



Board of Education Column

By Robin Nelson, Board of Education

Legislative Priorities for 2021

The Fargo Board of Education is committed to advocating at the local, state, and federal levels on behalf of the district and PreK-12 education.

The Board's Governmental Affairs Committee is currently focusing its efforts on the 67th North Dakota legislative assembly. This committee has historically been active in the state legislative process by establishing priorities, monitoring activity, and engaging with elected officials and various state agencies. We work closely in these efforts with other school districts and partners across the state.

The committee and Fargo Public Schools administration typically host two legislator linkage events, provide regular updates, and frequently communicate with individual legislators throughout each week during the session. A virtual information meeting was held on Tuesday, November 17 during which the district's legislative priorities and a COVID-19 update were shared with local Senators and Representatives.

Fargo Public School's [Legislative Priorities for 2021](#) identifies two overarching categories; behavioral health and education funding.

Behavioral Health

It has grown even more apparent during the pandemic how behavioral health and any lack of basic needs such as safety, food and shelter affect students' academic outcomes. It is further being realized how vital public schools are in identifying those needs and facilitating appropriate services. The intersection of two major state agencies' work, the Department of Health and the Department of Public Instruction, is imperative to break down the barriers in connecting students with the assistance they need. We will continue to prioritize our advocacy efforts toward the Human Services and Education committees during the upcoming session.

Education Funding

Public schools are morally and constitutionally obligated to provide a free and appropriate education that meets the needs of each student. Fargo attracts many families due to the vast array of services that are not often available in the more rural communities of our region; consequently, our resources are disproportionately affected. We seek to close



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funding gaps for underfunded programs such as special education and related transportation costs, tuition revenue offsets, and English learners.

We continue to support allowing access to revenue sources that could be utilized to meet the growing needs of our students as well as to maintain the level of education our community expects and deserves.

Please watch for updates from the Governmental Affairs Committee in future newsletters as the session progresses.

