bills crafted by special interest groups in states like Virginia, Tennessee and Florida. In floor debates, the question was often asked, "Can you tell me of a single instance where X is an issue in North Dakota?" The response was usually along the lines of, "No. this legislation is preventative." Ugh!
- Among the greatest disappointments was our

inability to prevent the closure of the PERS Defined Benefit (DB) retirement plan. We fought side-by-side with PERS and others to save the plan, which is an important tool to recruit and retain dedicated and talented public employees at the state level and in our political subdivisions. But, with the governor and the majority leaders in both chambers behind ending it, the lift was just too much. The sad part is that ND will eventually learn the hard lessons learned in Alaska, West Virginia and Oklahoma, and will be forced to reopen the plan because it is simply too expensive to shut down.

- On the positive side, this legislative session drew ND United members together like never before! On the voucher bill alone, NDU members and friends sent 57, 507 emails to legislators in opposition and almost 850 emails to Governor Burgum urging him to veto HB 1532, which he did. In total, our members and friends sent 75,449 emails in support of our positions on legislation affecting pensions, school lunch, tenure, K-12, higher education and public employee funding, book bans, parental rights, and more. Our friends and members are the best!

I want to close by thanking each and every one of you for your membership in North Dakota United. Because of you, our state is a better place in which to live and work. Thank you for all you do and will do on behalf of the people and communities we serve. Have a great summer!

2023 Legislative Wrap Up



The 2023 Legislative Session is over! In this final legislative update, we summarize our wins, where the legislature could have done better, run the numbers on how many actions members took over the last four months, then wrap up with what's next.

Thank you all for your hard work during the session! Please let us know if you have any questions on legislation, thoughts on how we can do better, or anything else that comes to mind at legislative@ndunited.org.

NDU Wins



Held Legislative Forums

The work that goes into each legislative session doesn't just start in January. After the midterm elections, our members took part in legislative forums across the state, allowing us to establish connections with local legislators in Bismarck, Mandan, Minot, Dickinson, Rolla, Grand Forks, Williston, Fargo, and West Fargo. We learned more about where they were at on the

issues, conveyed our concerns and priorities for public education and public service, and let them know that we would be paying attention to the decisions they were going to make that would impact our students, schools, and communities. Be on the lookout for upcoming forums to continue our conversations with legislators!



Defeated HB 1532 – Vouchers

House Bill 1532 would have given \$10 million dollars in public money to private schools with no strings attached. The bill was a dangerous threat to public schools, rural communities, and services that depend on public funding. North Dakota United members sent over 57,000 emails to Senators and Representatives on this issue, which successfully flipped votes of legislators like Representative Anna Novak of

Hazen, who cited a member email as the reason she switched to opposing HB 1532.

The final version of the bill narrowly passed out of the House by three votes and was sent to Governor Burgum, who vetoed HB 1532 after receiving almost 900 emails from NDU members urging him to do so. The House then sustained the veto and HB 1532 was finally defeated.



Defeated HB 1446 – Attack on Tenure at Dickinson State University and Bismarck State College

House Bill 1446 was written by Representative Lefor and the President of Dickinson State University to expand the power of University Presidents and threaten the job security of tenured professors at Dickinson State University and Bismarck State College. If passed, the bill would have limited academic freedom and shared governance, and hurt higher education by

making our state less attractive to quality professors looking to work in North Dakota.

After passing through the House on a 66 yea, 27 nay, 1 absent vote, the Senate came one vote short of passing the bill. Our members made their voices loud and clear on HB 1446, sending over 4,000 emails to legislators and submitting 20 testimonies opposing this legislation.



Passed HB 1494 and SB 2284 – School Lunch

House Bill 1494 prevents stigmatization or penalization of a student for having an unpaid lunch debt. Practices like withholding meals, using lunch tokens, placing a child's name on a list of those with lunch debt, or limiting participation in school activities are no longer allowed. This bill easily passed through both chambers with only one nay vote each and is now a law!

With more states passing

universal free school meals legislation, North Dakota legislators followed suit by introducing HB 1491. The bill began as a \$90 million dollar appropriation to cover all costs of school lunches, making them free of charge to public school students. After a series of amendments in the House Education committee, HB 1491 was whittled down to a mere

Continued on next page.

\$6 million dollar bill to cover costs of meals for students whose parents or guardians make less than 200% of federal poverty, which equates to \$60,000. After passing 80 yeas, 11 nays, 3 absent in the House, the bill failed in the Senate on a 23-24 vote: one vote short of passing.

After an incredible outpouring of messages to legislators from North Dakota United members

and partners like the AFL-CIO, the final language of HB 1491 was inserted as an amendment to SB 2284 by Representative Schreiber-Beck and seven other members of the House Education Committee. Senate Bill 2284, a broad K-12 education funding bill, then passed through both chambers and has been signed into law with the amendment for school meals included!



Defeated Multiple Parental Rights Bills

SB 2260 was one of several parental rights bills that was defeated in the legislature this session. SB 2260 would have created additional requirements for teachers, who already have a long list. In its original form, the bill would have allowed parents

to sue teachers and school boards alike. With a teacher shortage and high rates of burn out, SB 2260 was the last thing that North Dakotan teachers needed. Thankfully, with NDU members' messages in mind, SB 2260 was defeated.



Defeated SB 2360 – Book Bans

This bill would have required every library worker to read every word in every book of a library's collection, removing anything with so-called "obscene material". The exorbitant fiscal note for this bill was determined by reviewing the number of additional positions our public libraries would need to hire to meet the expectations outlined in SB 2360. The bill also would have penalized any individual who displays "obscene material" in a library with a class B misdemeanor.

The Governor ultimately vetoed

the bill after hearing from constituents, and the House ended up being the chamber to sustain the veto, as the Senate had voted to override. This would not have happened without our members speaking up and following the lead of the North Dakota Library Association.

Meanwhile, House Bill 1205 was signed by Governor Burgum. While this new law does not include a criminal penalty, it is poorly written, redundant legislation that puts Government in the way of local public library control and processes.

What Could Have Gone Better and Why Elections Matter



Attack on Pensions

This is an issue we have been tracking and working on continually, while the Legislature has been ignoring it since 2011. Although we fought hard, we learned throughout this session that we lost this fight on election day. Members of the legislature disregarded the facts and chose to vote ideologically, based on numbers from a think-tank instead of an actuarial report

provided by NDPERS.

Because of this, HB 1040 passed and will close the defined benefit pension plan to new employees. There were some changes made at the last minute and we will keep monitoring the situation. We will continue to keep up the heat on them about their decision now and when the true cost becomes apparent during the next legislative session.



Teacher Licensure

HB 1329 would have reduced the 30 year experience requirement for a lifetime teaching license to 20 years. While it passed easily in the House chamber, the Senate defeated the bill. Senators considered the lifetime teaching licensure a badge of honor, rather than a benefit to

veteran teachers. They were also concerned about missing out on additional reviews that would occur over the 10-year period, reiterating their distrust in our public educators. Unfortunately, the legislature failed to provide this benefit to teachers.



Necessary Raises for Public Workers and Educators

This legislative session, funding bills went through at the very end. While there were some increases, we still fell short of where our state needs to be and what we asked for at 8% and 8%. After this past election, we knew that funding would be an uphill battle this session. K-12 funding ended with a 4% and 4% increase with an added 0.5% for special education funding. Additionally, a section in SB 2013 requires that 70% of the increased

funding must go towards non-administrative salaries. Public employees and higher education funding ended at 6% and 4%. These percentages are a win in our book; however, they are not up to par with our current economic environment. We must continue to pay close attention to the actions of our elected officials as we head into another election season.

Continued on next page.

X No Stipends for Foreign Language Education

Further demonstrating the priorities of our legislature, SB 2354 – which would have expanded foreign language education in kindergarten through third grade – failed in the House in March. The bill would have appropriated a mere \$25,000 to create a pilot program providing stipends to educators who teach a foreign language. SB 2354 passed easily through the Senate on a 37-7 vote but

was defeated in the House after concerning discussion regarding foreign language education. One Representative claimed he did not want kids learning the “language of a third world country that nobody around here speaks”, while another stated that teaching North Dakota children a second language may allow them to leave North Dakota or the country. The bill was ultimately defeated on a 36-54-4 vote.



LOBBY DAY



AT THE CAPITOL

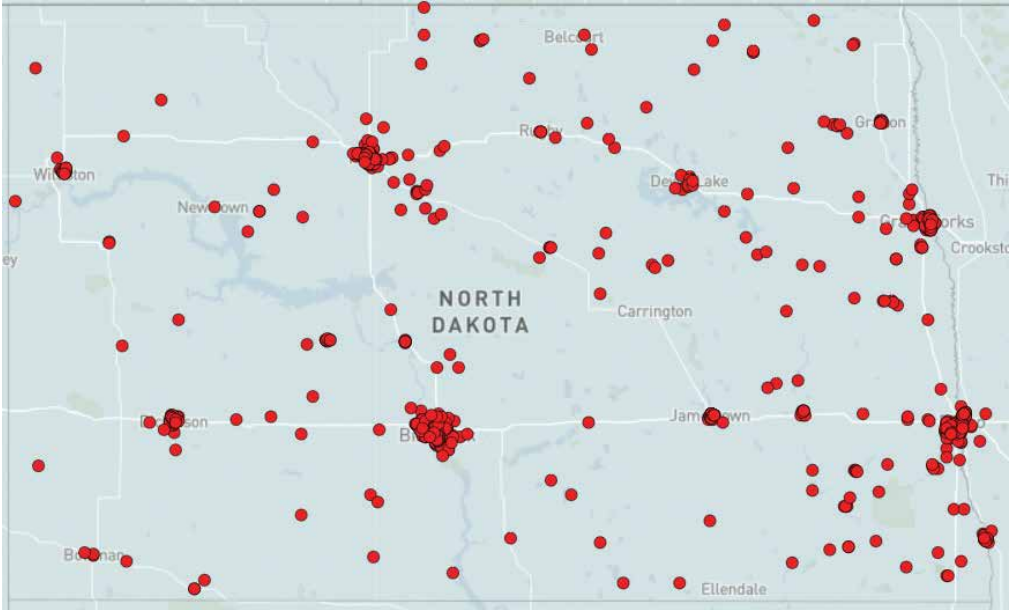


By The Numbers

People Who Took Action **1,881**

We had 1,881 people submit an action alert this session. Of those, 1,104 were members and 777 were allies in public education and public service. This shows us that we have a small group

of dedicated members taking legislative action and sharing our alerts with family, friends, and their communities! Below is a map of where our action alert submissions came from.



Lobby Day Attendees **74**

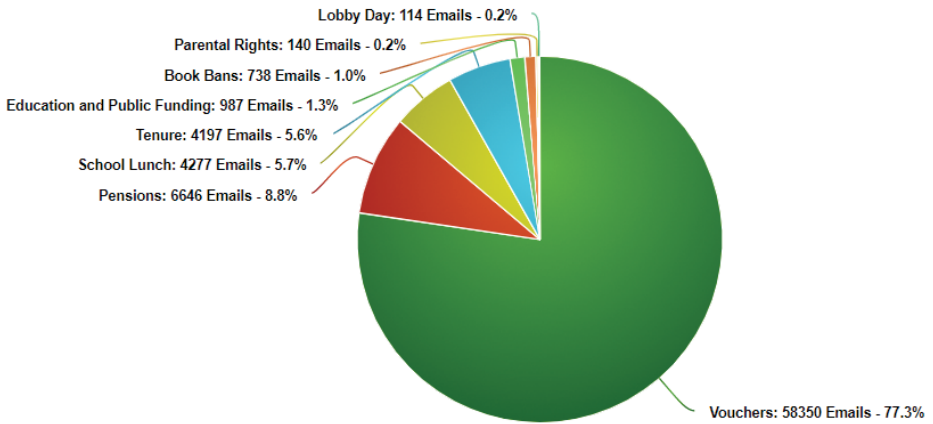
What better way to be active during the legislative session than to go to the Capitol and talk face-to-face with your legislators? North Dakota United brought 74 members to the Capitol for two Lobby Day

events, where members had the chance to participate in a Q&A session with the House Education Committee, talk to their legislators, and sit on the Senate and House floor during the floor session.

Emails Sent **75,449**

ND United members were most vocal about HB 1532 this session, pushing back against the private school voucher legislation by sending 57,507 emails to legislators in opposition and 843 emails to the Governor asking him to veto the bill. Members sent thousands of additional

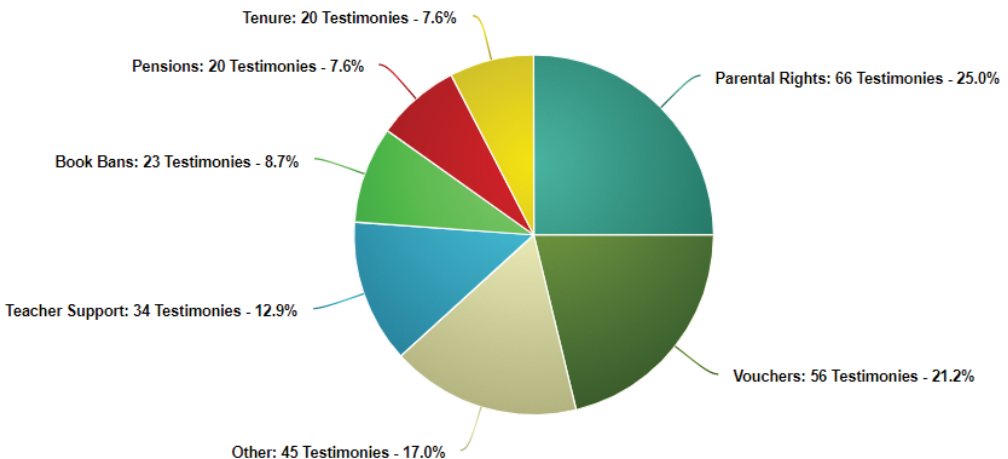
emails to their legislators regarding pensions, school lunches, funding, and other legislation as shown below! Note: these numbers only account for emails sent through our action alerts; many members sent personal emails as well.



Testimonies Submitted **264**

We had an incredible number of testimonies submitted this session regarding parental rights,

vouchers, teacher support, book bans, pensions, tenure, and other issues!





Vouchers were on the minds of our members who sent letters to the editor. Nine of the eleven letters written by our members were penned in opposition to HB 1532. Another letter was written in support of SB 2239, which

would have maintained and invested in the NDPERS defined-benefit pension plan, while the final letter was written in opposition to parental rights bill SB 2260.

Although the legislative session has ended, there are several things you can do to stay active and keep up the pressure heading into the 2025 legislative assembly.

WHAT'S NEXT



First, if you would like to stay involved and be prepared for the next legislative session, head to the Issues and Action page of our website at <https://www.ndunited.org/issues-action/> to sign up and to stay involved!



Your legislators still represent you and your community. Maintain communication with them and make sure they know your positions on issues important to you; staying in their ear about their votes is a great way to remind them who they represent. You know more about the issues that impact you than they do!

Meanwhile, there will be a general election held in November of 2024. If we learned

anything from this legislative assembly, it is that we need more advocates for public schools and public services representing us in the legislature, working to make North Dakota the best it can be. Talk to your network about running for office! If you or anyone you know is considering running, please feel free to reach out to us at legislative@ndunited.org and we can help figure out next steps along the way to an election campaign.

Thank you again for all your work this legislative session!



Enough is Enough

ND Legislature didn't listen or lead to solve real problems

As I write this, it's April 27th at 1:24 PM, the 73rd day of the legislative session. We are waiting for the House of Representatives to vote on Governor Burgum's veto of one of two book banning bills and closely monitoring committee actions to make sure Legislative leadership doesn't slip a school voucher amendment into a budget bill as they near the end. We are assessing the loss of pensions for new state employees and questioning what more we could have done when both facts and costs were ignored in reaching this conclusion. We are planning a deep dive into all the impacts of this session very soon; right now, it's too fresh to think straight.

And yet, here I am, thinking a lot....

This morning, I attended my son's first elementary musical performance as a Kindergartener at Bismarck Public Schools (shout-out to the great teachers and staff at our little neighborhood school!).

There was a great turnout of support for his classmates, and Evin was fortunate that his parents and both grandmas could attend the performance, which was pretty adorable and perfectly timed (clocking in at just under 10 minutes).

As we walked out, my mom (a retired teacher and retired NDU member) turned to me and said, "Your uncle (also a retired teacher) called and told me that North Dakota is in his local and state papers every day for the stuff they are doing at the Legislature." (My Mom, not one to mince words, may have substituted a more colorful word for "stuff".) I responded with "Yeah... It's tough," which is about the extent of energy I can gin up to talk about the legislature these days.

That brief conversation also got me thinking... For a state whose elected leaders claim that our number one issue is workforce and that we need to attract more people, I can't help but think this session actually made it worse. When people look for

new places to move, work, raise a family, or retire, they want strong PUBLIC schools and great teachers, public services that keep them healthy and protected, a childcare system that is safe, accessible, and affordable, and communities that will welcome and include them and people of all kinds, even those who might be a little different than them. North Dakota has great schools, great public services, great communities, and great people, but will that last with debates like the ones this Legislature is leading?

I can't help but think about people in other states and across the country reading those headlines in the paper, or how friends and former North Dakotans tell me they would never consider coming back here, or how many current North Dakotans feel like they're unwanted, unwelcome, or even being forced away from the only place they've called home. Spend all you want on an advertising campaign to encourage people to come here, it won't change the message they're choosing to send in less than 80 days of a legislative session. I love North Dakota, and I love living here, but yeah, it's tough.

I admit, I'm tired and frustrated, but I don't know how you can't be. Rather than acknowledging why teachers are leaving the profession at higher rates than ever, our legislators spent time

peddling a manufactured conspiracy that librarians are corrupting children. Rather than determining what our public schools need to support kids and help them succeed in a complicated world, they spent time dictating where certain people can go to the bathroom and trying to give private schools a taxpayer-funded handout. Rather than figuring out how to truly engage families in their kids' education, they proposed giving parents total authority to tell public schools what kids should or shouldn't learn. And rather than recognizing why good people are not willing to take jobs working for the state, they eliminated a significant benefit for a trusted, secure retirement that past and current state employees have chosen for themselves, even when given other options.

Together, the members and staff of ND United beat back a lot of destructive bills this session. We also won a few fights to provide free lunches to more kids, increase K-12 funding, and get raises for state employees. But even with these successes, it feels like too many of those being elected to our state legislature aren't listening or leading to solve real problems and tackle actual challenges. At some point, enough is enough. Not only will they not dissuade new people from coming here, but they'll lose the good ones working so hard for the kids and state they serve.

The Triumphs of a TikTok Teacher

Minot elementary music instructor finds success locally, in her classroom, and internationally on social media



By Kelly Hagen, kelly.hagen@ndunited.org

The term “influencer” has risen to new heights in the past decade, trending alongside the rapid expansion of social media in all our daily lives. In this new world of dance challenges and viral trends, the top influencers of today are on platforms such as TikTok, and they know that engagement is the key metric when trying to capture the attention of an often disparate, inattentive mass audience.

That kind of sounds like the description of a teacher too, doesn't it?

“It has always been my philosophy as a teacher that engagement is THE metric,” said Risha Allen, a music teacher at both Roosevelt and John Hoeven Elementary Schools in Minot. “I think, sometimes, people are worried about noise. If we make too much noise in here, then it looks like I don't have control of my classroom or it looks like we're not doing the thing. ... I am going with the culture that's already established, which is we have fun. We want students to be engaged. We're not afraid to

make some noise.”

Her philosophy for teaching is evident both in Allen's classroom and online. Her TikTok profile, @rishdishfish, has made a lot of noise on the platform, to the tune of 239,500 followers and over 8.3 million likes. Reaching that level of influence on social media doesn't happen overnight. Allen's traces the start of her digital journey back to humble roots in the South.

Originally from southeastern Kentucky, Allen said she grew up in a family of both musicians and educators. “My mom was actually my first-grade teacher,” she said, “and this was in the '80s, they didn't have music teachers then. But my mom is a pianist and a singer, and so she had a piano in the back of her room. I don't remember much about first grade, but I remember the music. ... She would play from songbooks, ‘Mary Poppins’ and all those things. And we started the day with music. I know I've carried that into my life as a music teacher, starting the day with happy, positive music.”

Allen started taking piano lessons at the age of seven, and she continued those studies for 12 years and learned to play by ear. In high school, she discovered another key influencer in her path to becoming an educator in her choir instructor. “He showed me how accessible music was,” Allen said. “It doesn’t have to be black-and-white notes on a page. ... Just watching him move and work, I learned so much. And then I thought, maybe I can do that.”

While she originally went to Union College in Barbourville, Ky., on a vocal music scholarship, she changed her tune – and major – toward writing and teaching, with a minor in music. She got a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and communication and Bachelor of Science in secondary education, with a Master’s of Education in literacy K-12 from Eastern Kentucky University.

This slight change in direction didn’t represent a total 180, she said, because writing and creating was always central to her love for music. “I’ve always been very quick with words,” Allen said. “Kind of a wordsmith, can turn something funny real quick, something rhyming or using some other device. That’s always been a strong suit.”

She spent 14 years teaching high school English, starting in her home state of Kentucky and ending up in North Dakota, for the first time, in 2012 to teach 11th and 12th grade English at

Magic City Campus in Minot. She and her family had to move around a lot in the next few years, but when her life came to a crossroads a few years ago, she looked back at Minot as the time she was happiest as a teacher.

“I moved back to North Dakota to be an English teacher,” she said. “I loved it here. So, when I got divorced I was like, I want to go back to where I was the happiest because this is going to be my career and this is going to be how I bring my kids up on my own.”

She moved back to Minot initially as a Title I English instructor, again at Magic City, when the opportunity presented itself for her to teach music for the first time in her professional career. “2021 was my first year as a music teacher,” she said. “This is a complete career shift. I was the English department chair, wrote all the English language arts curriculum for the last school I was at. I had created this big program to increase A.C.T. scores. My school district that I left in Kentucky, they still use it. That was my intellectual pursuit. And I will never go away from music now. This is too fun.”

Allen said she knows that the correct key for reaching an audience of elementary school students is to the catchy hook that’ll attract the attention of an audience in music or on social

Continued on next page.



Risha's TikTok profile

<https://www.tiktok.com/@rishdishfish>

media: engaging their interests and meeting them where they are.

“I was trying to learn their names at my other school,” she said.

“So, I got the guitar out, and I was rhyming with their names, and they just thought it was absolutely amazing. And I was like, huh, they like it. From there, it actually just became kind of a buy-in thing. Like, if you like it when I write silly songs, you act better, you’re more engaged, you’re ready to learn.”

That steady focus on engagement has also led to her success in the realm of social media. When she started, she mostly used Facebook and Instagram stories to share the “adorable life” moments she experienced as an elementary school teacher. But everything changed less than two years ago, shortly after she started her current position.

“I’ve been on TikTok as long as I’ve been a music teacher, pretty much,” Allen said. “I’ve had an account for a while but never did anything with it. One of my good girlfriends back home had been like, ‘Risha, you need to be on TikTok. This is your platform. ... The way you sing and write music, you need to be on here.’ But the music I used to write is like Heartbreak City. I don’t want to be putting misery out into the world. There’s enough of that.

“I started to put on my Instagram and Facebook story, just some of the cute little moments, I would snap a picture or something like that. And then in November of 2021 with my ‘Hello, Ms. Allen’ song, I put it on my Facebook, and it really kind of blew up on

Facebook. And my friend who had been pushing TikTok was like, ‘Put it on TikTok! I’m done with you. Put it on TikTok!’ So, I put it on TikTok, and it just instantly went viral. And I’ve just kept going viral ever since.”

As her follower list exploded following her first viral post, her influence and reach in that arena has expanded alongside those numbers. This has allowed Risha to do some pretty amazing things, both for her and her students. In early 2022, she had her students write songs about their favorite football teams. By tagging the accounts of these teams on posts of the songs, several of them collected comments of encouragement for the students from NFL teams, including the Kansas City Chiefs, Detroit Lions and Minnesota Vikings. When the Green Bay Packers didn’t comment, one of their star players, AJ Dillon, did.

“The NFL was fighting over us last year because I let kids write their own songs,” she said. “They’ll do a rough draft, and then I’ll let them color it in however they want. Then they’ll put some words on it. And so, last year I put a couple of these on my TikTok and ... there was several people that would like and comment on them. So, they write their own music and they write it about what they want it to be about. They put it all together and help each other and revise. It’s just so much fun.”

A Christmas song she wrote and performed in the classroom for her kids, titled “Teacher’s Christmas Wish,” was posted on TikTok, and collected an enormous amount of comments and likes. This allowed her the

opportunity to record the song and release it to streaming services online.

“I think that is my best moment ever as a teacher,” she said. “That one went to the Today Show. Jamie Lee Curtis shared it. One of the Kardashians liked it, and now it’s anywhere you can find music. So, my songwriting now is on Apple Music, Spotify, all of that. I took students into a studio with me, like a handful of students whose parents are friends, and I felt comfortable with the moms coming in with me and stuff. ... That’s been on Cincinnati News twice, Minot News a couple of times, and then was just viral. I was on Upworthy. ... That’s one of the reasons I feel like I’m where I’m supposed to be. I’m bringing a lifetime of songwriting and music into this pure love and joy for these little kids. It’s life-changing.”

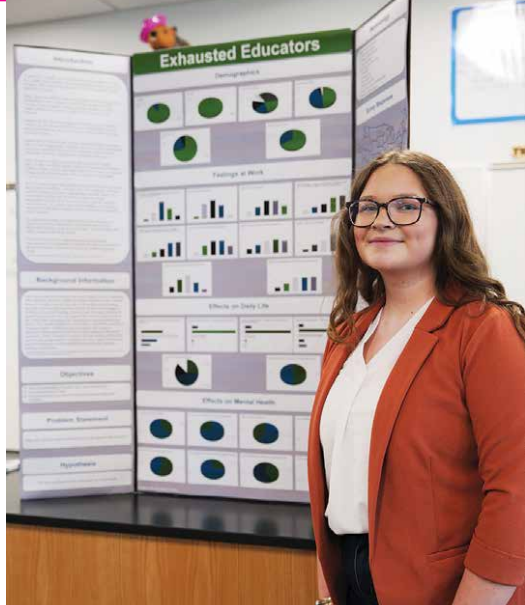
In April, Allen spoke to aspiring educators at our Student-North Dakota United (SNDU) conference in Bismarck about how they can responsibly utilize social media to both add value to their instruction and advocate for their profession. “When I spoke to the NDU students, I think my main focus with them was don’t be afraid of social media,” she said. “Be smart. ... You can get in trouble as a teacher for a lot of things, not just social media. Does social media increase the risk? It sure does. And so, I talked with them about, if you’re going to use it, know your persona, know what you stand for and put out that content. Be positive. There’s enough negativity in the world. People need to see teachers happy and doing a good job and enjoying their lives.”



In summation, Allen said that her sudden success on TikTok has given her more opportunities than she’d ever dreamed possible, and that it aligns with her parallel passion for educating students is the best bonus possible. “I feel like what I’m doing perfectly lines up with what my philosophy has always been,” Allen said. “If you engage kids, if you meet them where they are and you give them fodder that is at their interest level, not yours, then they will learn at high levels. They’ll let you teach them anything and they’ll enjoy it.”

Q&A

Studying the Science of Teacher Retention Issues



Student in Flasher worked with teacher, NDU president on science fair project about the pressures our educators face in their classrooms

By Kelly Hagen, kelly.hagen@ndunited.org

Teacher recruitment and retention has been a big topic of discussion for a long time, and the conversation has only grown in volume these last several years. In three rounds of North Dakota United member polling conducted in the last two years, 35 percent of educators said that they were considering leaving the profession. The top reasons cited were burnout/additional stress (82%), current salaries (61%), and extra duties becoming burdensome (60%).

Certainly, the public is talking about this issue and coming around to the realization that it is a growing problem for communities of all sizes. In one of North Dakota's smaller communities, Flasher, one sophomore, Sophia Jochim, dedicated a year's efforts into studying this epidemic as a science fair project.

She first turned to her science

teacher, Tana Schafer, for guidance on where to start and how. Schafer recommended she talk to a few names, including North Dakota United President Nick Archuleta. We recently sat down with Sophia, Tana and Nick in the high school science classroom at Flasher Public School to talk about the experiences they shared.

Your interest in science, when did that start? And were there people in your life who really inspired your love for science?

Sophia Jochim: I always liked science fair because we start in fifth grade and I think I really liked it because I got to talk to people and because I like to talk. I'm just a big people person. As long as you find something that you're passionate about, you can turn almost anything into a science fair project. And that's what I've done here. This is

actually a continuation from my project last year. Last year, I did mental health and 911 dispatchers. And then next year I plan to continue this and do a survey on bankers or something, and then compare and contrast with those jobs.

How did you decide to turn the focus of this year's project to teachers?

SJ: We start kind of earlier in the year. We pick our topics, and then we find a question. I had brought it up to Mrs. Shafer, and she said, "Let's do something with the teachers."

Since you started as science teacher and working with students on science fairs, how much work goes into it and how receptive are kids today in these projects?

Tana Schafer: When I first started, it was a fight. Families didn't want me to do it. Kids didn't want to do it. It was this really big deal. And it's just grown into a thing. Like, it's science fair in Flasher. It's a thing. And kids want to do it because they know that we're really successful with it. Kids get excited about it, and it becomes something they look forward to every year.

Walking through the hallways, I saw signs on the locker room, wishing students luck at the state science fair. What does that mean to you?

SJ: It helps a lot because, I mean, Fischer is very high on the sports side. A lot of the smarter kids or academic kids don't always get a lot of the attention. I mean, truly, we're the kids that go the farthest. I don't know how many kids we sent to state this year.

TS: 30. We can send 44 from our region. Our region had about 180 kids this year, and 30 of the 44 came from Flasher this year, actually.

In talking with Nick, what things did you learn?

SJ: I met with Nick twice over Zoom. I knew he was a big name in the education system, so I knew I could bring him up a lot in my conversations with the judges. And you had told me that there was a school that has higher paid teachers and teachers just get to teach there.

Nick Archuleta: I think I talked about Finland. In Finland, every teacher there has a master's degree. There is real competition to get into the colleges of education there. ... Most of that education is paid for by the government. And here's why: Finland knows if you're going to have a successful country, you have to have an educated population. They invest in their education, and they invest in their children's education. Because, frankly, we don't do anything more important as a society than invest in our future.

Can you share a little of what you told the judges when they were evaluating your project?

SJ: My objectives were to gain an understanding of teachers' duties and responsibilities, understand pressures faced, and uncover problems associated with decreased mental health in the workplace. My problem, obviously, was: What effect does current teaching have on mental health? And I thought the more experienced the teacher, the (better their) mental

Continued on next page.

health. From there, I shadowed teachers at my school. I observed mental health, co-worker interactions and demeanor during work. Using Google Forms, I created a 52-question survey. I split between demographics, feelings at work, effects on daily life and effects on mental health. I distributed my survey nationwide, in all 50 states, 36 outside of the United States, and I received over 1,200 responses. For my analysis, teachers experiencing burnout at the beginning of this school year had notably worse classroom management by spring than other teachers. 49.9% of respondents stated they have experienced a traumatic event at work. 33.1% showed lower time pressure. 32.4% of teachers struggle with increased anxiety that is work related. And 54.1% feel constant frustration at work. And then, in conclusion, careers in teaching are still extremely rewarding. Teachers gain confidence through experience. Administrative to employee relationships may be tense. And careers in teaching may negatively affect emotional and mental health.

Do you think that your fellow students, Sophia, and your colleagues in education, Tana, or the general public really have a good idea of the amount of stress that teachers are facing now?

SJ: No. I think it can be a little bit lucky (in Flasher) because we're smaller, to where once we get older, we kind of bond together with the teachers to where we kind of understand like, okay, she's having a bad day. We'd better sit down and be good.

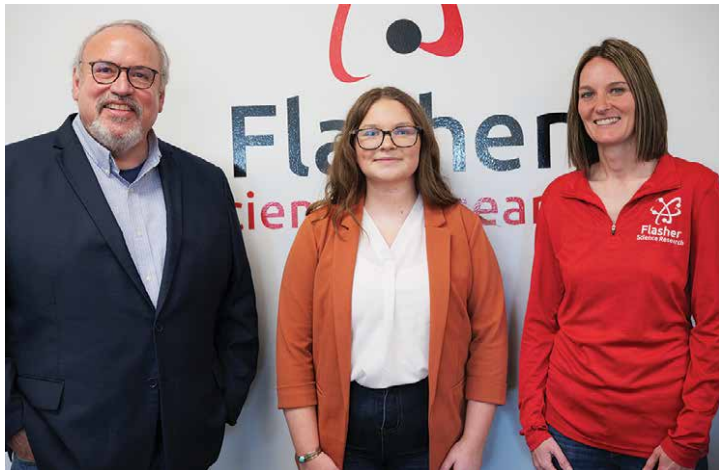
TS: We have our kids for six years

in the high school. And as we are with them, you get to know them. I mean, we're really a family here ... Once this survey was done and I was talking to different teachers, I told them, we're not alone. I think that that was really inspiring to hear. I think our community is pretty supportive of our teachers. But if things don't change, we're going to lose them. I mean, you talk to other staff members and they're just done. We're fried, we're tired. It's one more thing. It's one more thing. It's one more thing. Now we have to do this coding, the computer science thing came out great. It's phenomenal. But you added one more thing, and you're never taking anything away.

NA: On one of our surveys, teachers in the 30-to-39 age group, we asked when they first started teaching, did you see yourself retiring after a long career in education? 91% of them said yes. Last year, that number was down to 46%. ... It just seems to be sort of a blind spot in the public where we're not doing enough to encourage our own folks here to go into teaching.

TS: A lot of it is, I feel, the financial aspect of it, too. I don't know a single teacher here who doesn't have some type of side hustle. There's something on the side, because you have to in order to financially make ends meet. ... I would say, I love my job. I love to teach these kids. But if I didn't have something on the side that financially kept my family stable, I couldn't stay here. I think that's driving a lot of people out, too.

When a teacher leaves a smaller school in a rural community, how difficult is it to recruit a new teacher into the community and to retain them long-term?



TS: My job was actually a revolving door. I'm a business major, by trade. I did not go to school for education. I was here as a para, and it was just a new science teacher every year. ... I had a passion for science fair when I was a kid, and so, I just kind of stepped into the role. And you have to find people in your small communities to do that. ... We're a stepping stone. We are a place for a first-year teacher to get the experience (in order) to get a job somewhere else. And so, in our community, we have to grow our own. We have to grow our kids to become teachers, to want to move home and teach, because otherwise we don't fill those positions.

As a student, do you find that when you're invested in a subject, and really passionate about it, you'll get better results?

SJ: Yeah. I think the more passionate you can become about something, the more doors it opens. Last year, I got a \$40,000 scholarship from Jamestown through science fair. I think the more you care, the more doors that open, the more people you meet, the more experiences you get.

You'd mentioned that you got third place at regionals for this year's project on teachers. How did you fare at state competition?

SJ: That was at regionals. Yeah. At state, I didn't get anything.

TS: So, I was shocked! For the record, I think she got sixth, so she was one under ISEF qualifying. One under!

SJ: Next year.

TS: Next year!

SJ: And then, at regionals, I got the National Geographic certificate and American Psychology.

In closing, Sophia, I'd like to ask if there's one last message you'd want to share with our audience of members of North Dakota United who are educators and maybe feeling the extra pressures of their profession currently?

SJ: Yes, keep showing up. I mean, somebody cares. You're making an impact on somebody. Maybe you don't see it every day, but if you've got a class of 20, I'm sure you're making an impact on at least one kid. One kid looks up to you and cares about you, and you've got to give back to them.



Leadership Academy Commemorating First Female ND Lieutenant Governor Ruth Meiers

In partnership with the North Dakota Historical Society, the ND Department of Public Instruction, and the NDSU Extension Service, the NDU Foundation co-sponsored the North Dakota State Historical Society 2020 “Person of History” Leadership Academy Commemorating First Female ND Lieutenant Governor Ruth Meiers (1985-1987) on March 24, 2023 at the Heritage Center in Bismarck. North Dakota Teachers of the Year, finalists from the past 5 years, and outstanding educators with a tie to the Meiers family were invited to participate.

“This Academy was amazing! It was a day filled with learning. I took away so many inspirational stories of grit and determination from various leaders in our home state. My family and friends were very envious of my day and all the stories I shared about inspiring people!”

– Heather Tomlin-Rohr, Jamestown



The Academy was developed to inspire, motivate, understand, and appreciate effective leadership styles of North Dakota leaders from the past and into the present and future. The Academy was developed to honor Ruth Meiers, the first female Lieutenant Governor of North Dakota, who was selected as the North Dakota State Historical Society 2020 “Person of History” winner. Vivian Meiers, daughter-in-law of the Lt. Governor, coordinated the event. Speakers included: SaNoah LaRocque, Miss ND 2022; Macine Lukach, “Building Tomorrow’s Leaders” NDSU Extension Service; Sara Medalen, ND Teacher of the Year 2019; Lindsey Miller, Miss Rodeo North Dakota 2023 and author of “The Girl In Lime Green Jeans”; Sarah Vogel, former ND Commissioner of Agriculture and author of “The Farmer’s Lawyer”, and; Susan Wefald, former ND Public Service Commissioner and author of “Important Voices: North Dakota’s Women Elected State Officials 1893-2013”.



TOP: ND Teachers of the Year Mary Eldredge Sandbo, Ivona Todorovic, Bret Dockter, and Sara Medalen

BOTTOM: David & Vivian Meiers and State Historical Society of ND Director Bill Peterson

“The power of hearing stories, the benefits of having time with other colleagues, the many ways that leadership skills grow and develop over the years, the many ways that love for teaching and learning exist in our state. Hearing the stories of our many speakers was really a great way to fill my bucket and remind me of my “WHY.” The experience has me thinking about ways that I can help all of my colleagues remember the many powerful ways that teaching makes a difference.”

– Mary Eldredge Sandbo, Minot

DELEGATE ASS



As always, the 2023 Delegate Assembly was a great event to gather leaders from across the state, share updates on our collective work, and plan for the future of our great union.



The morning included reports and remarks from President Nick Archuleta, NEA Director Brenda Seehafer, and Executive Director Chad Oban. Each spoke clearly of our collective power to make our communities and workplaces stronger and the role every member has in making that a reality. The Assembly also heard updates on our progress to goal for our 3 Year Strategic Plan focused on professional development, growth, and advocacy.



The Delegate Assembly also included concrete actions by delegates to pass a balanced budget with no increase in state dues for the fourth straight year and the Assembly unanimously passed two new business items. The first item approved a referral campaign for the voucher bill, HB 1532. The bill was subsequently vetoed



TOP: US Representative Kelly Armstrong
MIDDLE: NDU VP of Education Alicia Bata
BOTTOM: Cara Mund

EMBLY



2023

by the Governor, but the enthusiasm to stand up for public education was palpable in the room as it was discussed. Second, some veteran curlers from our numbers proposed New Business Item No. 2 to make curling the official sport of North Dakota United and to encourage the formation of curling teams in our locals across the state.

Finally, North Dakota United presented the Friend of Public Employees Award to three legislators who fought valiantly during the session to protect the North Dakota Public Employees Retirement System (NDPERS) defined benefit plan: Senators Sean Cleary and Dick Dever of Bismarck and Representative Josh Boschee



FRIEND OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES AWARD

TOP: Representative Josh Boschee of Fargo

BOTTOM: Senator Dick Dever of Bismarck

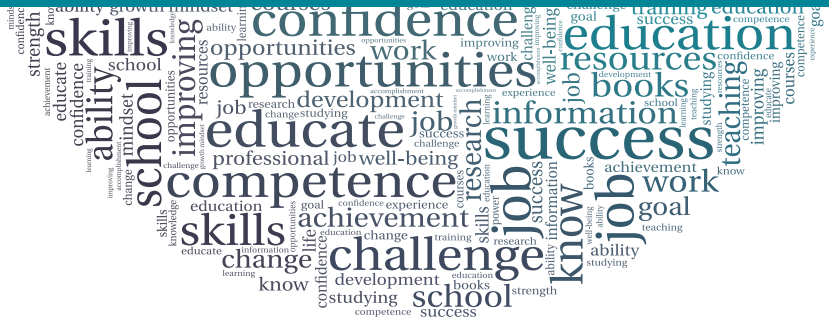
NOT PICTURED: Senator Sean Cleary of Bismarck

of Fargo. Senator Dever, Representative Boschee, and 2022 winner of the Friend of Public Employees, Scott Miller, participated in a thorough panel discussion of the proposed changes to the defined benefit pension plan. Senator Cleary was unable to attend, but sent along words of appreciation for the recognition.

All NDU professional development courses are FREE to North Dakota United members through July 31, 2024.



NDU Professional Development Opportunities



Participants are responsible for the cost of the book and the \$50 credit fee to UND to have your credit recorded onto your transcript. The fee to participate in an NDU professional development course for non-members is \$100, plus the credit fee to UND.

Early Career Educator Cohorts – June 2023 and January 2024:

North Dakota United is continuing to sponsor early career educator cohorts, with one beginning in June 2023 and another in January 2024. Each cohort will last approximately fourteen months and will include 30 early career educators (service years 1–7). The educators will complete six courses for six credits that can be used for re-licensure and

lane changes, at no cost to the educators. That’s right – FREE!

The six book studies in the Early Career Educator Cohorts are: Poor Students, Rich Teaching: Seven High-Impact Mindsets for Students from Poverty; Hacking School Discipline; Classroom Management Matters; The Energy Bus; Differently Wired, and; Troublemakers.

North Dakota United is currently accepting educators for the January 2024 cohort, while the June 2023 cohort is currently full. If you are interested, please contact Professional Development Director Amy Flicek at amy.flicek@ndunited.org.

September 2023 Book Studies:

Book studies are typically one credit courses that last approximately six weeks. One credit equates to 15 hours of study. Expectations include reading the book, answering discussion questions, responding to others’ responses, and a reflection paper/action plan.

Behavior

- The Self-Driven Child: The Science and Sense of Giving Your Kids More Control Over Their Lives – September 11
- When the Adults Change, Everything Changes: Seismic Shifts in School Behavior – September 25

Instruction/Strategies

- Solving Academic and Behavior Problems: A Strengths-Based Guide for Teachers and Teams – September 25

Native American Culture

- Lakota Way: Stories and Lessons for Living – September 4

Poverty/Equity

- Teaching with Poverty and Equity in Mind: Succeed With the Students Who Need You Most – September 4

Social Justice

- Social Justice in Schools: A Framework for Equity in Education – September 11

Registration will open August 1st at courses.ndunited.org.

CONGRATULATIONS, COUNTY TEACHERS OF THE YEAR

BARNES

KELLY SCOTT
Barnes County North, Wimbledon

BILLINGS

JAMIE PRELLWITZ
Prairie Elementary School, Fairfield

BOTTINEAU

JOCELYN GRANN
Westhope Public School

BURLEIGH

SHEILA PETERSON
Wachter Middle School, Bismarck

CASS

AMY BRADDOCK
Harwood Elementary School
SARA LICHTBLAU
South High School, Fargo

DICKEY

KELLI GEBHARDT
Oakes Public School

DUNN

MARK ZASTOUPIL
Killdeer Public School

GOLDEN VALLEY

DENISE DIETZ
Lincoln Elementary School, Beach

GRAND FORKS

NIKKI POLUM
South Middle School, Grand Forks

GRIGGS

MARISSA DAHL
Griggs County Central, Cooperstown

LOGAN

TINA NITSCHKE
Gackle-Streeter Public School

MCHENRY

MADELINE BRANDT
TGU Granville School

MCINTOSH

JESSICA SCHMIDT
Ashley Public School

MCKENZIE

JULIE GRONOS
Badlands Elementary, Watford City

MERCER

REBECCA JOHNSON
Hazen Elementary School

31 ND United members earned recognition



MORTON	CHERYL WEHRI Hebron Public School
MOUNTRAIL	KYLE VANWAGONER Edwin Loe Elementary, New Town
OLIVER	BROOKE BOESCHANS Center-Stanton Public School
PIERCE	ANDEE MATTSON Ely Elementary School, Rugby
RAMSEY	MEGAN WASNESS Central Middle School, Devils Lake
RANSOM	KORTNEY GROETTUM VESEL Lisbon High School
RENVILLE	REBECCA YOUNG Glenburn Public Schools
RICHLAND	CHANDRA MULLER Zimmerman Elementary, Wahpeton
SARGENT	KIMBERLEY DAHLGREN Milnor Public School
STARK	TREVOR CONRAD Dickinson High School
TOWNER	LINDSAY BUNDERMANN North Star Public School, Cando
TRAILL	KRISTA HOGFOSS Peter Boe Jr. Elementary, Mayville
WALSH	HALEY ULLAND Park River Area School
WARD	TRISHA SCHAEFER Erik Ramstad Middle School, Minot
WELLS	KORI JENSEN Harvey Public School



FINANCIAL WELLNESS

Horace Mann is your partner in financial wellness

Financial wellness, one of the biggest challenges for many, is defined as, “being confident in your financial situation, able to withstand unexpected expenses and enjoy a financially secure future.”¹

You have many financial needs — meeting everyday expenses, paying off debt, saving for emergencies, paying for healthcare and saving for retirement — but there’s only so much money to go around.

A well-crafted financial wellness program may be the answer. No matter where you are in your journey, Horace Mann will be with you every step of the way. Contact your local Horace Mann representative to learn more.

General Financial Wellness

- Managing Debt
- Financial Success
- DonorsChoose

Women’s Financial Wellness

- Women and Retirement
- Why Women need Life Insurance
- Financial Success for Women

Retirement

- On the road to retirement
- Millennials and financial wellness
- State Teachers’ Retirement System
- Retirement Income

Horace Mann has been helping educators with financial wellness since 1945.

Contact your local representative today!



¹LIMRA, “A Measure of Financial Wellness” 2020

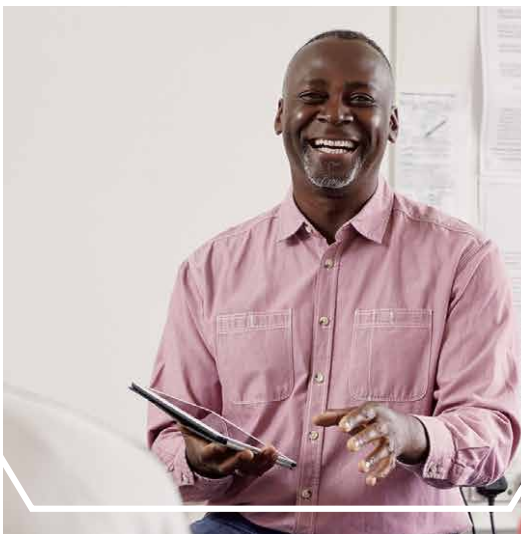
The information provided here is for general informational purposes only, and should not be considered a recommendation or investment, tax or legal advice. DonorsChoose is not an affiliate of Horace Mann. Horace Mann Life Insurance Company underwrites Horace Mann life insurance products.

Horace Mann is not affiliated with state teachers’ retirement systems, and the content of its workshops has not been endorsed or approved by state teachers’ retirement systems.

Horace Mann Service Corporation and certain of its affiliates (Horace Mann) enter into agreements with educational associations where Horace Mann pays the association to provide services aimed at familiarizing association members with the Horace Mann brand, products or services. For more information, email your inquiry to association.relations@horacemann.com.

AM-C04711 (4-23)

horacemann.com



Benefits designed with **YOU IN MIND**

Explore exclusive
benefits online:

- Student debt reduction
- Flexible insurance coverage
- Complimentary life insurance
- Easy retirement planning
- Shopping and travel deals

And so much more!

nea *Member
Benefits*

CO370623

Scan below
to learn more





North Dakota United
301 N 4th St
Bismarck, ND 58501-4020



Non-Profit
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit #222
Bismarck, ND
58501

**PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR
K-12 EDUCATORS
SUMMER 2023**

Advance your teaching skills
this summer

- Face-to-Face Learning Events
- Online Courses
- 2900 Graduate Level Professional Development Credit

Register Today!
UND.edu/educators

See our website for a complete list of courses!

UND UNIVERSITY OF
NORTH DAKOTA