

JUNE 6, 2024

CONGRATULATIONS TO NORTH DAKOTA, 2024 RECIPIENT OF THE FRANK NEWMAN AWARD FOR STATE INNOVATION

Education Commission of the States is pleased to honor the state of North Dakota with the 2024 Frank Newman Award for State Innovation in recognition of its success in leading the country's first competency-based graduation pathway that provides individualized opportunities for student success.



After recognizing the barriers in traditional curricular pathways for students, North Dakota set out to expand students' options for fulfilling graduation requirements while exploring their interests and passions.

This began in 2017, when the North Dakota Legislature approved S.B. 2186, which allowed schools to request waivers of some state laws and regulations to assist education innovation projects. The new law gave North Dakota's state school superintendent authority to work with districts to implement innovation plans while requiring periodic results reporting to the superintendent and the North Dakota Legislature to ensure accountability.

In 2021, the North Dakota Legislature approved a package of four measures to accelerate the innovation trend:

- S.B. 2196 created the North Dakota Learning Continuum — the first official competency-based student graduation pathway in the country.
- H.B. 1478 gives students opportunities to earn course credit from outside work, internships or organization memberships aligned with their interests and passions.
- H.B. 1388 guarantees the same amount of state support per student no matter if a student is earning credits inside or outside the classroom.
- H.B. 1135 allows student competency that is demonstrated as part of an innovative education program to be used to qualify for a state scholarship.

S.B. 2196 emphasized the collaborative nature of North Dakota's education innovation efforts. Rooted in the instructional requirements established in the Legislature, state leaders worked with educators from across the state to write continuum benchmarks that would offer flexibility to students and

schools. Family and public comment was invited before the State Board of Public School Education officially adopted the continuum in spring 2022.

A nominator said, “It has been a true partnership between school districts and the state to reimagine a model of education which values the diverse needs of every individual learner.”

These four bills have created a comprehensive innovation continuum to support North Dakota’s personalized, competency-based instruction. North Dakota’s ongoing efforts prepare students with the skills and experiences they need to be successful long after they graduate high school.

Education Commission of the States will present North Dakota with the Frank Newman Award for State Innovation at the 2024 National Forum on Education Policy July 10-12 in Washington, D.C.

The Frank Newman Award for State Innovation is one of three awards that Education Commission of the States gives each year to celebrate outstanding commitment to public education. The others are the James Bryant Conant Award, which recognizes individual achievement, and the Education Commission of the States Corporate Award, which recognizes a for-profit corporation or nonprofit organization.

For more information about North Dakota’s competency-based education initiatives, contact [Dale E. Wetzel](#), public information specialist at the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction.

For more information about Education Commission of the States or its awards, contact [Maryana Boatenreiter](#), communications manager.