

Use this form to request authorization to plan a new baccalaureate major, associate degree program, or graduate program; formal approval or waiver of an Intent to Plan is required before a university may submit a related full proposal request for a new program. The Executive Director and/or their designees may request additional information. After the university President approves the Intent to Plan, submit a signed copy to the Executive Director through the System Academic Officer through the proper process. Only post the Intent to Plan to the university website for review by other universities after approval by the Executive Director, System Academic Officer or designee. This form is meant to capture critical elements for stakeholders to review prior to a full proposal.

University NSU - Northern State University

Degree EDS : Specialist in
Education

Name of Major X999 : New Major
Requested

Innovative Pedagogical Leadership

No

Specialization Required? *Note: If the new proposed program includes specific specializations within it, complete and submit a New Specialization Form for each proposed specialization and attach it to this form. Since specializations appear on transcripts, they require Board approval.*

College/Department 5E : NSU School of Education/NESE : Elementary and Secondary
Ed

Intended Date of Full Proposal Fall 2024

Planned CIP Code 13.0441

Program Description

1. Provide the working program description that may appear in the university catalog.

Designed for professionals with experience in education, the flexible learning Specialist in Education (EdS) degree in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership equips educators to lead in diverse, complex learning environments. With an emphasis on the expansion of e-learning, the program empowers educators with the knowledge, skills, and innovative pedagogies required to lead, inspire, and drive positive change in the field of education. Successful completion of the School Superintendency specialization prepares educators for school superintendent certification.

Strategic Impact

2. Describe how the program fits in with the institutional mission, strategic plan, existing institutional program array, and academic priorities.

Northern University opened its doors in 1901 as Northern Normal and Industrial School with the admission requirement that the applicant be at least fourteen and have a desire to teach. For over 120 years, Northern has been preparing educators. Northern's mission, as identified in SD Codified Law, is "the preparation of elementary and secondary teachers, and a secondary purpose is to offer preprofessional, one-year and two-year terminal and junior college programs. Four-year degrees other than in education and graduate work may be authorized by the Board of Regents." BOR Policy currently authorizes NSU to offer credential certificates, associate degrees, baccalaureate degrees, and master's degrees. Policy states that the "BOR may authorize programs outside of the statutory mission due to workforce needs, strategic needs of the state, etc."

Northern State University's unique mission focuses on E-learning and serving South Dakota, the region, and the nation. The development of a flexible learning (online and HyFlex) specialist program elevates Northern's mission by combining E-learning and E-leading opportunities, a response to the superintendency shortage, and an innovative program that provides access to an advanced education program that is currently unavailable in the region. Out of 66 counties in South Dakota, 30 are classified as "rural," and the districts that serve those communities require new sorts of administrators who are not only highly competent leaders but who are also savvy in E-leadership and who can differentiate the superintendency. Schools and communities are unique, and a one-size fits all leadership style may not be effective. Applying a differentiation focus to the superintendent's role means learning how to customize leadership strategies to fit the specific characteristics, challenges, and strengths of the district and community.

The EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership program offers two specializations—one that leads to school superintendent certification, and the other designed for leadership across learning environments. The Innovative Leadership and Pedagogies program aligns with Northern State University's mission by contributing to the institution's commitment to providing diverse academic, civic, social, and cultural opportunities in three distinct ways.

First, the EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership program involves advanced coursework in innovative school leadership strategies in the areas of educational leadership, curriculum development, and instruction. This aligns with NSU's commitment to professional education, ensuring that we can provide educators with advanced knowledge and skills to excel and specialize. Obtaining a specialist degree and the ability to be certified as a school superintendent is an important opportunity for professionals in education.

Second, the program supports the liberal arts degree because it continues to integrate aspects of the liberal arts by fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication, which are pillars of a school superintendent's role as a school's highest leader.

Third, the impact of specialized preparation in education extends beyond individual students to the broader community. Graduates with a specialist degree in education will contribute to local and community enrichment as school leaders by empowering teachers and staff to implement innovative teaching methods, address educational disparities, and foster a culture of lifelong learning.

Northern State University's Strategic Plan states that, "Institutional strategic priorities and actions will align with the university's authorization, mission, vision and values, and the university will be regionally recognized for:

- Distinctive Learning: experiential, innovative, interdisciplinary, relevant
- Distinctive Culture: diverse, engaged, inclusive, welcoming
- Distinctive Partnerships: collaborative, entrepreneurial, supportive, sustainable
- Distinctive Leadership: accountable, ethical, responsive, transparent"

The proposed specialist degree in education strongly aligns with Northern's Strategic Plan in each of the four distinctive areas.

Distinctive Learning: This program will utilize a hands-on approach, providing students with real-world opportunities to apply theoretical knowledge in a culminating internship. Students will be trained to implement innovative teaching methods, incorporate new technologies, and adapt to evolving educational trends. The specialist emphasizes practical skills and knowledge that are directly applicable to the needs of the education sector. This ensures the relevance of the education programs to the current and future demands of the field.

Distinctive Culture: Program completion would contribute to creating diverse and inclusive learning environments by providing coursework and training to address the needs of diverse student populations, fostering a culture of inclusivity within the educational system.

Distinctive Partnerships: NSU's specialist in education will continue to foster important partnerships with school districts in the state and region by providing a pathway for specialized training for school professionals and leaders. Northern State University maintains strong partnerships in education throughout the state and region. Offering the EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership provides Northern more opportunities to engage with school partners. Northern's superintendent preparation program strengthens connections with school districts in an authentic way. Northern is developing the EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership in collaboration with several current rural school superintendents and other stakeholders in education, giving our partners an important voice in the process.

Distinctive Leadership: Northern State University prepares classroom teachers, special education teachers, and building principals. The addition of a specialist in education (EdS) degree in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership at NSU aligns and complement the current programs in teacher education.

The EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership creates a vertical integration within the education programs at NSU; students can progress seamlessly from undergraduate teacher preparation to graduate principal preparation and further their education at the specialist level to prepare for superintendent certification. This continuum enhances the educational pathway for aspiring educators and leaders. Graduates seeking advanced roles

in educational leadership, district administration, or specialized educational positions will benefit from the advanced knowledge and skills provided by the specialist program.

Northern State University's HLC accreditation liaison supports the University adding a specialist in education degree. Adding the EdS degree enhances the leadership development continuum for educators at Northern State University. In addition, candidates in the specialist program could serve as mentors for graduate principal preparation students, providing guidance, expertise, and support as they navigate their paths towards leadership roles. This mentorship model enhances the overall educational experience and promotes a sense of community within Northern's education programs.

The combination of undergraduate teacher preparation, a master's degree with principal preparation, and a specialist degree with the option of superintendent certification offers a comprehensive educational pathway that addresses the various stages of an educator's career. This holistic approach ensures that graduates are well-prepared for leadership roles and specialized positions in education.

If the program does not align to the strategic plan, provide a compelling rationale for the institution to offer the program.

N/A

3. How does the program connect to the Board of Regent's Strategic Plan?

One of the fundamental beliefs of the SD Board of Regents states, "South Dakotans will need increased access to continuing education opportunities to upgrade their credentials while remaining in the workforce." [1] A Hy-Flex specialist degree in education will play a crucial role in creating accessible learning opportunities by leveraging a flexible and innovative approach to instruction. Northern's EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership focuses on creating a supportive, accessible environment in which current in-service teachers or administrators can obtain an advanced degree that leads to superintendent certification while remaining engaged in their current role in the workforce.

Northern's EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership connects to Board of Regents Strategic Plan Goal 2: Access and Affordability. The goal states, "The Board of Regents must prepare pathways for enrollment efforts to ensure this strategic plan." The development of a specialist in education (EdS) degree at Northern provides an opportunity for South Dakotans to further their career while complementing their current role in the workforce. The Hy-Flex learning options allow students to facilitate their learning when and where it works for them, targeting current in-service teachers and administrators, underserved populations, and individuals in remote areas.

The EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership program also addresses Board of Regents Strategic Plan Goal 3: Academic Excellence, Student Outcomes, and Educational Attainment. The degree will require CAEP and DOE specialized accreditation. The NSU Teacher Education Program is fully accredited by CAEP and DOE for bachelor and master level teacher education programs. Northern's EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership program is aligned with the District Level standards recognized by the National Educational Leadership Program (NELP).

The administrator shortage in South Dakota has worsened over the last few years and districts across the state struggle to fill positions or in some cases, are unable to. Dr. Rick Melmer, former SD Secretary of Education, and current instructor of the Dakota Dreams Leadership Academy, stated, "Given the shortage of educators in South Dakota, it is more important than ever for the Superintendent to be a creative leader who is open to multiple ways to meet the educational needs of the district." Northern's EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership is unique because in addition to providing credentials for obtaining superintendent certification, it:

- 1) focuses on E-leadership as a superintendent in addition to traditional leadership
- 2) explores the flexibility in learning choices
- 3) addresses the leadership and supervision of remote teachers and e-learning classrooms
- 4) focuses on practice, remote management of teachers and classrooms, and the unique nature of leading a school in a rural community
- 5) addresses the unique expectations of a rural superintendent

Aligning the program to the District Level NELP Standards while also creating a relevant, innovative curriculum specific to the needs of a differentiated school superintendent and offering a Hy-Flex learning environment increases the likelihood of student retention, degree attainment, and success in the program and field.

Northern's EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership addresses Board of Regents Strategic Plan Goal 4: Workforce and Economic Demand. The specialization that leads to superintendent certification credentials provides one solution to the growing challenge of school administrator shortages in South Dakota, especially in rural areas. Out of 66 counties in South Dakota, 30 are classified as rural. Realizing the effects of administrator shortages are exacerbated in rural areas, developing this degree at Northern provides an opportunity to serve prospective students who seek a program designed with a rural emphasis and a focus on E-Learning and E-Leading.

[1] https://sdbor.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/StrategicPlan_22_27.pdf

Program Summary

4. If a new degree is proposed, what is the rationale?

This question refers to the type of degree, not the program. For example, if your university has authorization to offer the Bachelor of Science and the program requested is a Bachelor of Science, then the request is not for a new degree.

A preschool through grade 12 career school superintendent requires completion of an education specialist (EdS) degree as noted in SD Administrative Rule. [2]

§ 24:53:08:03 states, “A preschool through grade 12 career school superintendent program shall require:

- (1) Completion of an education specialist or doctoral degree;
- (2) Three years of verified experience on a valid certificate in an accredited K-12 school, one year of which includes classroom teaching experience or direct services to students. The three years of verified experience may be waived if the candidate receives a passing score on the state designated test; and
- (3) An internship that allows participation in all job responsibilities of the cooperating superintendent.

The required courses and experiences of a preschool through grade 12 career school superintendent program shall meet the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Program Recognition standards 2018 edition.

The program shall require candidates to demonstrate the applicable content, pedagogical, and professional knowledge and skills identified in the NELP standards and to demonstrate competency on the applicable multiple assessment measures of chapters 24:53:04.01, 24:53:05, and 24:53:06.”

Northern's Innovative Pedagogical Leadership program requires a new degree to align with South Dakota's requirements for a highly qualified school superintendent. In order to qualify for a Career School Superintendent endorsement from the South Dakota Department of Education, an individual must complete a superintendent preparation program as part of a specialist degree in education.

The BOR describes Northern State University as [3]:

“a regional comprehensive university serving its geographic region's educational and programming needs. NSU offers graduate and undergraduate programs, promotes excellence in teaching, supports research and creative activities; while providing service to the state of South Dakota, the region, and the nation.

Located in Aberdeen, the university specializes in HyFlex delivery of university curriculum and services. Northern also houses the Center for Statewide E-learning, providing equitable access to quality secondary education content courses for students across the state of South Dakota—in many locations where teacher shortages preclude adequate content delivery. Northern serves the public good as a vibrant hub for education and entrepreneurship, workforce and economic development, arts and culture, health and wellness, athletics, and community engagement.”

Expanding Northern's mission and authorization to include a specialist degree in education aligns with the evolving needs of the education landscape and the broader goals of our BOR system. The proposed degree aims to offer specialized and relevant training to individuals in our area and region who depend on Northern as their regional comprehensive education provider. By providing this advanced degree, NSU can contribute to the development of educational leaders in the region and state who currently serve or will serve in districts within rural areas.

According to the 2024 BOR Fact Book [4], Northern State University has the highest percentage of faculty with terminal degrees (83.7%), which indicates a high level of academic qualification and expertise among the teaching staff. In the Millicent Atkins School of Education, 89% of the faculty have terminal degrees. [5] The faculty in Teacher Education have a deep understanding of their subject area that has been demonstrated through advanced research and scholarly contributions. The faculty possess advanced pedagogical skills; 100% of faculty in Teacher Education have K-12 experience. The bachelor's degree and master's degree programs in the Millicent Atkins School of Education maintain a strong reputation of excellence and expanding the mission to include authorization to offer a specialist degree, strengthens not only NSU's reputation, but the collective system-wide reputation of academic excellence and breadth of programming options.

Northern's capability to offer a specialist degree in education is evidenced by highly qualified faculty, resources and facilities, full CAEP accreditation of all education programs at the bachelor and master's level, partnerships and collaborations with districts throughout the state and the SD Department of Education, and a highly effective education advisory committee. The number of master's programs effectively managed by the School of Education and Graduate Studies at Northern indicates the competency and capacity to handle advanced programs. Graduates of NSU education programs are loyal to NSU and have expressed interest to stay with NSU for additional degrees whenever possible. Master's degree completers will return to NSU for continuing education, up to and including terminal degrees, if it is offered.

NSU has, for decades, had the reputation as the place to go for teacher preparation in South Dakota and is the only BOR institution representing the northeastern and north central parts of the state. It would also benefit recruitment at every level for a student to be able to plan their bachelor's, master's, and specialist degrees at one institution where they can develop long-term relationships with faculty, staff, and fellow students.

Since Fall 2014, 90 students have graduated with a MEd in Leadership and Administration from Northern State University. That list was cross-referenced with the current school administrators with the following roles occupied by NSU MEd Leadership and Administration graduates:

- Principal: 18
- Assistant Principal: 3
- Superintendent: 4*
- Assistant Superintendent: 1*
- Special Education Director: 6
- Technology Coordinator: 2
- Curriculum Director: 6

- Assessment Coordinator: 3

By offering the EdS degree, Northern State University can offer our MSED in Leadership and Administration graduates a specific program, the EdS, where they can earn additional graduate credits beyond the master's degree. Offering the EdS enables Northern to better prepare our alumni to work as superintendents or assistant superintendents. Of the five individuals who earned a MSED in Leadership and Administration from Northern State University and who currently serve as superintendent or assistant superintendent, only two have earned a specialist degree and both earned their EdS from the University of Sioux Falls. See also the response to question 11.

[2] <https://sdlegislature.gov/Rules/Administrative/24:53:08:03>

[3] <https://sdbor.edu/about/>

[4] https://sdbor.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Factbook_2024-2.pdf

[5] <https://catalog.northern.edu/content.php?catoid=15&navoid=1268>

5. What modality/modalities will be used to offer the new program?

Note: The accreditation requirements of the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) require Board approval for a university to offer programs off-campus and through distance delivery.

	Yes/No	Intended Start Date	
On Campus	Yes	Fall 2025	
	Yes/No	Location(s)	Intended Start Date
Off Campus Location	Yes	Huron Community Campus	Fall 2025
	Yes/No	Delivery Method(s)	Intended Start Date
Distance Delivery	Yes	Online and HyFlex	Fall 2025

	Yes/No	Identify Institutions
Does another BOR institution already have authorization to offer the program online?	Yes	The University of South Dakota offers a Specialist in Education: Educational Administration and Leadership.

6. If the program will be offered through distance delivery, identify the planned instructional modality:

Both / HyFlex

Academic Quality

7. What peer institutions and current national standards will be referenced to develop the curriculum for this program? Include links to at least 3 comparable programs at peer institutions and links to national or accreditation standards, if any.

The curriculum for this program is developed to align with the District Level NELP Standards [6]

In addition, the requirements established by SD Administrative Rule for a school superintendent are addressed and integrated in the curriculum. [7]

Minnesota State University Moorhead [8]

Wayne State University [9]

University of Wisconsin Superior [10]

[6] <https://www.npbea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/NELP-DISTRICT-Standards.pdf>

[7] <https://sdlegislature.gov/Rules/Administrative/24:53:08>

[8] <https://navigator.mnstate.edu/Catalog/ViewCatalog.aspx?pageid=viewcatalog&catalogid=43&chapterid=629&loadusercredits=False>

[9] https://www.wsc.edu/info/20148/specialist_in_education_eds/1134/education_specialist_eds_program_of_study

[10] <https://online.uwsuper.edu/degrees/education/eds-educational-administration-superintendent/>

8. What program accreditation is available, if any?

CAEP (Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation) will be sought as well as approval from the SD Board of Education.

9. Will the proposed program pursue accreditation or certifications?

Yes

If no, why has the department elected not to pursue accreditation for the program?

N/A

Duplication and Competition

10. Do any related programs exist at other public universities in South Dakota?

*A list of existing programs is available through the university websites and the RIS Reporting: Academic Reports Database. If there are no related programs within the Regental system, indicate **none**.*

Yes, the University of South Dakota offers a Specialist in Education: Educational Administration and Leadership.

A. If yes, defend the need for an additional program within the state, Include IPEDS enrollment data and additional data as needed.

Superintendents have become the living embodiment of their schools; consequently, the role has become increasingly relationship-oriented, with superintendents needing to possess strong communication and interpersonal skills to rally entire communities behind a goal. The implications of COVID-19 on education have been substantial; the expansion of e-learning emerging as one of the most significant impacts. The aftermath of the pandemic, the teacher and administrator shortage, district location, and budget constraints have created the need for a different perspective of school superintendent preparation programs. Schools, especially in rural South Dakota, require administrators who are not only highly competent leaders but who are also savvy in e-leadership and who can differentiate the superintendency.

The need for this program is not necessarily due to unavailable space in other superintendent preparation programs in the state, but it is due to the unique nature of the curriculum. Most of South Dakota's 176 school districts are considered rural or located in rural settings. Research (pre- and post-pandemic) continues to show that needs within these rural communities and the challenges they face continue to grow (Pfankuch, 2019; Johnson & Pratt, 2024). Northern State University's Teacher Education Department is currently proposing the establishment of the Innovation in Rural Education Center (IREC), which will serve as the hub for rural education, teacher preparation specializing in rural education, and resources specific to the needs and challenges faced by rural communities.

Districts face a growing challenge in hiring a highly qualified school superintendent, especially in rural areas. When a rural school district cannot hire a qualified and effective superintendent, it impacts the community. Northern State University's Millicent Atkins School of Education appreciates the impact our alumni have on schools and communities. Dr. Mitchell Reed, Florence School Superintendent noted, "Northern State University serves as a catalyst and a resource to many rural school districts, not only in the northeast region but also across the state of South Dakota. I believe their background will offer a new and fresh perspective to up-and-coming administrators to help them serve in school districts in the state, especially those of rural nature." The changing landscape of education is creating an opportunity for Northern State University to rethink the preparation of school leaders.

Northern's unique curriculum will simultaneously provide credentials for school superintendent certification and train those individuals to be savvy users of innovative pedagogies in leadership, learning, and instruction that is focused on e-learning, e-leading, and the differentiated superintendent role. As Dr. Reed stated, "With a shortage of administrators and the number of openings that are projected to incur, finding different ways to attract and engage future administrators is crucial."

Furthermore, a natural pipeline exists for individuals who have earned their master's degree in Teaching and Learning from Northern through the Huron Community Campus cohort. Northern State University has a special partnership with Huron Community Campus that is recognized by the South Dakota Board of Regents. Northern State University is the higher education presence in Huron. Northern provides face to face instruction in Huron for associate degrees, the bachelor's of general studies, and the master's in Teaching and Learning. More than 200 educators have earned their master's degree from Northern State University at Huron Community Campus. Northern will recruit these alumni to earn their EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership.

NSU's Teacher Education Program has extensive experience facilitating a "Grow-Your-Own" apprenticeship approach with its BSEd in Secondary Education program. Feedback from the field indicates an interest in developing an apprenticeship option attached to the superintendent preparation program. The DOE has indicated that districts will often choose a "CEO" option for their top leaders rather than "superintendent," which means that the individual does not need to complete a superintendent preparation program or a specialist degree in education. While this route meets minimum qualifications and requirements, individuals who assume the role of CEO may not be trained and prepared to assume the role of the complexity of the superintendent's role. Offering a program that is tailored to address the unique and multi-faceted skill set needed to lead a school, especially in a rural area, with the option to complete as an apprentice, creates an authentic way for districts to potentially plan for succession and ensure a pipeline of well-trained and qualified individuals ready to assume superintendent roles when current leaders retire or move on.

NSU will seek approval for school superintendent as a new occupation through the United States Department of Labor and Regulation. Currently, NSU's Teacher Education Department is approved for a teacher apprentice pathway and in the process for a principal apprenticeship pathway. NSU is an approved sponsor of registered apprenticeship programs in South Dakota; utilizing the apprenticeship approach for superintendents to obtain their specialist degree and earn credentials for highly qualified status is effective and will be appealing.

Creating a second specialization, Learning, Instruction, and Strategy that is not intended for superintendent licensure creates an opportunity for educators to translate creativity in education into innovative learning experiences that explore approaches to learning that integrate technology with the global needs of learners. The addition of this specialization creates limitless possibilities for advancement in education, beyond school administration.

B. If yes, would this program be a candidate for Regental system collaboration?

Northern's EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership is specialized to Northern's E-Learning mission in both its E-Leadership focus and its HyFlex modality. The Millicent Atkins School of Education has a Professor of E-Learning on faculty as well as faculty who are qualified to teach superintendent preparation courses. The Millicent Atkins School of Education is pursuing recognition by the National Rural Education Association as South Dakota's only Rural Education Center, which will create research and scholarship opportunities for graduate students in this program. Opportunities for collaboration with other BOR institutions exist in courses that are common in content and are required for superintendents, including school finance.

11. Do any related programs exist at any non-Regental college or university within 150 miles of the university?

List those programs here:

The University of Sioux Falls, which is 158 miles from Northern State University, offers an Education Specialist degree.

A. If yes, use IPEDS to identify the enrollment in those programs.

The National Center for Education Statistics lists 21 completions at the University of Sioux Falls in 2021-2022. [11]
[11] <https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=university+of+sioux+falls&s=all&id=219383#enrolmt>

B. What evidence suggests there is unmet student demand for the proposed program, or that the proposed program would attract students away from the existing program?

Northern State University's Millicent Atkins School of Education completed an assessment of the academic qualifications, teaching credentials, and institutions of highest education attainment among the 176 current school district superintendents in South Dakota.

The SD Department of Education (SD Educator 411) lists information for 167 of those 176 school superintendents.

- 85 school superintendents hold a specialist degree in education. Among the 85 school superintendents with earned EdS degrees:
 - ** 28 degrees conferred by the University of South Dakota
 - ** 58 degrees conferred by the University of Sioux Falls
- 18 school superintendents have a master's degree as their highest credential and have obtained certification through alternative certification.
- 6 school superintendents have a master's degree as their highest credential and were able to qualify for the endorsement (which is a former qualification option).
- 10 school superintendents have a bachelor's or master's degree as their highest credential and have educator permits.
- 48 school superintendents have a doctoral degree as their highest credential.

Currently, 20% of the school superintendents in South Dakota do not have the required degree for highly qualified status as a career school superintendent (34 of the 167 with information listed on SD Educator 411). Because school districts need superintendents, alternative pathways were created to offer options.

The potential exists for Northern State University to attract students from South Dakota who are currently choosing a non-regental institution for their EdS degree, as well as attract Northern State University alumni in South Dakota, North Dakota, and western Minnesota. Northern State University's smaller graduate program and smaller school feel is similar to the University of Sioux Falls' smaller graduate program and smaller school feel. Graduate student enrollments at Northern State University and the University of Sioux Falls are closer to each other (493 at NSU and 269 at USF in fall 2022) and significantly lower than the University of South Dakota (2,724 graduate students in fall 2022). [12]

Northern will offer the specialist degree online with a Hy-Flex delivery method, which creates opportunities for students to have personal interactions and personal engagement with peers and faculty. Northern's HyFlex approach is also similar to the hybrid approach at the University of Sioux Falls.[13] Instead of a 100% online format, USF's program requires in-person attendance for particular classes which could also be motivation for students to select that program. The University of South Dakota's education specialist degree is offered only fully online. [14]

[12] National Center for Education Statistics. Fall 2022.

<https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=northern+state+university&s=all&id=219259#enrolmt>

<https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=university+of+sioux+falls&s=all&id=219383#enrolmt>

<https://nces.ed.gov/collegenavigator/?q=university+of+south+dakota&s=all&id=219471#enrolmt>

[13] University of Sioux Falls Education Specialist (EdS) - Principal or Superintendent. <https://www.usiouxfalls.edu/academics/school-of-education/education-specialist-principal-or-superintendent>

[14] University of South Dakota Education Administration and Leadership: School District Superintendent (EdS)
<https://www.usd.edu/Academics/Graduate-Programs/School-District-Superintendent>

Market Demand

This section establishes the market demand for the proposed program (eg Regental system need, institutional need, workforce need). Use the following sources for your data:

- [South Dakota Department of Labor & Regulation](#)
- [O-Net](#)
- [US Department of Labor Projections Central](#)
- SDBOR Workforce and Degree Gap Analysis Report

12. What is the expected growth of the industry or occupation in South Dakota and nationally?

Include the number of openings, as well as the percentage of growth when possible.

The SD Department of Labor and Regulation does not specify School Superintendent as a subset of Education Administrators. The SD Department of Labor and Regulation estimates the percentage of growth for Education Administrators, All Other to be 2.30% with an average of 6 annual openings, 2 due to exits and 4 due to transfers. The estimated percentage of growth for Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School is estimated to be 6.52% with an average of 51 annual openings, 16 due to exits, 31 due to transfers, and 4 due to annual change. [15]

The percentage of growth for Education Teachers, Postsecondary, according to the SD Department of Labor and Regulation is estimated to be 8.74% with an average of 19 average annual openings in South Dakota, 8 due to exits, 9 due to transfers, and 2 due to annual change. [16]

The US Department of Labor estimates the percentage of growth for Education Administrators, All Other to be 12.7% nationally 2020-2030 with an average of 4,500 openings per year. For Education Administrators, Elementary and Secondary School, the percentage of growth is estimated to be 7.8% with an average of 22, 100 openings per year. [17]

The percentage of growth, according to the US Department of Labor and Regulation for Education Teachers, Postsecondary is estimated to be 8.3% nationally with 7,200 average annual openings. [18]

O-Net identifies a projected growth in Education Teachers, Postsecondary in South Dakota to be 11% from 2020-2030. In the US, a projected growth of 4% is expected with 6200 annual openings. [19]

[15] South Dakota Department of Labor.

https://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/documents/projections/occupational_projections_2020_2030_statewide_south_dakota.pdf

[16] South Dakota Department of Labor.

https://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/documents/projections/occupational_projections_2020_2030_statewide_south_dakota.pdf

[17] United States Department of Labor. [https://projectionscentral.org/Projections/LongTerm?](https://projectionscentral.org/Projections/LongTerm?AreaName=&Name=&NameSelect%5B%5D=218&NameSelect%5B%5D=219&items_per_page=10)

[AreaName=&Name=&NameSelect%5B%5D=218&NameSelect%5B%5D=219&items_per_page=10](https://projectionscentral.org/Projections/LongTerm?AreaName=&Name=&NameSelect%5B%5D=218&NameSelect%5B%5D=219&items_per_page=10)

[18] United States Department of Labor. [https://projectionscentral.org/Projections/LongTerm?](https://projectionscentral.org/Projections/LongTerm?AreaName=&Name=Teacher&NameSelect%5B218%5D=218&NameSelect%5B219%5D=219&items_per_page=10&page=1)

[AreaName=&Name=Teacher&NameSelect%5B218%5D=218&NameSelect%5B219%5D=219&items_per_page=10&page=1](https://projectionscentral.org/Projections/LongTerm?AreaName=&Name=Teacher&NameSelect%5B218%5D=218&NameSelect%5B219%5D=219&items_per_page=10&page=1)

[19] ONet Online. <https://www.onetonline.org/link/localtrends/25-1081.00?st=SD>

13. What evidence, if any, suggests there are unfilled openings in South Dakota or nationally?

The Associated School Boards of South Dakota Teacher Placement website lists five searches for school superintendents, all in rural schools. [20]

According to Indeed.com, 84 positions for school superintendent and assistant superintendent are currently available nationally. [21]

In an article released in July, 2023, Keloland quoted SASD (School Administrators of South Dakota) Executive Director, Rob Monson, as stating, "There is certainly a need for more administrators and when a position opens, I would say that we see probably fewer applicants or fewer people that we can recruit into those positions." Monson also noted that there were 28 openings for superintendents in the state in 2023, and the positions were filled with administrators moving districts, referred to in the article as the "superintendent shuffle." [22]

To mitigate the "superintendent shuffle," to better prepare educators to serve as superintendents (see question 11.B), and to enable rural districts to grow their own superintendents, Northern State University will offer a structured apprenticeship model in the EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership aligns with the demands of educational leadership, providing candidates with firsthand exposure to the multifaceted responsibilities in the superintendent role. Through practical experiences, apprentices in this program will gain valuable insights into strategic planning, fiscal management, community engagement, and effective governance, supplementing their theoretical knowledge with real-world application. The apprenticeship pathway ensures a gradual and comprehensive development of leadership skills under the mentorship of experienced superintendents.

[20] <https://teachers.cometeachinsd.com/Jobs/Search>

[21] <https://www.indeed.com/jobs?q=school+district+superintendent&l=&vjk=04de312fad07bd26>

[22] <https://www.keloland.com/keloland-com-original/the-superintendent-shuffle/>

14. What salaries can program graduates expect to earn in South Dakota and nationally?

In South Dakota, the average salary program graduates can expect to earn is \$83,390. Across the nation, the average salary program graduates can expect to earn is \$106,690. [23]

A nationwide survey of more than 2,400 superintendents conducted by the School Superintendents Association (AASA) revealed that the median base salary for the 2022-2023 school year was \$145,000 for superintendents. [24]

[23] Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes119032.htm#>

[24] AASA The School Superintendents Association. 2022-2023 Superintendent Salary & Benefits Study. https://www.aasa.org/docs/default-source/resources/reports/2022-23-superintendent-salary-benefits-study-abridged-version.pdf?sfvrsn=3c42defe_5

15. Optional: Provide any additional evidence of regional demand for the program.

e.g. prospective student interest survey data, letters of support from employers, community needs...

See attached letters of support.

Student Demand

16. Provide evidence of student completers/graduates at that degree level at peer institutions that offer the same/similar program using data obtained from IPEDS.

Choose programs not already listed in question 11. Use the most recent year available.

University Name	State	Program Name	Number of Degrees Conferred in Program	Total Number of Conferrals at Level (Undergrad or Grad)
Minnesota State University Moorhead	MN : Minnesota	Specialist in Educational Leadership	29	50
Wayne State College	NE : Nebraska	School Administration/Educational Leadership	20	20
University of Sioux Falls	SD : South Dakota	Superintendency and Educational Administration	21	76

17. What evidence suggests there is interest from prospective students for this program at the university?

Please see attached letters of support.

Northern State University's Admissions/Graduate Studies request for information form does not list an EdS degree as an option. Since 2019, Northern State University has received nearly 150 inquiries about educational leadership and 67 have applied to the MEd in Leadership and Administration. It is not safe to assume all the unapplied inquiries were looking for a EdS degree, but we will use the list of unapplied inquiries plus the list of NSU MEd in Leadership and Administration alumni plus enrollment numbers of NSU alumni at the University of Sioux Falls EdS degree to estimate enrollments in Northern's EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership program.

Anecdotally, alumni of Northern State University master's degree programs regularly contact the Graduate Studies Coordinator and Millicent Atkins School of Education Dean and faculty about earning a EdS degree at Northern to prepare for a superintendent position or to intentionally earn additional graduate credits that apply to another degree beyond the master's.

Enrollment

18. Are students enrolling in this program expected to be new to the university or redirected from existing programs at the university?

Include the number of openings, as well as the percentage of growth when possible.

The students in this program will be new to the university. Educators who have graduated from master's degree programs at Northern will be recruited to the EdS in Innovative Pedagogical Leadership program.

19. Narrative Description of the preliminary estimates on annual enrollment in this program by year six

Include all students within the program, not just those new to the program.

A requirement of the SD Department of Education for teacher certification renewal is continuing education. Most schools in the state offer salary advancement for educators who earn advanced degrees. The specialist degree (EdS) is the next opportunity for motivated individuals who have already earned their master's degree to advance their career, gain new skills, and qualify for better pay. Developing a pathway for educators to obtain a specialist degree at a regionally comprehensive university like Northern will be attractive to prospective students because the program would 1) be locally relevant, 2) address regional and rural educational needs, 3) promote community engagement for potential school leaders by focusing on growing local talent, and 4) make advanced education accessible.

The enrollment in Northern's master's level graduate programs has grown by 49% between 2019-2023 and is at the highest it has ever been. As the numbers continue to soar, it becomes evident that there is a growing demand for advanced education within our academic community and region. Introducing a specialist degree will not only accommodate the increasing number of graduate students seeking advanced education but will also provide a path for those looking to specialize further. Adding a specialist degree will enhance Northern State University's commitment to academic excellence, meet the evolving needs of individuals in the education profession, provide credentials for superintendent certification, and solidify the University's position as a hub for rural education as well as comprehensive and advanced education in the region.

Dell Rapids School District

Quarrier Pride

We Empower Each Other to Excel

Board of Education

Troy Randall, President
Matt Weiland, Vice President
Jeff Traill
Lee Bollock
Paula Harvey

Administration

Dr. Donovan G. DeBoer, Superintendent
Drew Bunkers, 9-12 Principal
Larry Baker, 5-8 Principal
Linda Merkwan, K-4 Principal
Melissa Larsen, Special Education/Student Services Director
Jeff Krumm, Technology Director
John Silvernail, Activities Director/Facilities Manager
Barb Littel, Business Manager
Jennifer Ruesink, 9-12 Counselor
Sara Holmberg, 5-8 Counselor
Lindsey Peters, K-4 Counselor

January 11, 2024

South Dakota Board of Regents,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the proposed Specialist Degree in Education program at Northern State University, particularly given its alignment with the evolving demands placed on school superintendents, especially in the aftermath of the unprecedented challenges posed by COVID-19.

As a superintendent with a wealth of experience leading schools in South Dakota, I understand firsthand the importance of strong communication and interpersonal skills in rallying entire communities behind educational goals. The proposed program's emphasis on relationship-oriented leadership is a testament to the changing landscape of education, and it aligns seamlessly with the expectations that vary based on the size and location of the district.

The expansion of e-learning and virtual professional development is a significant outcome of the pandemic and underscores the need for a fresh perspective in superintendent preparation programs. I particularly appreciate the focus on e-leadership alongside traditional leadership, reflecting the growing importance of technology in education.

Having served as a principal in a remote rural area of Northwest South Dakota, I recognize the unique challenges faced by schools in such regions. The program's commitment to addressing the specific needs of rural superintendents is commendable and ensures that graduates are well-equipped to lead effectively in these environments.

Furthermore, as a proud representative of my alma mater, Northern State University, I am confident that this program will uphold the institution's commitment to academic excellence and produce graduates who are not only highly competent leaders but also adept in the nuances of modern educational leadership.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly support Dr. Schwan, endorse this program, and believe it will play a crucial role in shaping the next generation of superintendents who can navigate the complexities of education in our region.

Sincerely,
Dr. Donovan G. DeBoer
Go Wolves!!!

HAMLIN SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 28-3

P.O. BOX 298

HAYTI, SD 57241-2098

PHONE (605) 783-3631

FAX (605) 783-3632

JOE HOMOLA
BOARD PRESIDENT

JIM HULSCHER
SUPERINTENDENT

TERRI L. GAIKOWSKI
BUSINESS OFFICIAL

January 20, 2024

RE: Support of Northern State University's request to initiate Specialist Degree in Education

To Review team of the Board of Regents,

Northern State University is a leader in education in the state of South Dakota. Whether it be preparing teachers, professional development for staff, dual credit, e-learning for high school credits and many other areas of education to numerous to mention, Northern State University does an excellent job. It only makes sense that the leader in education and online instruction would have the ability to offer an online specialist degree in education. With the shortage of administrators in SD, NSU would offer a terrific opportunity for people in northeast SD looking to possibly join the superintendency field.

Northern State University turns out the best teachers on average in the state. If the teacher doesn't turn out to be good teacher for your district, NSU felt very disappointed and took it almost personally. They would continue to advise this student even years after they have graduated on improving their teaching abilities. NSU's teacher program prepares their teachers for success and even eliminates students from the field who are not equipped to be a teacher. NSU takes a lot of pride in their teaching program. I feel confident they would take a lot of pride in their specialist program. In this day and age, we need quality candidates not just candidates with a pulse. NSU will ensure to the best of their ability they are quality candidates.

Northern State University has been the leader in E-learning for years in our state. It first started with DDN and eventually transitioned to online coursework. Whether it was dual credit or coursework not offered at your local high school, high school principals have been turning to NSU for years to ensure that their high school students get the proper education. When these high school students were enrolled in NSU coursework, the NSU teachers and professors were great to work with and the students benefited from their splendid work. With the shortage of teachers and superintendents in the rural setting of our state, it only makes sense that the leader in E-learning would have the opportunity to offer a specialist degree for these leaders of the rural schools.

Having personally just moved from Doland School to Hamlin School, I was a part of Doland's hiring process in looking for my replacement. There was not an abundant number of quality candidates, and the majority of the candidates were in their later years in education close to retirement. In checking with other rural school openings, the same was at their schools as well. The state of South Dakota needs this opportunity and Northern State University will do an excellent job with it.

I would highly recommend Northern State University for this program. If you have any questions, I can gladly answer either via email (jim.hulscher@k12.sd.us) or via phone (605)783-3631.

Thanks



Jim Hulscher
Superintendent
Hamlin School

DUSTIN BLAHA
ELEMENTARY PRINCIPAL

JEFFREY SHEEHAN
MS/HIS PRINCIPAL

Don Kirkegaard, Retired Superintendent
12204 Washington Loop
Sturgis, SD 57785

605-228-7398 (cell)

Board of Regents

I am writing in support of NSU proposed Superintendent Specialist program. I recently retired from K-12 Education after 42 years in the field. During my tenure, I have noticed a drastic decline in the number of superintendent candidates for open positions across the state. I spent most of my career in Northeast SD and finished my career in Western SD. The shortage exists in all parts of the state in all sizes of schools.

I have had the opportunity to help several school districts in the superintendent selection process and the number of quality applicants for many of the positions is scary. I recently helped a small western school district, and the total number of applicants was one. A neighboring district is currently looking for a new superintendent and I believe there are less than 5 candidates. The stories are similar in all parts of the state. It is important to offer a program that not only attracts potential students but that will authentically prepare superintendents for the reality of what's needed across South Dakota.

The proposed NSU specialist program can help fill a need for K-12 schools in SD as well as the upper Midwest. The ability to take much of the program online or virtual is a bonus. Most administrators looking to complete their specialist program are currently principals and/or curriculum directors. The ability to take classes on campus is difficult. NSU is well known for their ability to deliver quality Hy-Flex and online opportunities and the Superintendent Specialist is a natural fit.

I believe that there is a need in SD for another Regents sponsored Superintendent Specialist Program and that NSU is the natural choice.

If I can be of any assistance or you want additional information and or comments, please let me know.

Good luck in the decision-making process.

Don Kirkegaard

January 5, 2024

To Whom It May Concern

I am pleased to have this opportunity to write a letter of support for the Specialist program proposal submitted by Dr. Anna Schwan. The Specialist degree in Education: Innovative Pedagogies in Leadership, Learning, and Instruction is an important and relevant program for the state of South Dakota. As a current faculty member involved in the Dakota Dreams Teacher Leadership Academy we recognize that there is a significant shortage of administrators in our state. Any effort to address this shortage should be viewed as a potential solution to a growing challenge in our state.

As was noted in the program proposal, South Dakota is a small state with most school districts categorized as rural. In these districts, the Superintendent will undoubtedly serve in a variety of roles to meet the administrative needs of the district. In addition to being an educational generalist, the Superintendent needs to be the lead learner and originator of innovative ideas to meet the needs of the district. Given the shortage of educators in South Dakota, it is more important than ever for the Superintendent to be a creative leader who is open to multiple ways to meet the educational needs of the district.

Northern State University is uniquely positioned to offer this program given its commitment to rural education in South Dakota and the region. Along with my colleagues in the Dakota Dreams Teacher Leadership Academy, we encourage your support of the Specialist Degree proposal offered by Dr. Anna Schwan.

Sincerely,

Rick Melmer Ed.D.
Dakota Dreams Teacher Leadership Academy



Ipswich Public School

510 2nd Ave, PO Box 306
Ipswich, SD 57451-0306
Elem. Ph: (605) 426-6832
HS Ph: (605) 426-6571
Admin Ph: (605) 426-6561
Fax: (605) 426-6029

...Dare to dream it, Work to achieve it...

Dear SDBOR,

I am writing this letter in enthusiastic support of Northern State University School of Education's proposed Specialists Program for the "Differentiated Superintendent". As a public school superintendent leading Ipswich Public School District in rural Ipswich, South Dakota. I recognize the critical importance of tailored preparation programs for educational leaders, especially those who are committed to serving in rural areas.

In Ipswich, and indeed throughout our state, there is a significant need for school superintendents. Over half of our school districts in South Dakota are classified as rural, and the challenges and expectations faced by leaders in these areas are unique. It is imperative that the preparation programs reflect the distinctive nature of rural leadership, encompassing the multifaceted responsibilities and the diverse set of skills required to effectively lead a rural school district. In rural schools, the superintendent often plays a multifunctional role, being the face of the district, the instructional leader, and the community liaison, among other responsibilities. The ability to navigate these diverse roles requires a specialized skill set, and I believe that NSU's program will play a pivotal role in developing leaders who can successfully meet these challenges head-on.

Moreover, with the advent of remote learning, the role of a superintendent has evolved, bringing forth new challenges and opportunities. The reality of remote learning, especially in rural areas with limited resources, underscores the need for superintendents who are not only adept at traditional leadership but also equipped to lead in the digital age. The program's focus on preparing superintendents to navigate these technological advancements aligns perfectly with the current and future needs of school districts.

In conclusion, I wholeheartedly endorse Dr. Schwan and NSU's Specialists Program for the "Differentiated Superintendent". The program's commitment to addressing the unique demands of rural leadership, its focus on differentiation, and its forward-thinking approach to emerging trends in education will make it a vital and timely initiative. I believe that graduates of this program will be exceptionally well-prepared to lead our rural school districts effectively, contributing to the continued success and growth of our educational communities.

Sincerely,

Trent Osborne
Superintendent
Ipswich Public School District

"The Ipswich School provides the opportunity for all students to achieve their maximum potential in a safe and positive environment encouraging them to become responsible lifelong learners."

FLORENCE SCHOOL DISTRICT 14-1

515 Main Ave · PO Box 66
Florence, SD 57235

Phone (605) 758-2412
Fax (605) 758-2433



Mitch Reed, SUPERINTENDENT · Alex DeVries, PRINCIPAL · Sherri Sumner, BUSINESS MANAGER

Letter of Support

South Dakota Board of Regents,

I am writing to you today to show my support for initiating the development of an Ed. S. program at Northern State University.

Currently, there are two Ed. S programs that I am aware of that serve the rising need of school administrators in the state. These programs, when I attended, required you to attend class one day a month to cover material and network with peers. Although the opportunity to meet people and build relationships with other future administrators was valuable, many potential administrators declined the opportunity because of things going on in their lives and the level of commitment that an Ed. S program takes.

The plan that is set out by Northern State University, a Hy-Flex, allows people to gain the valuable information that is provided by these classes and interact with classmates, all from the comfort of their home or office. With a shortage of administrators and the number of openings that are projected to incur, finding different ways to attract and engage future administrators is crucial. I am also very excited about how this program attracts administrators from rural school districts. Northern State University serves as a catalyst and a resource to many rural school districts, not only in the northeast region but also across the state of South Dakota. I believe their background will offer a new and fresh perspective to up-and-coming administrators to help them serve in school districts in the state, especially those of rural nature.

I appreciate your time and consideration for the new specialist program at Northern State University. I believe it would be a true asset to education across the state of South Dakota. If you have any questions or would like to talk further, don't hesitate to reach out at Mitchell.reed@k12.sd.us.

Sincerely,

Mitch Reed
Superintendent/Elementary Principal/Special Education Director
Florence School District



Tyler Severson

Athletic Director

605-216-3440(Cell)

605-225-6194

tyler.severson@k12.sd.us

To the South Dakota Board of Regents

As the leader in producing teachers in the state of South Dakota, Northern State University would tremendously benefit from adding a pathway for those interested in pursuing an Educational Specialist degree. Numerous Teachers and Principals across the state obtained both their bachelor's degree in education, and their Educational Leadership master's degree from Northern State University. Adding a program for a specialist degree would fit in nicely to what Northern State already offers.

With South Dakota being made up of mainly rural communities, there is a need to accommodate the way we teach to reach a vast and wide audience of students. With a focus on E-Learning and E-Leading, future Superintendents could learn how to best provide for their students in some of the most rural communities in the state that have difficulty attracting and retaining teachers. As a graduate of Northern State University in their Educational Leadership and Administration program, I would be very interested in potentially obtaining a Specialist Degree from Northern State University should such program be added.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Tyler Severson

High School Principal/Athletic Director – Warner High School