NORTH DAKOTA
2024 EDUCATION
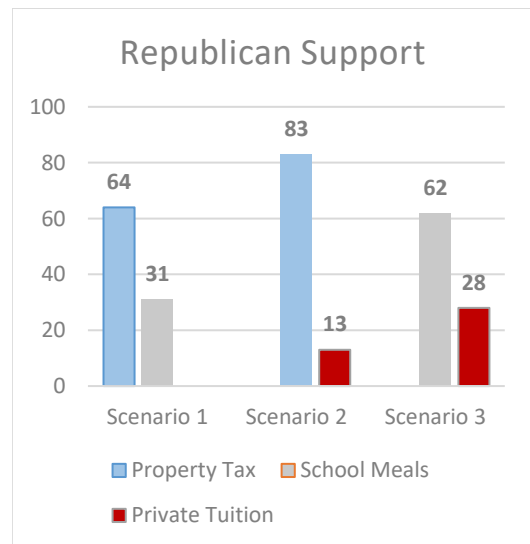# STATEWIDE SURVEY

DECEMBER 7-10, 2024

Executive Summary:

The data is clear, when it comes to education issues for the 2025 North Dakota legislative session, the top priority is property tax reform, followed by universal free school meals. Both concepts reveal intensity of over 50 percent strongly support; overall support is roughly eight-in-ten North Dakotans. In contrast, there is little support for public money for private school tuition, with 56 percent strongly opposed to just 12 percent strongly support. The statewide survey of 600 North Dakotans was conducted December 7-10, using mobile, landline, and text-to-web platform to maximize survey reach.

When weighed against each other, property tax reform was the most popular at 35 percent primary support, with universal school meals closely behind at 25 percent support. The only other issue in double digits (12 percent) was support for increased public-school spending. Public money for private schools was near the bottom at 4 percent priority support.

The survey also pitted each issue against each other as an A/B option. The results confirm that property tax reform and universal school meals are roughly equal in overall support (48 percent picked school meals to 47 percent property tax reform). When public money for private schools was pitted against each of the top two priorities, the numbers again show clearly where the public is on these issues: Just 9 percent picked public money for private school tuition to 86 percent for property tax reform. The crosstab data is also very revealing:

- About four-in-ten North Dakotans identify as a Republican, with another four-in-ten as Independents. Of self-identified Republicans, property tax reform is the number one priority, with 64 percent to 31 percent for school meals, and 83 percent to 13 percent for public money to private schools. Given a choice between school meals or private tuition, Republicans pick meals by a more than two-to-one margin.

- Crosstab data also shows that Men, North Dakotans over the age of 50, and those more likely to vote are strong supporters of property tax reform versus other potential ideas for the legislature to address in the next legislative session.

One shocking number that deserves mention is the final question, which shows both rural and city respondents believe city families benefit more than rural families (rural/city crosstabs both at a seven-to-one margin) when it comes to using public money for private school tuition (see Q16).

It is not often a survey presents a clear agenda on education issues; it is usually more muddled in the middle. But this survey does. The North Dakota public, regardless of where you live, your age, or political affiliation, do not support public funds for private school tuition, and would rather see the state budget on education issues prioritize property tax reform, followed by school meals and increase funding for K-12 public schools.

Topline

Q1: Generally speaking, do you think North Dakota is moving in the right direction, or do you think North Dakota is on the wrong track?

Right direction	**46%**
Wrong track	**32**
(VOL) Unsure	**22**

Q2: Looking ahead a year or so. Do you expect things in North Dakota to be better than they are now, about the same as they are now, or worse than they are now?

Better	**28%**
About the same	**42**
Worse	**24**
(VOL) Unsure	**6**

Q4: I am now going to read you a list of groups and organizations that are involved in public education; for each one, tell me if you trust them a lot, trust them somewhat, trust them very little or do not trust them at all when it comes to education policy.

	A lot	Somewhat	Very Litte	Do Not	Neutral
Teachers	44	38	9	5	5
School Principals	20	53	11	8	8
School Board Members	8	49	23	13	8
School Administrators	13	49	18	13	7
Education Support Staff	31	38	11	6	14
North Dakota Governor	19	37	17	19	7
North Dakota Legislators	4	40	27	23	6
Parents	31	45	14	4	6
U.S. Department of Education	12	33	20	27	8
North Dakota Department of Public Instruction	10	45	19	12	14

Q5: Besides parents, when it comes to K-12 education policies, who do you trust more to do right for North Dakota students?

Teachers **57%**
School Superintendents **3**
School Principals **5**
School Boards **9**
North Dakota Legislators **6**
(VOL) Unsure **20**

Q6: Using a grading scale of A through F; what overall grade would you give North Dakota public schools: an 'A', 'B', 'C', 'D', or 'F'?

A **7%**
B **38**
C **30**
D. **14**
F **5**
(VOL) Unsure **7**

Q7: When it comes to education decisions, like school budgets, teacher salaries and teacher work conditions -- should these decisions be made at the:

Local level **33%**
State level **10**
Federal level **2**
Local and state level **34**
Local, state and federal levels **10**
(VOL) Unsure **4**

Q8: Which is the biggest issue facing K-12 education today?

Insufficient funding **19%**
School safety **4**
Overcrowded class size **4**
Students inadequately prepared after graduation **22**
Teacher retention and recruitment **23**
Student behavior in classroom **19**
(VOL) No big issues facing K-12 education **0**
(VOL) Other / Unsure **9**

Q9: In general, how do you feel about property taxes?

Property taxes are too high **61%**
Property taxes are about right **29**
Property taxes are too low **2**
(VOL) Unsure **8**

Q10: I'm now going to read you some policy options that North Dakota legislators may face in the upcoming legislative session. For each potential policy, tell me whether you strongly support, somewhat support, somewhat oppose or strongly oppose.

	Strong Support	Some Support	Some Oppose	Strong Oppose	Neutral
a: Property tax reform	53%	28	4	3	11
b: Universal free school meals	55	24	6	11	4
c: Increased public-school spending	35	32	12	14	7
d: Increased higher-ed spending	18	33	17	20	11
e: Raises for public employees	32	38	11	9	10
f: Public money for private school tuition	12	15	12	56	6
g: Public money to all students to access services like tutoring or counseling	40	36	9	10	6

Q11: Suppose the North Dakota Legislature has $200 million dollars in the next state budget to earmark to one of the seven policy ideas just mentioned; if you could only choose one, which would be your choice for the $200 million allocation?

Property tax reform 35%
Universal free school meals 27
Increased public school spending 12
Increased higher-ed spending 1
Raises for public employees 7
Public money for private school tuition 4
Public money to all students to access services like tutoring or counseling   8
(VOL) Unsure 5

Q12: I am now going to read you some policy options weighed against each other. For each question, tell me which option you prefer:

Property tax reform 47%
Universal free school meals 48
(VOL) Unsure 5

Public money for private school tuition 9%
Property tax reform 86
(VOL) Unsure 5

Universal free school meal 78%
Public money for private school tuition 16
(VOL) Unsure 5

Public money to all students to access services like tutoring or
     counseling 41%
Property tax reform 55
(VOL) Unsure 4

Increased public-school spending **42%**
Public money to all students to access services like tutoring or
    counseling **47**
(VOL) Unsure **11**

Increased public-school spending **70%**
Public money for private school tuition **23**
(VOL) Unsure **7**

Public money for private school tuition **18%**
Public money to all students to access services like tutoring or
    counseling **74**
(VOL) Unsure **8**

Q13: Thinking about the next election. Suppose your legislator voted for Universal Free School Meals, would this make you more likely or less likely to support them?

Much more likely **37%**
Somewhat more likely **32**
Somewhat less likely **8**
Much less likely **9**
(VOL) Unsure **14**

Q14: Now suppose your legislator voted for public money for private school tuition; would this make you more likely or less likely to support them?

Much more likely **8%**
Somewhat more likely **16**
Somewhat less likely **13**
Much less likely **56**
(VOL) Unsure **8**

Q15: And now suppose you found out that your legislator did not support significant property tax reform legislation, but did support public money for private school tuition; would this make you more likely or less likely to support them?

Much more likely **4%**
Somewhat more likely **8**
Somewhat less likely **11**
Much less likely **68**
(VOL) Unsure **10**

Q16: Do you believe a program that would allow public money for private school tuition will benefit rural families the same as city families, or do you believe city families will benefit more than rural families?

Rural families same as city families **10%**
City families benefit more than rural families **70**
(VOL) Unsure **19**