



This is Afterschool in North Dakota

Preparing the Emerging Workforce for a Changing Economy

Careers in the fields of agriculture, oil and gas, and technology and STEM are driving economic growth in North Dakota, yet there aren't enough qualified high school graduates to fill the available jobs. The demand for "middle-skill" jobs—those that require more education and training than a high school diploma, but less than a four-year college degree—remains high.¹

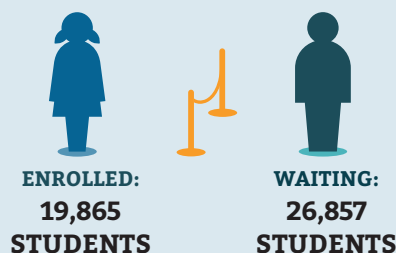
Nationally, the private sector spends more than \$164 billion every year on employee education and training to close workforce skill gaps,² yet more than 1 in 3 workers say they lack the education and training they need to get ahead.³ In early 2019, Commerce Commissioner Michelle Kommer reported a possible 30,000 unfilled jobs in the state,⁴ making workforce issues a top priority. While North Dakota has a low unemployment rate of 2.3 percent,⁵ we need young professionals with the technical skills, enterprising aspirations and readiness to build our future economy.

To address the workforce gap, young people across North Dakota need access to expanded learning opportunities made possible by afterschool and summer learning programs.

These programs are critical partners for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and help kids develop skills that North Dakota employers need.

Time in afterschool—about 1,080 hours per year or 144 school days—is used in North Dakota for career exploration, development, and skill building, inventions and innovations, job shadows, mentorships and internships. Afterschool programs, offered to children elementary through high school age, also foster professional connections with North Dakota businesses that encourage young people to stay in our state, increase their earning potential and contribute to building a prosperous economy.

For every North Dakota student in afterschool, **one more would participate** if a program were available, therefore, giving them the opportunity to explore and prepare for careers in in-demand and emerging job fields.



A study of afterschool STEM programs found that among participating students:

- 80% gained a deeper understanding of science careers
- 78% increased their interest in STEM
- 73% developed a "STEM identity," a personal belief that he/she can do well and succeed at science
- 72% developed perseverance and critical thinking skills

Among North Dakota parents:

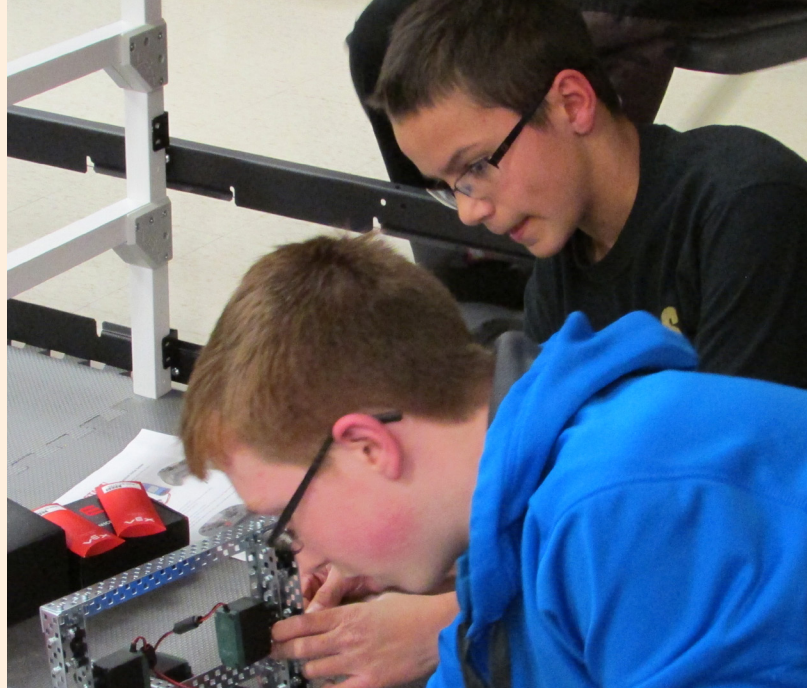
- 70% agree that afterschool programs help kids gain teamwork, leadership and critical thinking skills

Program Spotlight

To provide hands-on, student-centered learning, Cheney Middle School in West Fargo utilizes skilled and experienced teachers from all grade levels. Its **STEM Summer Academy** runs at capacity with students solving real-world problems through the practice and application of the engineering design process. They have proven that kids can love school year-round!

Grafton, which offers jobs in agriculture and manufacturing, is home to the **North Valley Extended School Project** that serves 550 students from six school districts. Students develop career-ready skills through programs like the Developing Leaders Afterschool Club, where they meet with community leaders, attend workshops about starting businesses, and practice presentation skills in collaboration with CTE organization Future Business Leaders of America, and the Afterschool Welding Club, which resulted in one student now working at a local welding manufacturer in a co-op through CTE.

The North Valley Extended School Project relies on strong partnerships with local leaders and businesses to help kids who would otherwise not have the resources to explore career possibilities. A partnership with Northland gave rural kids at a CTE center learning opportunities about unmanned aerial systems, skills for which they can apply to both jobs in national security and agriculture.



Benefits of afterschool programs, including its partnerships, extend to the enrolled child's family. For example, North Valley offers certification programs to parents of afterschool students in Certified Nurse Assistant (CNA), School Paraprofessional (DPI Credential), Commercial Drivers License (CDL), welding and GED.

How You Can Partner with Afterschool

The North Dakota Afterschool Network advises continued communication among policymakers, businesses and afterschool programs, as well as support for budgets for afterschool programs' workforce development efforts. Specifically:

- Encourage connections between local Workforce Investment Boards & afterschool. Include afterschool leaders as stakeholders.
- Visit your local afterschool programs. Business leaders can share employability skills and resources with students.
- Advise afterschool programs and schools on desirable skills needed for the emerging workforce.
- Solicit from businesses input on their workforce needs, and then ensure these needs are reflected in policy priorities.
- Invest or encourage investments in afterschool programs to help meet the demand of students wanting to participate.
- Support funding for CTE, including those approaches that allow for collaboration between afterschool and CTE programs.

Sources

- ¹ <https://m.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/2017-middle-skills-fact-sheets/file/North-Dakota-MiddleSkills.pdf>
- ² [Business Roundtable. \(2017\). Work in Progress: How CEOs Are Helping Close America's Skills Gap.](#)
- ³ [Pew Research Center. \(2016\). Key findings about the American workforce and the changing job market.](#)
- ⁴ <https://www.inforum.com/business/964689-There-is-no-silver-bullet-to-solving-N.D.s-worker-shortage-officials-say>
- ⁵ [United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics \(May 2019\). Economy at a Glance: North Dakota.](#)

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