

Kirsten Baesler
State Superintendent



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For Immediate Release

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Baesler, Burgum Praise Lawmakers For School Pandemic Aid

BISMARCK, N.D., Sept. 17, 2020 – State School Superintendent Kirsten Baesler and Gov. Doug Burgum applauded North Dakota lawmakers on Thursday for approving \$31.45 million in new support for K-12 schools.

The funds will be used for school staffing needs, distance instruction in reading, English, and mathematics, and to ensure that families have adequate broadband connections for distance learning.

“This money will be a great help to our schools in meeting pandemic expenses that were unexpected and impossible to budget for,” Baesler said. “Our educators, school administrators, and families are doing heroic work to make sure that the education of our students continues in spite of the obstacles created by this pandemic, and these funds offer assistance that is badly needed.”

“Keeping students safe and connected to a high-quality education is essential both to North Dakota’s recovery from this pandemic and our state’s long-term success,” Gov. Doug Burgum said. “This emergency funding will help keep our schools open, our students learning in person, and our educators safe and equipped with tools that tailor teaching to the individual to ensure the best possible outcomes.”

The Legislature’s Budget Section approved the investments on Thursday, following the state Emergency Commission’s endorsement earlier this month. The funds come from federal COVID-19 emergency response legislation that was approved by Congress in March. The money was originally part of a \$200 million allocation to the Bank of North Dakota.

This is how the money will be apportioned:

- \$30 million for a state “Education Corps,” a fund that will help school districts cover extra staffing expenses -- such as costs for substitute teachers, additional paraprofessionals, and other support staff -- that are necessary because of the pandemic. Each district will receive \$30,000, plus \$217.21 per student.
- \$950,000 for [Exact Path, a software learning program](#) that is tailored for individual student instruction in mathematics, reading, and English. The program adapts to each student’s skills. Any North Dakota K-12 district, school or student may sign up at no cost. The program was developed by Edmentum, an education software company based in Bloomington, Minn.

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Education Funds

- \$500,000 for school districts to assist families who cannot afford the broadband service that is necessary to conduct distance learning. The money will be allocated among districts according to each one's percentage of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals.

“We are grateful to the Legislature for being alert to the needs of K-12 schools, and for making these added resources available,” Baesler said.

The funds must be used by Dec. 31. The money for ExactPath resulted from a partnership between the Department of Public Instruction and the governor's office, each of which used a share of federal emergency COVID-19 funds to meet the expense.

Thursday's money for schools comes in addition to the \$30 million Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund, also approved by Congress in March. ESSER money has already been allocated to North Dakota schools according to student enrollments. Schools have substantial flexibility in using ESSER funds and have [deployed the money for a variety of needs](#), including technology, cleaning supplies, transportation and mental health support.

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