

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 23, 2019

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Work begins on collaboration initiative with public school districts

Williston, N.D., (October 23, 2019) – Williams County, in cooperation with the North Dakota Governor’s Office and the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, is pleased to announce that work has begun on the public school district collaboration initiative.

Dr. David Flowers and Dr. Jeff Schatz, former school district superintendents and career educators, are leading the team of consultants tasked with delivering a comprehensive solutions-based analysis about Williams County’s six public school districts. On August 6th, the Williams County Board of Commissioners committed to funding the external study to collect and analyze data/information pertinent to public school districts in Williams County. Scope of the initiative was defined by the input gathered from school district leaders during a meeting facilitated by Governor Doug Burgum on August 12th.

“We appreciate and commend the collaboration between the Williams County school districts and study partners to find solutions to the challenges related to population growth,” Burgum says. “Working together and making data-based decisions gives everyone the best opportunity to develop a long-term plan that ensures the most efficient use of facilities and a strong school system that puts students first and helps attract new residents to meet our workforce needs, while being responsible stewards of tax dollars.”

The overall goal of the initiative is to compel a collaborative process, providing sound facts, analysis, and options for which optimal decisions can be made to ensure adequate, safe, and accessible school facilities for students across the County.

Says Kirsten Baesler, the North Dakota state school superintendent, “This is a complex undertaking. There are six public school districts in Williams County that share boundaries, and all of them are experiencing growing enrollment, ongoing building maintenance and upkeep, and the need to provide a 21st-Century education to K-12 students across the county. I am grateful to the Williams County Commission for supporting this study for its youngest citizens.”

Data collection and analysis will be divided into four components, with specialized consultants dedicated to each area in order to expedite a final report in March 2020.

1. The Budget, Finance, and Taxation component will be conducted by Brent Bogar senior consultant with AE2S and education finance consultant Mark Lemer. Scope will be focused

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on, but not limited to, expense/revenue; level of bonded indebtedness, expenditures and revenue per pupil; taxable valuations; mill levies; current, past and future capital improvement projects; history of referendum attempts.

2. The Student Enrollment and Demographics component will be conducted by RSP and Associates. Scope will be focused on, but not limited to, data-driven analysis of enrollment; student residence demographics; cross-district enrollment; current and future residential property demographics.
3. The Curriculum and Student Opportunity component will be conducted by education consultant and University of Mary professor Dr. Jeffery Lind. Scope will be focused on, but not limited to, general curriculum programs; extra-curricular offerings; special education resources; career and technical education availability; advanced placement and dual credit opportunities.
4. The Property and Facility Assessment component will be conducted by JLG Architects. Scope will be focused on, but not limited to, facility age; current facility utilization and capacity; deferred maintenance issues; modular/rented space solutions being utilized to address overcrowding.

Study leaders are contacting school district leaders and stakeholders this week to schedule initial meetings. Team member biographic information, survey links and meeting schedules focused on community involvement and study progress reports can be found on the [Williams County website](#).

“I applaud the efforts of all the public school districts in Williams County to collaborate and ensure their students have the best environment in which to learn,” said Kirsten Baesler, the North Dakota state school superintendent. “This work will benefit students, their families, teachers, administrators, and the communities, while providing efficient solutions for everyone who pays taxes to support Williams County’s public schools.”

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