

Educational Well-Being: Children in North Dakota



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Obstacles to Our State's Future: Fewer Children

The future of our state lies in the successful development of our children, who will become North Dakota's future leaders and citizens. Because of this, all North Dakota citizens have a vested interest in making certain that our children have the resources they need to grow and learn, including community assets like libraries and athletic groups, adequate health care, and, of course, well-supported public schools.

Mandan and Jamestown combined (N=32,416). In 1980, children ages 19 and younger were one-third of our state's population. By 2015, they are estimated to comprise less than one quarter of the state's population.

Declining numbers of children means that there are fewer children in the state's public schools. As shown in page 2 of this report, average daily enrollments at North Dakota public schools have been decreasing.

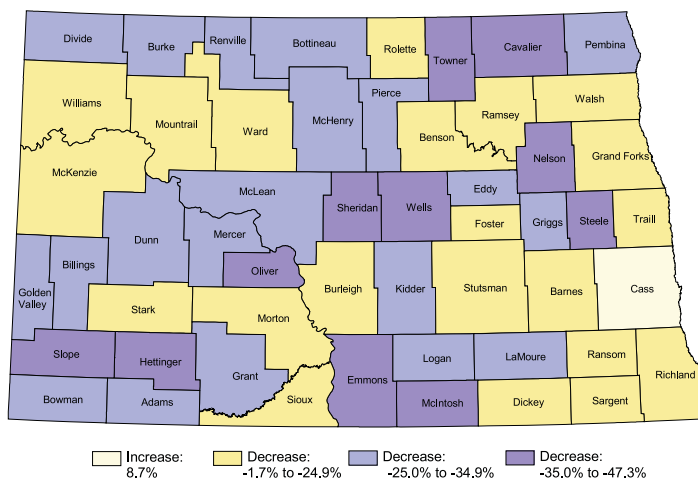
Of the 187 school districts in the state in 2008-09, 19% (N=36) do not contain high schools. The smallest district without a high school had an average daily attendance in 2008-09 of three children. If you examine all North Dakota school districts containing high schools, you

find that in 2007-08, 14 of the 20 districts with the highest average cost per pupil also had average daily attendance levels of fewer than 100 students in the entire district.

Projections indicate that enrollment numbers are going to continue to decline through 2016, the last year included in the most recent enrollment projections for North Dakota public schools.

One of the largest obstacles facing many of North Dakota's public school districts is the decreasing enrollment of children. As shown in this map, the number of children in our state has been declining. Slope, Steele, Oliver, Towner, and Sheridan counties each experienced greater than 40% declines in the percentage of children ages 0-17 from 2000 to 2007.

Percent Change in Children Ages 0-17 in North Dakota by County, Census 2000 to July 2007



From 2000 to 2007, all but one county in the state experienced a decline in the number of children ages 17 and younger. In fact, in 2007, North Dakota had 32,576 fewer children ages 17 and younger than it did in 1990. This population loss exceeds the 2007 population of

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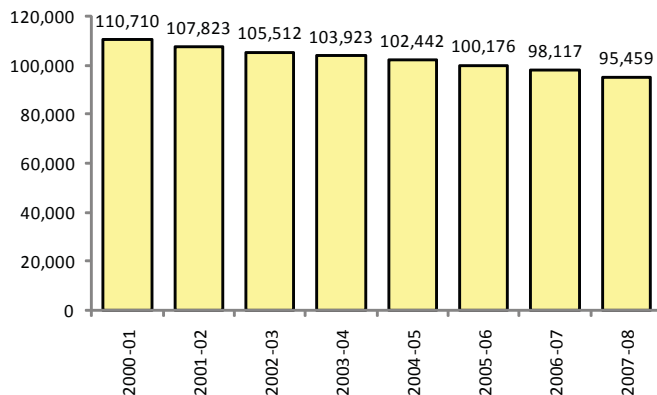
Some Trends in North Dakota Public Schools

SCHOOL ENROLLMENTS DECLINE

Public school enrollments in North Dakota have been on the decline since 1997-98, when average daily attendance reached 120,538. In 2007-08, average daily membership (which is a measure of average daily enrollment) was 95,459 students. There were 25,079 fewer children attending North Dakota K-12 public schools on an average day in 2007-08 than there were in 1997-98. This is larger than the 2007 population of the city of West Fargo (N=23,081). In addition, in 2007-08, 28% of all school districts in North Dakota had fewer than 100 students in attendance on an average day.

Many North Dakota school districts have fewer than 100 students in attendance on an average day.

Average Daily Membership in North Dakota Public Schools, 2000-01 to 2007-08



Projections anticipate that by 2016, there will be 87,131 K-12 students in North Dakota's public schools. Most of these students (47,044) are expected to be enrolled in the largest eight school districts in the state.



PROPORTION OF SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS DECREASING, BUT STILL HIGH

In 2008, special education students were a larger proportion of the declining enrollments in North Dakota's public schools than they were in 1996. Special education students grew to 14% of total public school enrollment in 2008, which was a 27% increase over 1996, when the percentage was 11%. Special education enrollment peaked in 2004 at 14.6% of all public school students. Because special education often involves more time intensive, personal interaction with students, it is a more expensive component of a school district's budget.

The proportion of all North Dakota students enrolled in special education has increased by 27% since 1996.

Year	North Dakota Special Education Enrollment as a Percent of Total Public School Enrollment	Number of Students Enrolled in North Dakota Special Education
1996	11.0	12,985
1998	11.8	13,468
2000	12.6	13,650
2002	13.4	13,901
2004	14.6	14,681
2006	14.3	13,825
2008	14.0	13,278

From 1996 through 2004, the percentage of special education students who were emotionally disturbed went from 6% to 8.7%, and then declined to 7.5% by 2008. In 2008, the percentage of special education students who were mentally handicapped was 6.5%.

Proficiency Scores of North Dakota's 8th Graders

One measure of a student's success is their ability to show proficiency in academic subjects, such as reading and writing. In comparison with other states' 8th graders who scored at or above the proficiency level, North Dakota 8th graders ranked:

•3rd in the nation in math

(41% of our 8th graders scored at or above the proficient level in math in 2007)

•22nd in the nation in reading

(32% of our 8th graders scored at or above the proficient level in reading in 2007)

•1st in the nation in science

(43% of our 8th graders scored at or above the proficiency level in 2005)

•29th in the nation in writing

(27% of our 8th graders scored at or above the proficiency level in 2007)



FEW HIGH SCHOOL DROP-OUTS

There are many ways to measure high school graduation rates. If you consider the percent of teenagers between the ages of 16 and 19 who are not enrolled in high school and are not high school graduates, North Dakota ranked first in the nation in 2007 for our low drop-out rate.

The table below shows another measure of high school drop-outs: the number of drop-outs in grades 9-12 as a percentage of total school enrollment for grades 9-12. Given this measure, our high school drop-out rate hovered around 2% from school year 2000-01 to 2007-08.

School Year	High School Drop-Outs Grades 9-12 as a Percent of Total School Enrollment for Grades 9-12
2000-01	2.2
2001-02	2.0
2002-03	2.1
2003-04	2.0
2004-05	1.8
2005-06	2.0
2006-07	2.3
2007-08	2.4

HIGH LEVELS OF POST SECONDARY EDUCATION

Many North Dakota high school graduates continue their education in a post secondary setting. In 2007, North Dakota ranked 7th in the nation for its percentage (53%) of young adults (ages 18-24) who either enrolled in or have completed college. The national average for states in 2007 was 46%.



HOME-SCHOOLED CHILDREN

A small percentage of North Dakota's children are home schooled and do not attend public schools. In 2000-01, there were 1,310 students in North Dakota who were reported to the Department of Public Instruction as home schooled. In 2007-08, 1,479 were home schooled, an increase of 169 students. These numbers are self-reported to the Department of Public Instruction by parents who home school. Average daily membership in public schools was 95,459 in 2007-08.

The Future of Children's Educational Well-Being in North Dakota

In order to secure a bright future for our state and our children, several ideas are suggested by the data in this report, including:



•**Address the declining population base and its effects on school districts.** Many rural communities are struggling to maintain viable school districts. Legislation that encourages the migration of young adults in their child-bearing years into these communities will help grow rural populations and increase the population base of smaller school districts.

•**Examine creative options for sparsely populated rural areas with few children.** Technology can provide options for educational programming, such as online courses and partnerships with Prairie Public Television. Communities also might consider investing in mobile educational units that can travel to several districts.

•**Provide children with early learning opportunities.** There is convincing research demonstrating that preschool education helps children develop important social and intellectual skills. Children who have early opportunities to learn and succeed are less likely to repeat grades, drop out of school, or need special education.

•**Encourage additional development of reading and writing skills.** North Dakota students have achieved strong proficiency scores in math and science, when compared with the rest of the nation's students. However, our students rank about average in their reading and below average when it comes to their writing, both of which are fundamental communication skills necessary for personal and professional success.

SOURCES CITED IN THIS CLOSE UP ON EDUCATION

Kids Count Data Center. See <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/> for information on population change, average daily attendance of public schools, special education enrollment, proficiency scores, post secondary enrollment, and high school drop-out rates.

National Institute for Early Education Research. See <http://nieer.org/resources/factsheets/13.pdf> for information on the benefits of preschool education.

North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. See <http://www.dpi.state.nd.us> for information on average cost per pupil, district size, home schooling, and average daily membership.

You can obtain this and all North Dakota KIDS COUNT publications online at no charge.
Visit our web site at www.ndkidscount.org.

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