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# Can greatness replace the culture of ranking?

CHRIS STURGIS, [LearningEdge](#)



**I've never stepped foot in North Dakota before.** It took my breath away. The shape of the earth of the Red River Valley was so flat that it made Nebraska seem hilly and Iowa downright mountainous. Pockets of trees, silos, and a few farmhouses are the only thing breaking up the miles upon miles upon miles of farms growing [soybeans](#), [sugarbeets](#), [wheat](#), [beans](#), and [corn](#).

I'm used to empty spaces from living in New Mexico. But there, you see the skin of the earth all wrinkly, bumpy, and jagged. In North Dakota, with its rich loamy soil, nearly every inch of land was striped with the remains of the harvest.

Thirty miles outside of Fargo lies [Northern Cass School District](#), serving 650 learners from the towns of Argusville, Arthur, Erie, Gardner, Grandin, and Hunter. In the parking lot, the majority of the cars are SUVs. Within a suburb, they could be a sign of wealth. Here, they are also indications of the hard winters. In this valley, the powerful change of seasons is simply part of life that produces the fertile lands and its economic base.

Our environment shapes us. It inspires us. It directs our imagination.

At Northern Cass School District #97, it has inspired greatness.



Superintendent  
Cory Steinder

**Northern Cass's journey toward mastery learning** and personalization was launched when district leadership began to wonder about the lives of their learners after graduation. Superintendent Cory Steiner explained, "Academic results were never the issue. Our results are fine. We are often a little above the state averages or just below. We wanted to find out what it meant for learners." So Steiner began to have conversations with employers and colleges about their graduates. What kind of students and employees were they? What did they bring to their lives after high school? "What we found out," he recounted, "is that our learners are respectful and write good research papers. We were pleased about that, but shouldn't there be something more? Shouldn't our kids be making an impact in the communities where they learn and work and live? Shouldn't they be standing out in some way? Shouldn't they look and sound different from other young adults because of their high school experience at Northern Cass? We were concerned that our students just weren't making a mark in their lives beyond high school."

Thus began a stream of conversations within the district about what they wanted their learners to be, know, and do when they graduated from Northern Cass. The eventual result was a new vision statement and commitments based on the belief that learners are empowered individuals who can shape their environment and that each of us can develop greatness, albeit in different ways.

We believe every learner can change the world, therefore we must provide a world class education.

### Northern Cass Collective Commitments

We are dedicated and passionate about relationships, teaching and learning, self-reflection, acknowledging greatness, and support of the Northern Cass community.

We are driven towards continuous improvement.

This vision, emphasizing empowerment, learning, and greatness, became the "WHY," the powerful driver for change. As in many schools, language became a way to signal change. At Northern Cass the term 'student' was replaced with 'learner,' 'teacher' was replaced with educator.' The walls of Northern Cass are dotted with reminders that greatness is the goal, including an enormous, colorful banner created by elementary school children emblazoned with **#GR8NESS2DAY**.





- Philosophers are quoted: “The truth is, there’s no easy road to exceptional, but knowing from the start that this is what you’re after, is always a great way to begin.” — Alan Watts
- Suggestions for how to be significant in one’s daily life are offered: Say thank you. Greet others by name. Pick up someone else’s garbage.

Everyone is great at Northern Cass. Everyone is great in their own way. Educators send “Greatness Cards” home to celebrate learner growth or special examples of greatness.

Most compelling is that outside every classroom is posted the MY WHY and professional learning goals of every educator. Examples of MY WHY include:

- I want to support each learner in recognizing their capabilities, talents, and passions to help them excel in all they do at Northern Cass and beyond.
- To define my significance in the world through the impact I leave on its people.

Each of the MY WHY statements ends with the question... What is yours?, encouraging learners to think about their own purpose and intentionality. My lunchtime conversation with the Jaguar Ambassadors, learners who have received training on personalized learning to help other learners, parents, and visitors to understand Northern Cass’s approach, illuminated this. Ryker explained, “We used to be robots doing what the teacher told us to do.” One of the other students jumped in, “Now we want to be great humans.” Hannah admitted with a smile, “I used to check my GPA two to three times per day to make sure all my assignments are okay. I used to learn just to get the grade but now I realize that we are always building upon our learning.” Laura then chimed in, “I can’t even see my GPA in our system now. We’ve let go of it. We understand now that being high achieving in the old system was just

about remembering things and writing it back down. We didn’t need to retain it or apply it to get an A. Now we learn things because it is valuable to us.”

As I toured the school with four ambassadors, listening to how they experienced personalized learning and made sense of the transformation, I began to wonder: *Is greatness the antidote to our society’s dependence on a culture of ranking?*

All of us advancing mastery learning (also referred to as competency-based education) have been humbled by how much our understanding of school and learning is dominated by grades. We can barely imagine a world where learners do not receive grades or are ranked by their GPA. Even if our imaginations lead us to transform schools — as Northern Cass is doing — to create dynamic cultures of learning, the power of the GPA as a predictor of success in college (although not in life) continues to dominate the college admissions process. Even with the flexibility of colleges to move beyond ranking students based on grades, the NCAA, scholarships, and US. News and World Reports ranking systems handcuff us to the antiquated and harmful traditional model of education.

We can continue to chip away at the culture of ranking and sorting. However, I don’t know how far we can get unless we actually replace



it with a new belief. We've learned that the growth mindset helps us eliminate the fixed mindset. We've learned that using the research on learning can help us replace the concept of a "blank slate" with active learning and prior knowledge. But what can replace our culture of ranking and sorting that begins with the idea that there is a hierarchical order?

Steiner mentioned that every year they select a different theme. This year is Seek Significance, but the Greatness theme has staying power. It hasn't gone away. Learners mentioned it. Educators mentioned it. By the end of my visit, I couldn't help thinking that perhaps Greatness would be the driver that could once and for

all challenge the idea that there is value to ranking learners. Steiner noted, "The traditional system was never based in equity. It was never designed for it. The idea that some kids are better than others is in conflict with greatness."

Can discovering our greatness, each of us making different contributions and always with a commitment to continue to develop, be the antidote to the sickness that leads us to rank students? Can we instead build on the mantra I saw posted on Northern Cass's walls:

Still Growing  
Still Changing  
Still Learning

Still Growing  
Still Changing  
Still Learning  
Still Growing  
Still Changing  
Still Learning  
Still Growing  
Still Changing  
Still Learning  
Still Growing  
Still Changing  
Still Learning  
Still Growing  
Still Changing  
Still Learning  
Still Growing

# Building a World-Class Education Through Personalizing Learning

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With a new vision in hand, Superintendent Cory Steiner knew that the hard work was just about to begin. An unexpected opportunity developed in the newly established Teacher Leadership Academy (TLA) designed in partnership with North Dakota State University to offer a masters program at the school. (Please note: The two schools in Northern Cass District are on the same campus, serving a total of 650 learners from six communities over a 400 square mile range.)

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**The goal of the TLA** was to build leadership among educators and advance the district capacity. Twenty educators signed up for the program, which is designed to address educational issues such as curriculum and instruction in the context of the district. As part of a four-day intensive near the end of the program, one day was dedicated to personalized learning. Steiner noted, “The conversations that happened that day have leapt to the forefront of Northern Cass. The conversations that happened on that one day with twenty educators launched the transformational process that continues today.” Tom Klapp, Director of Personalized Learning agreed, “You can’t underestimate the power of the Teacher Leadership Academy on how quickly Northern Cass has been able to move. We had a quarter of our educators, all with that drive to do better for kids, getting together every other Wednesday. Those educators were talking with their peers along the way. Almost everyone was on board by the time we started to implement.”



Tom Klapp,  
Director of  
Personalized  
Learning

The initial idea that emerged from TLA was to develop an online academy called the Jaguar Academy. It was designed to increase options

for learners so they could take up to three online courses with flexibility in pacing while enrolled in their other courses in the high school. However, they discovered right away that some learners couldn’t handle the independence. In reflection during the TLA sessions, the educator-leaders began to wonder, *Why can’t we provide more flexibility to every learner? What would need to happen so that every learner could be an independent learner?*

Klapp explained, “We thought personalized learning should be good for every learner. That meant we needed to ask, *What would it take for every learner to benefit from personalized learning? What could a school look like that actually was designed around learners?* The more we explored those questions, the more we realized that we were going to have to blow up the whole system.” In their weekly meetings, the twenty educators began to talk among themselves — So what if we did blow it up?

Steiner emphasized this point, “The more you think about personalized learning, the more you implement it, the more you realize that the system is broken. We realized that we couldn’t

even begin to offer a world-class system when we were buried under the traditional system. Over time, this led us to understand and commit to changing the system.”

As enthusiasm for personalized learning grew, site visits, with support from the Busch Foundation, developed a deeper understanding of how it could be operationalized. Teams went to Freedom Elementary in Harrisburg, South Dakota; RSU2 near Augusta, Maine; and Lindsay Unified in the Central Valley of California. Steiner enthused, “The Board has been fantastic. Early on, two board members took the time to visit Lindsay. They left asking, ‘*What is this personalized learning thing?*’ and came back saying that this had to happen at Northern Cass.”

The spirit of personalized learning quickly began to take hold. Educators began to try out new practices. Professional learning was soon enhanced to embrace the tenets of personalization, with educators building their capacity based on their own skills. The district began the hard work of unpacking the traditional system and putting into place a new system of teaching and learning.

One of the most important steps was to revisit the research on learning to develop the Jaguar Way of Instruction, including a nurtured heart approach; whole brain teaching; transparent learning targets and proficiency scales; accountable talk; celebrating success; and no opting out. Everyone is expected to learn and succeed even if they need to try several times, receive more support, and more time. Isn’t that what equity is all about?

Over time, an understanding of personalized learning developed:

- Learners have multiple opportunities to show proficiency
- Learners have multiple ways to learn content
- Learners advocate for their learning
- Learners can articulate what they are working on and where they’re at in their learning
- Learners have opportunities to work ahead
- Learners can engage in level 4 opportunities
- Learners have opportunities to backfill standards not yet met
- Learners work in spaces best for their learning (flex spaces, independent, small group)
- Voice and choice
- Learners engage in self-reflection
- Learners track their own progress toward priority standards
- Learners utilize Empower (a learning management system) to progress in their learning
- Learners receive feedback through proficiency scales

As a field, we continue to struggle with the multiple definitions of personalized learning and multiple variations of how to describe competency-based education. Northern Cass has had the confidence in themselves to merge the ideas of personalization and mastery into one learning model. It is important to note that although Northern Cass has invested in technology so that it is a 1:1 school with each learner having a device — iPads in grades PreK-3 and Chromebooks in grades 4-12 — technology is considered a tool to support teaching and learning, not a feature of personalization. Instruction is rarely delegated to ed tech programs. Although ALEKS is used in mathematics, learners turn to their devices primarily for productivity purposes and accessing Empower, the learning management system.

**Personalized learning at Northern Cass is about learners, not technology.**

# Everyone a Learner: Personalizing Learning System Northern Cass

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I asked a few educators at [Northern Cass School District #97](#) what guidance they would give other educators as their schools venture on the journey toward personalized and mastery learning. One gave an answer that has stayed with me: “Remember to have grace with oneself. I don’t expect perfection from my learners but I expect it from myself. Be gentle with yourself.”

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**Compassion for educators** was also demonstrated in my conversations with learners. Hannah, one of the Jaguar Ambassadors who gave me a tour of Northern Cass, emphasized, “All of our educators are learners. We went to a meeting, and it was clear that even though the shift to personalized learning can be overwhelming to learners at times, it is really, really overwhelming to educators.” She noted that every class has a different style and every educator in a different stage of their own learning. It might irritate learners a bit but they know that every educator is trying to learn new things. In fact, every educator has one of their professional learning goals taped to their door to remind learners and peers that they are learning and aren’t going to be perfect.



Jessica Stoen,  
Personalized  
learning coach

Professional development has been personalized, as well. Personalized learning coach Jessica Stoen explained, “We started with the same practices we had always used with timelines and deadlines. Then we came to the realization that we needed to let the research on learning guide our PD as well. It’s okay if they don’t meet a deadline as long as they are making progress. Educators need to be working on developing new practices or

new skills but they don’t have to be the same one.” A different topic is offered at monthly, paid professional development events held in the evening, consistently attracting 20–25 educators at a time.

## Instruction and Assessment

“Good instruction is simply good instruction,” said one educator. Most educators, with the exception of new educators who feel the pressure of developing the craft of teaching, felt that personalized learning didn’t require a different type of instruction. The important shift was that instead of pretending all learners were the same — starting at the same place, with the same set of skills, and learning the same way — personalized learning started with the assumption that every learner is different. And that means you need to organize school differently. “It just made sense to me,” explained Stoen. “We were doing one-size-fits-all but kids aren’t the same. You could see it wasn’t working... I was teaching to the middle, but there were so many kids who weren’t being challenged because they already had the skills or were missing the skills they needed.” Another educator chimed in, “We knew it was going to be a lot of work creating the

scaffolding needed to differentiate. It's worth it because it is best for the kids."

In a conversation with educators, they explained that part of personalizing learning is differentiating instruction so that you are meeting learners at their challenge points — no matter what grade level that is. Differentiation as an instructional strategy has been around for a long time. But this is the first time it can be fully implemented. The big shift is being very transparent about what learners are expected to learn and where they are in their learning.

## Transparency

Northern Cass is working with Marzano Research Labs within an initiative called High Reliability Schools. The model has five stages that districts are certified in: safe, supportive, collaborative culture; effective teaching in every classroom; guaranteed and viable curriculum; standards-referenced grading; and competency-based education. Northern Cass has already been certified in the first three levels and is working on the fourth level now. Part of the High Reliability School model is to have transparent learning targets and proficiency scales so that educators and learners know what is expected and what proficiency looks like.

Educators can more easily differentiate when the state standards are explicitly used in designing their instruction, curriculum, and assessment. They can use the proficiency scales to help them moderate their understanding of what it means it be proficient. Luke Bush, a high school educator, said, "The scales keep the focus on proficiency, not just a grade. Also, the scales are helpful because they are clear. It describes the skill or behavior that is expected with much less gray area. It helps us give more specific feedback to learners." Several educators described that their capacity for assessing is

developing through the use of proficiency scales.

By having a transparent set of learning targets over the progression of K-12, it becomes possible to move from one-size-fits-all curriculum to designing learning that meets learners at their challenge points. A CTE educator explained, "We may have the same project, but learner evidence is going to be different based on where they are in their learning. We think about what learners are going to need to be successful when we design a lesson or project." Don Hollister, a high school English educator, pointed out, "There are aspects of the old way that just didn't let us differentiate. It was a theoretical concept. Now we can all know the expectations for different grade levels. And there is more flexibility in how much time we have to work with learners. For the first time we can really start to differentiate learning."

## Leveling

"There are two different ways of talking about where learners are in their learning. One is the social level or age-based grade, and the other is their learning level," explained an educator at Northern Cass. I'd never heard it explained so simply: a social level and a learning level. Yes, learners develop socially at different rates, and one shouldn't make an assumption based solely on age where they are in their physical and emotional development; however, as a technique to guide us in the transition from the traditional system to a personalized, mastery system of learning, the easy-to-understand dual framing of where learners are — socially and learning-wise — is tremendously helpful.

It was this understanding that led Northern Cass to restructure their elementary school. There are two cohorts of educators in the social level of grades 1–3. Each cohort has a wing all to themselves that have been designed with big, open spaces. Grades 4–5



are also grouped together in a separate area with five educators.

The co-teaching model enables educators to better reach all of the learners. Through careful analysis of where learners are in their learning, flexible grouping is possible to help learners build the skills they need to continue to progress. If learners are missing skills, educators design ways to “backfill” the gaps. One elementary school educator explained, “Before, I was teaching all second graders the second grade standards. But some kids weren’t ready for them. They needed something else before they could reach the standards. Working in a cohort model of grades 1–3 allows us to focus on learners and their learning. The standards, in the form of learning targets and proficiency scales, help us make sure learners are progressing.”

In grades 1–3, learners may spend half the day in social grouping around age and half the day around learning levels, often in groups aimed at specific learning targets. Grades 4–5 spend more time in leveled groups, partly due to the increased range of skills of learners stretching from second to seventh grade, and partly due to staffing constraints. Whenever possible, they use the same standards with the understanding that the levels will vary based on learners’ learning levels. Northern Cass understands how easily this might slip into a new version of tracking. They use the Empower learning management system to see where learners are, how they are progressing, and which learners aren’t progressing as expected. The goal, although not yet reached,

is to re-group every two weeks to make sure learners are always challenged.

## Backfilling with Timely and Differentiated Support

Northern Cass knows there is more work to be done to develop a full system that meets the needs of every learner. Underway is an effort to figure out how to provide timely supports to learners who are struggling. Tom Klapp, Personalized Learning Director, explained, “We don’t want to wait until the next year to help learners. We want to catch them up now. We need to figure out how to build schedules that get them the immediate help they need to get to proficiency.” One step they’ve taken is to modify summer school so that learners are able to “backfill standards” by focusing on the standards they need help with rather than take the whole course again. Another is to organize a day once a month where students can get extra help and participate in enrichment activities.

They are also exploring ways to expand resource time for learners so they have access to extra help every day. They’ve looked at Noble High School’s model in Maine for ways to systematically get learners help when they need it. They are involving learners in designing a support system that will include extended learning opportunities as well as academic supports. Learners requested opportunities for peer tutoring, coding, and how to change tires (a survival skill in a state blanketed with 50 inches of snow each winter).

**The Northern Cass learning model is still under construction. It will be fascinating to check back in a year or two to see how they integrated all of these parts into a new system.**

# Assessing and Communicating Learning at Northern Cass

Don Hollister, a high school educator, explained that [Northern Cass School District](#) made the shift to standards-referenced grading nearly seven years ago. They spent a lot of time separating grades and behaviors. They organized gradebooks around standards. They eliminated zeros. But it never added up to much. Learners weren't more motivated. They weren't more focused on learning. The GPA still dominated high schools. "But this time we are seeing a difference."

**Why the difference?** This time, the district started with a shift toward personalized learning that is aligned with the research on learning. The system Northern Cass is creating has learners at the center. They've also taken the time to think more deeply about how to motivate learners and help them become independent learners. Technology has advanced beyond a grade book that tracks grades to one that can track learning. Most importantly, Hollister explained, "Learners understand that we aren't grading assignments; we are assessing their learning."

## Creating Independent Learners

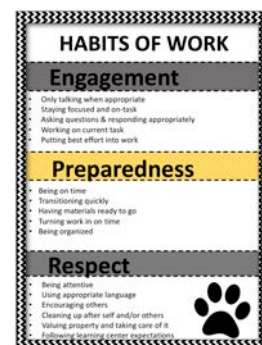
From nearly day one, the Northern Cass leadership and educators who were exploring what was possible with personalized learning wanted a system that would work for every learner. What was needed to make sure that learners who didn't have the maturity or skills for independent learning would be successful? "At first, we focused too much on pace," admitted Tom Klapp, Personalized Learning Director. "We eventually learned that we needed to focus on helping learners build the

skills to be independent."

They introduced Habits of Work, through which they could engage learners in reflecting upon and building their skills. The Northern Cass Habits of Work emphasize engagement, preparedness, and respect.

Learners get daily and weekly feedback on their Habits, which is tracked in Empower, the district's learning information system. Educators talk about strategies to help learners build their sense of accountability: When do you keep a learner more under your wing? When/how do you begin the process of gradual release? One educator explained, "I saw a big change in my kids last year when we took the Habits seriously. Their ability to advocate for themselves, their ownership over their learning because they were making decisions, and their sense of responsibility all notched up." One learner told me, "Habits of Work is about who you are. It's about becoming a person who is going to be successful."

The AVID program is another approach that Northern Cass has invested in heavily. Once



known only as a high school college prep program for low-income students, it has expanded to be implemented district-wide. Northern Cass has turned to AVID to help educators shift their instruction so they “lead more, talk less” and have learners drive the learning. This includes goal-setting, reflection, and social-emotional learning.

By high school, learners have a lot more independence in their learning. They have options about where they work and what they are working on. Northern Cass has broken this into three styles of working:

- **Personal:** When learners have completed their work in a class and prioritize other classes and tasks.
- **Group:** When learners are working on a project or group work in the class.
- **Focus:** When a learner is working on the class but wants to find a different place to work.

This was visible when walking around the halls in Northern Cass, with groups of learners circled around a table, a learner tucked into a book in a quiet corner of the hallway, and two learners with heads bent together as they worked on an assignment. But if you act up or let the noise level get too high? Any educator can send you back to the classroom, which will impact learners’ Habits of Work, which is monitored every single class, every single day.

## Assessing and Communicating Learning

The combination of the transparent learning targets, proficiency scales, and the multi-functional capacity of the Empower learning management system is also helping educators to differentiate

instruction, monitor learner progress, and help both learners and educators keep an eye on pace. Hollister explained, “I am much more deliberate in my scaffolding. When I create the proficiency scales in Empower, it prompts me to consider where all the kids in my classroom are. I have to spell out what is needed to help each learner get to the next level.” Klapp also noted that Empower helps educators release traditional control over the classroom. Learners can easily find out where they are in their learning, what it means to be proficient, and what they need to do next. Of course, they still need the Habits of Work, self-regulation, and meta-cognition to put forth the effort needed to learn. But Empower helps to make the entire cycle of learning transparent to learners. Learning is no longer a black box.

One of the important pieces of Northern Cass policies that signals the value of learning is their work revision policy. Students can submit revisions and educators can change the rating (or grade) at any time. Steiner emphasized, “The minute we set a timeline, learning stops. We want learners to understand that learning is what counts.”

At some point, every school on the path toward mastery learning makes the decision to change its grading policies and practices. In the Marzano Research Labs High Reliability Schools with which Northern Cass School District in North Dakota is becoming certified, standards-referenced (using the standards

to organize feedback, but not yet committing to getting all learners to proficiency) grading is the fourth stage.

Like most districts on the path toward mastery learning, Northern Cass is thinking through ways to offer learners the opportunity to excel while ensuring that all learners can access deeper learning. Part





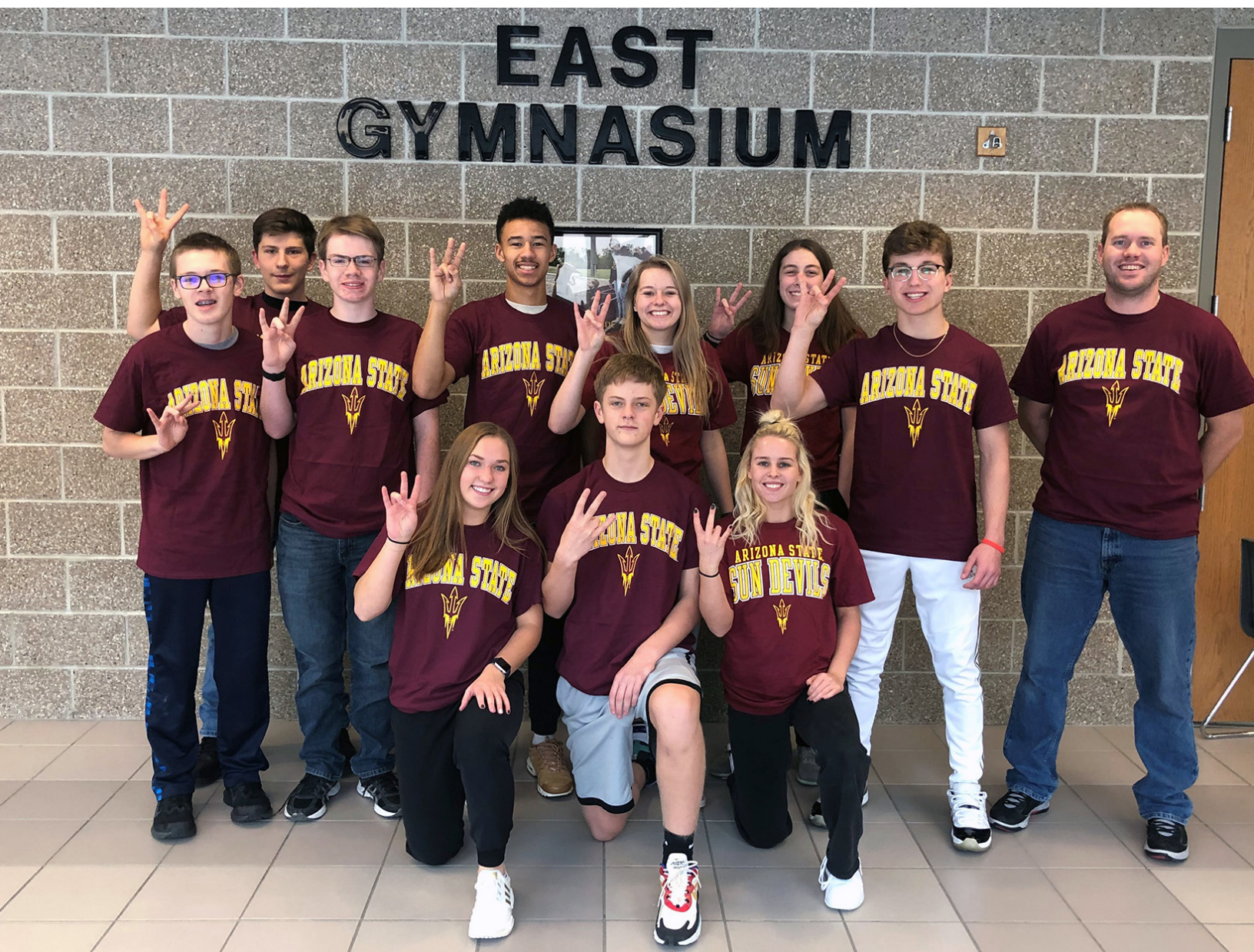
of this process is defining what constitutes a 4 in the rating system. Klapp emphasized, "Educators need a clear picture in order to provide learners with guidance." Equally challenging is ensuring that every learner has opportunities to dive deep into their learning, not just the learners who are at higher learning levels or those who reach a 3 before other learners.

## The Mastery Transcript

"We want a transcript that will let our learners tell their stories and share their greatness. We realized that we were selling a concept, not a product. We are selling the idea that all learners can excel and discover their

greatness, not just the top 10%," explained Superintendent Cory Steiner. They are hoping that the Mastery Transcript will do just that. They realized immediately that this part of the Mastery Transcript Consortium, personalized and mastery-based schools could push more quickly for change.

Steiner said that they value the network of schools that are gathering at the Mastery Transcript Consortium meetings. "We need to be with people who think differently," he said. "And the schools at the MTC meetings really do. We want to be with people who are thinking about the future: five, seven, and ten years into the future."





# Thinking About Sustainability from the Get-Go at Northern Cass

**Northern Cass School District** is moving fast. They are thinking about sustainability even while they continue to create an aligned system. Personalized learning is a standard item on the school board agenda. The board scheduled a retreat to focus solely on personalized learning and has committed to a goal of spending a half day per year observing classrooms. Resources have been re-allocated to create a Director of Personalized Learning position.

## Keeping the WHY Alive

Superintendent Cory Steiner explained that they are intentional about keeping a sense of common purpose. “There isn’t a meeting where we don’t go through the WHY and collective commitments,” he said. “We ask ourselves, ‘How are we going to live it in the next month?’ We ask ourselves, ‘What word would we want kids to use when they describe their school?’ We are purposeful in developing a shared understanding of a bigger and higher purpose to everything we are doing.”

### *My why...*

I WANT TO SUPPORT EACH LEARNER IN RECOGNIZING  
THEIR CAPABILITIES, TALENTS, AND PASSIONS TO HELP  
THEM EXCEL IN ALL THEY DO AT NORTHERN CASS AND  
BEYOND.

*What is yours?*

## Parent and Community Engagement

To ensure that parents and community members can learn about personalized learning and have their questions answered, Northern Cass invites them for tours twice a year. Jaguar Ambassadors, learners from a mix of grades, guide the tours and answer all their questions about personalized learning.

The four ambassadors I spoke with said that helping parents understand personalized learning is one of the hardest things. “Parent tours can be crazy. It can get heated. We always have to spend time talking with them about how society is changing, technology is changing, and jobs are changing. We use a video that helps them understand that Northern Cass is preparing learners for jobs that might not even exist yet,” explained Hannah. “We’ve all had to learn about personalized learning,” continued Laura. “Last year was worse because parents



had so many assumptions. It's hard to change, and parents are really concerned about their kids. But once we explain it, they can see why personalized learning makes total sense."

## System Building

System building is starting to take shape in North Dakota. The passage of SB 2186 gave the Superintendent of Public Instruction the authority to waive administrative regulations such as seat time. State policy also allows students to access curriculum above their grade level. For example, eighth graders can take high school courses and students in high school can earn dual credit with partnering institutions of higher education. A statewide initiative in partnership with four other districts (West Fargo Public Schools; Oakes Public Schools; New Rockford-Sheyenne Public School; and Marmot High School

located at the Youth Correctional Center) and KnowledgeWorks is leading to more schools thinking about personalizing learning.

Northern Cass's participation in the Mastery Transcript Consortium is also part of its effort to build new systems. This effort is bigger than just a new transcript. It includes helping parents to think differently about what it means for learners to be doing well. In the old system, learners wanted to know their grades or GPA to determine how well they were doing compared with their peers. There needs to be other ways for parents to quickly understand how learners are progressing in developing academic skills or meeting the skills identified in the graduate profile — leadership, learner mindset, adaptability, accountability, and communication. Pace and progress are important. So is seeing your child develop a sense of their own greatness.

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Mastery Transcript Consortium™ (MTC) is a global network of schools co-designing a new high school transcript that reflects the unique skills, strengths, and interests of each learner — and that supports educators as they deliver personalized, authentic, student-centered learning and prepare students for success in college, career and life.

[www.mastery.org](http://www.mastery.org)