

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 Adaptive Leadership in Education

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/NTE : Teacher Education

Intended Date of Full Proposal Fall 2026

Planned CIP Code 13.0441

Program Description

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

The Education Specialist in Adaptive Leadership in Education is designed for educators seeking to advance their careers beyond the master's level and prepare for leadership roles that shape schools and districts. The program emphasizes strategic, forward-thinking leadership rooted in the needs of rural communities and responsive to emerging trends in digital learning and instructional innovation. Candidates will engage in focused study of policy, school operations, and visionary planning, building the expertise to lead effectively in complex and evolving educational systems. Graduates may specialize in School Superintendency, preparing for district-level leadership, or Learning, Instruction, and Innovation, focused on advancing teaching and learning through interdisciplinary research-based practices and new technologies.

Strategic Impact

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

The proposed Education Specialist in Adaptive Leadership in Education is deeply rooted in the missions, legacies, and strategic directions of both Northern State University and Black Hills State University. Northern State University has a long-standing commitment to educator preparation dating back to its founding in 1901 as Northern Normal and Industrial School, when it was established to prepare elementary and secondary teachers for South Dakota schools. That commitment remains central to Northern's identity today. Black Hills State University, founded as Dakota Territorial Normal School in 1883, similarly serves as a regional comprehensive institution dedicated to expanding access to higher education, promoting excellence in teaching, generating new knowledge, and preparing graduates who contribute meaningfully to their communities and the workforce. Together, these institutions share a strong commitment to serving the educational and workforce needs of South Dakota through accessible, high-quality academic programs.

While specialist degrees extend beyond either institution's current degree offerings, Board of Regents policy allows for such expansion when workforce and strategic needs are demonstrated and when institutions collaborate to serve the state effectively. South Dakota faces a pressing shortage of district-level leaders, particularly in rural areas, and this program responds directly to that need through the School Superintendency specialization, which prepares highly qualified leaders for the challenges of modern school and district administration. In parallel, the Learning, Instruction, and Innovation specialization addresses equally urgent needs by equipping educators with the expertise to strengthen teaching and learning through digital integration, instructional technology, and innovative practices that elevate student outcomes across diverse contexts.

The program aligns with both universities' commitments to expanding educational access and serving regional communities. Northern State University's emphasis on serving South Dakota and the broader region through innovative E-learning models complements Black Hills State University's focus on providing accessible, student-centered education and serving as an economic and workforce engine for western South Dakota. Offered through flexible delivery models including online and HyFlex options, the program will allow working professionals, particularly those in rural communities, to access advanced leadership preparation regardless of geographic location. This flexibility supports equitable access to advanced credentials while cultivating leaders skilled in navigating the realities of rural and digitally integrated learning environments. Of South Dakota's 66 counties, 30 are classified as rural, and these communities require leaders who are not only effective managers, but also adaptive, innovative, and responsive to the unique strengths and challenges of their districts.

The program also reflects the shared institutional values of collaboration, adaptability, excellence, and student-centered learning that guide decision making at both universities. By partnering in the development and delivery of this specialist degree, Northern State University and Black Hills State University strengthen their collective ability to respond to statewide workforce needs and support the preparation of future educational leaders.

Academically, the program complements and extends the educator preparation offerings currently available at both institutions. Northern State University prepares classroom teachers, special education teachers, and principals through a comprehensive suite of undergraduate and graduate programs, while Black Hills State University provides a wide array of baccalaureate and graduate programs that support regional workforce development and student success. The addition of a collaboratively supported specialist degree creates a coherent, vertically aligned continuum of leadership development, from initial licensure to school leadership to district-level leadership, while also expanding opportunities for advanced study in instructional innovation and digital learning. This alignment supports a holistic model of educator growth and reinforces the role of both institutions as key contributors to South Dakota's educator preparation and leadership development system.

Ultimately, the Education Specialist in Adaptive Leadership in Education advances the strategic priorities of both Northern State University and Black Hills State University while responding to real and urgent needs in South Dakota's education system. Through collaboration, flexible delivery, and alignment with workforce needs, the program strengthens the pipeline of educational leaders prepared to serve schools and communities across the state.

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?

The proposed Education Specialist in Adaptive Leadership in Education aligns strongly with the South Dakota Board of Regents' 2022–2027 Strategic Plan by advancing its core priorities: Access and Affordability, Academic Excellence and Educational Attainment, and Workforce and Economic Development.

A foundational belief in the BOR strategic plan affirms that "South Dakotans will need increased access to continuing education opportunities to upgrade their credentials while remaining in the workforce." This program directly supports that belief. Delivered through a flexible HyFlex model, it enables in-service teachers and administrators, especially those in rural or underserved communities, to pursue superintendent or district-level certification or advanced study in instructional leadership and innovation without leaving their current positions. This delivery model not only increases access but also supports affordability and student choice, aligning with Goal 2: Access and Affordability, which encourages expanded pathways to degree completion through innovative instructional and credentialing models. By allowing candidates to learn when and where it works for them, the program enhances opportunities for adult learners, current educators, and non-traditional students across South Dakota.

The program also supports Goal 3: Academic Excellence, Student Outcomes, and Educational Attainment. Building on NSU's and BHSU's long-standing strength in educator preparation, anchored by CAEP and SD Department of Education accreditation at the undergraduate and graduate

levels, this specialist degree extends academic quality to a new level. The School Superintendency specialization is aligned with the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) Standards for District-Level Leadership, ensuring rigorous preparation for educational leaders. The Learning, Instruction, and Innovation specialization complements this by equipping educators with advanced skills in digital learning, instructional technology, and evidence-based strategies to improve student achievement. Together, the two pathways ensure graduates are not only prepared to lead schools and districts, but also to transform teaching and learning in ways that directly improve outcomes for South Dakota students.

The program also aligns with Goal 4: Workforce and Economic Development by directly addressing the well-documented shortage of school administrators in South Dakota, particularly superintendents in rural areas. Of the state's 66 counties, 30 are classified as rural, and many of these districts struggle to recruit and retain leaders capable of navigating complex operational, instructional, and community expectations. The School Superintendency specialization prepares candidates to step confidently into these high-need leadership roles. At the same time, the learning and innovation specialization strengthens the broader educator workforce by supporting leaders who can design, implement, and evaluate innovative instructional models that better prepare South Dakota's students for college, careers, and community engagement in a rapidly changing economy.

Finally, the collaborative development of the program, designed in consultation with rural superintendents, district leaders, and other key stakeholders, demonstrates strong alignment with the BOR's priority to build workforce-responsive academic programs. By integrating national leadership standards, localized rural needs, and flexible delivery methods, the Education Specialist in Adaptive Leadership in Education supports student success, strengthens both the educational leadership and instructional innovation pipelines, and reinforces the role of both Northern State University and Black Hills State University as critical partners in advancing public education across South Dakota.

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.

The creation of a specialist in education degree in Adaptive Leadership in Education is necessary to meet both state-mandated credentialing requirements for individuals seeking certification as a preschool through grade 12 career school superintendent in South Dakota and the growing demand for advanced leadership in learning, instruction, and innovation.

According to South Dakota Administrative Rule § 24:53:08:03, candidates must complete either a specialist or doctoral degree as part of an approved superintendent preparation program. At present, Northern State University and Black Hills State University do not offer a specialist degree, which creates a structural barrier for aspiring superintendents in both regions who would otherwise continue their leadership training at NSU or BHSU. The School Superintendency specialization directly addresses this statutory requirement, offering a locally delivered, regionally attuned pathway that reduces barriers of cost, geography, and alignment to rural contexts.

At the same time, the Learning, Instruction, and Innovation specialization responds to another pressing need: preparing educational leaders who can transform teaching and learning through digital integration, instructional technology, and evidence-based practices. As schools across South Dakota navigate hybrid, remote, and technology-rich environments, there is a growing need for leaders who can design and sustain innovative instructional systems that improve outcomes for students in diverse contexts. This specialization ensures that NSU and BHSU graduates are not only qualified to lead districts but also prepared to lead change in classrooms and learning environments across the state.

In addition to fulfilling a clear credentialing requirement for superintendent licensure in South Dakota, the proposed specialist degree responds to a growing pipeline of qualified, mission-aligned educators who are ready to pursue the next step in their leadership journey. Since 2014, Northern State University has graduated 379 students with master's degrees in education-related fields, including:

- 89 completers in the Master of Science in Leadership and Administration,
- 269 in the Master of Science in Teaching and Learning, and
- 21 in the Master of Science in Educational Studies: Secondary Education.

Since 2014, Black Hills State University has graduated 365 students with master's degrees in education-related fields, including:

- 234 in the Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction, and
- 131 in the Master of Education in Reading.

These graduates represent a robust population of education professionals deeply rooted in South Dakota schools. Many now serve as principals, instructional leaders, curriculum directors, or special education administrators. With continued professional growth, a significant number are ready to pursue district-level leadership or advanced instructional innovation, but they currently lack access to a specialist program within the university that trained them.

As a regional comprehensive university, NSU is uniquely positioned to serve this population and BHSU similarly in their respective region. Alumni have consistently demonstrated a strong sense of institutional loyalty and a desire to continue their educational journey with their "home" school. They trust the quality of instruction, value the relationships they've built with faculty, and prefer a local option that reflects the realities of their schools and communities. The absence of a specialist program at NSU and BHSU creates a break in the leadership pipeline, forcing dedicated educators to leave the Regental system, often seeking private institutions to complete their preparation.

The proposed Education Specialist in Adaptive Leadership in Education offers a solution that is both accessible and aligned. It allows Northern and Black Hills to retain their own graduates, continue relationships with regional school districts, and strengthen the leadership development continuum that both institutions have spent decades building. By providing seamless, locally delivered, and regionally relevant pathways to district-level leadership and instructional innovation, the specialist degree ensures that aspiring leaders can remain in the schools and communities they serve, while pursuing credentials that will prepare them for the next level of responsibility.

NSU and BHSU are uniquely prepared to meet this need. The Millicent Atkins School of Education reports:

- 89% of faculty with terminal degrees;
- 100% with K-12 experience;
- Full CAEP accreditation at both bachelor's and master's levels.

The BHSU College of Education reports:

- 80% of faculty with terminal degrees;
- 93% with K-12 experience;
- Full CAEP accreditation at both bachelor's and master's levels.

And longstanding partnerships with South Dakota school districts, the Department of Education, and advisory councils.

Northern also specializes in HyFlex and flexible delivery models, making it possible for working educators to pursue advanced credentials while continuing to serve their communities. The proposed degree will include coursework and internship experiences aligned with the 2018 National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) District-Level Standards and best practices in instructional leadership, ensuring quality, rigor, and full alignment with state licensure expectations. In short, a new degree is essential because:

- It is required by state law for superintendent licensure;
- There is no such degree currently offered by NSU, the regional university serving northeast South Dakota or BHSU, the regional university serving western South Dakota;

- Demand for both superintendents and instructional innovators is urgent, particularly in rural districts.

And NSU and BHSU have both the capacity and responsibility to offer a high-quality, accessible program that supports South Dakota’s educational leadership pipeline. This degree is not just an academic expansion, it is a critical step toward building a stronger, more sustainable workforce of educational leaders for South Dakota’s schools and communities.

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 2027

	Yes/No	Location(s)	Intended Start Date
Off Campus Location	Yes	Huron Community College / Black Hills Rapid City campus	Fall 2027

	Yes/No	Delivery Method(s)	Intended Start Date
Distance Delivery	Yes	Online, HyFlex	Fall 2027

	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[1]. In addition, the requirements established by SD Administrative Rule [2] for a school superintendent are addressed and integrated in the curriculum.

Peers we will look at include:

Minnesota State University Moorhead [3]

Wayne State University [4]

University of Wisconsin Superior [5]

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

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

[3] <https://navigator.mnstate.edu/Catalog/ViewCatalog>

[4] <https://www.wsc.edu/education-specialist-degree>

[5] <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 today are not only educational leaders, but also public figures, crisis navigators, strategic visionaries, and community builders. Especially in rural areas, they often become the living embodiment of their schools and communities. The aftermath of COVID-19, alongside worsening teacher and administrator shortages, shifting delivery models, and increasing expectations from families and communities, has dramatically changed what is required of those preparing to enter the superintendency. Thirty of South Dakota's 66 counties are classified as rural, and these areas face the most acute challenges in attracting and retaining highly qualified, fully certified superintendents. In some districts, "CEO" models are used as a stopgap, placing individuals in critical leadership roles without the comprehensive preparation that a specialist degree provides. This is not a sustainable long-term solution.

The proposed Education Specialist in Adaptive Leadership in Education, developed collaboratively between Northern State University and Black Hills State University, represents a strategic expansion of access rather than a duplication of existing programs. Northern State University serves as the regional comprehensive institution for northeast South Dakota, while Black Hills State University fulfills a similar role for western South Dakota. By working together, the two institutions are well positioned to support educators across geographically distinct regions of the state and provide greater access to advanced leadership preparation within the Regental system.

Since 2014, Northern State University alone has awarded 379 master's degrees in education-related fields, including 89 in Leadership and Administration. Many of these graduates now serve as principals, instructional leaders, and program directors across South Dakota. A growing number are prepared to pursue district-level leadership but currently lack access to a specialist program through the institution that prepared them. At the same time, Black Hills State University serves a broad population of educators in western South Dakota who face similar barriers to accessing advanced leadership credentials. Together, the two universities provide a natural pipeline of experienced educators who are ready for the next stage of professional growth but require an accessible in-state pathway to complete the required credential.

Access alone, however, does not make this program essential. Its deep alignment with the future of school leadership and its grounding in the real-world needs of districts and educators are equally important. The School Superintendency specialization provides the statutory pathway required for licensure while embedding e-leadership, HyFlex principles, and applied internships into every aspect of preparation. In parallel, the Learning, Instruction, and Innovation specialization addresses an equally urgent need: developing leaders who can guide districts, schools, and organizations in adopting evidence-based instructional practices, integrating technology, and fostering continuous improvement in teaching and learning. Together, the two pathways ensure that graduates are not only qualified for district-level leadership but also equipped to transform instructional systems in ways that directly improve outcomes for South Dakota's students.

South Dakota has seen strong results from its "Grow Your Own" teacher initiatives, and a similar grassroots approach to preparing superintendents holds great promise for districts struggling to fill critical leadership roles. This program provides a clear pathway for current school administrators to earn the advanced degree and credentials required for superintendent certification while continuing to serve in their districts. The model ensures authentic, field-based learning experiences that directly connect preparation to the realities of leadership in South Dakota schools.

District leaders have already expressed strong support for expanding superintendent preparation opportunities within the state. As Dr. Mitchell Reed of Florence School District noted, "NSU 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. 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." This program directly responds to that call while expanding the reach of preparation through collaboration with Black Hills State University.

In addition, there is clear interest in the Learning, Instruction, and Innovation specialization, which focuses on advanced instructional leadership rather than administrative licensure. One current teacher recently reached out with the following inquiry:

"I am reaching out to inquire about the possibility of pursuing an Educational Specialist (Ed.S.) degree that focuses on teaching and learning rather than principalship or superintendency. As a dedicated teacher, I truly enjoy my current role, but I am searching for a program that will help me further develop my skills in both instruction and student learning. While I have found a few online programs offered out of state, I would prefer to continue my education through Northern State University. Both my bachelor's and master's degrees are from NSU, and I'd love the chance to keep furthering my education here."

The need for an additional program in South Dakota is therefore not simply about adding capacity. It is about expanding access, strengthening regional pathways, and responding to the evolving demands of educational leadership. Through collaboration between Northern State University and Black Hills State University, the proposed specialist degree will strengthen the preparation pipeline for superintendents and instructional leaders while ensuring that educators across the state have access to high-quality, regionally responsive advanced credentials.

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

Yes. The proposed Education Specialist in Adaptive Leadership in Education is designed to support collaboration within the South Dakota Board of Regents system.

The program itself is being developed through collaboration between Northern State University and Black Hills State University in order to expand access to specialist-level preparation for educators across different regions of the state. By leveraging the strengths and geographic reach of both institutions, the program will provide greater opportunities for working educators to pursue advanced leadership preparation without leaving their communities.

In addition, the program may serve as a natural pathway for individuals interested in completing a doctoral degree in school administration at the University of South Dakota. Because both programs align with the National Educational Leadership Preparation (NELP) District-Level Standards, the opportunity exists to create a coordinated leadership pipeline in which educators complete the specialist degree through the collaborative program and may later pursue doctoral study through USD. This type of alignment strengthens collaboration across the Regental system while supporting the preparation of highly qualified educational leaders for South Dakota schools.

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 13 Superintendency and Educational System Administration completionst at the University of Sioux Falls in 2023-2024. [6]

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

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?

An assessment of academic qualifications, teaching credentials, and institutions of highest educational attainment among South Dakota's 243 school district superintendents highlights clear evidence of unmet need. According to SD Department of Education's Educator 411 data, degree information is available for 212 of the 243 superintendents:

- 125 superintendents hold a specialist degree in education
 - o 50 from the University of South Dakota
 - o 65 from the University of Sioux Falls

This means that less than 50% of South Dakota's superintendents do not currently hold the specialist degree required for "highly qualified" status as a career school superintendent. Because of the demand for these positions, alternative pathways have been used to place candidates, creating a patchwork pipeline that does not fully meet state standards.

The data suggest two important conclusions:

- Unmet demand exists among current and aspiring superintendents who have advanced into these roles without completing the required credential.
- A market opportunity exists to attract students away from a non-Regental provider (USF) by offering a comparable degree within the Board of Regents system.

Northern could be well-positioned to fill this gap. Graduate enrollment at NSU (589 in Fall 2023) is robust and more comparable to the University of Sioux Falls (233) than to the much larger University of South Dakota. Students often prefer what is familiar, and NSU alumni, in particular, demonstrate strong loyalty to the institution, making them more likely to continue their advanced studies at Northern when given the opportunity. USF's delivery model includes required in-person attendance for certain courses, while Northern's proposed HyFlex model balances online accessibility with opportunities for personal interaction. This distinction directly addresses a major factor influencing student choice and could draw prospective students who want flexibility without losing the benefits of engagement.

Together, these factors demonstrate both unmet demand for specialist-level preparation and a realistic opportunity for Northern and Black Hills State University to serve students who might otherwise turn to non-Regental programs.

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. [7]

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.

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. [8]

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. [9]

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. [10]

While projections related to superintendent preparation are important, the proposed Education Specialist in Adaptive Leadership in Education also includes a Learning, Instruction, and Innovation specialization that serves a broader segment of the educator workforce. Unlike the School Superintendency specialization, which is designed for individuals pursuing district-level administrative licensure, the Learning, Instruction, and Innovation pathway is intentionally flexible and applicable to a wide range of professional roles. This specialization supports classroom teachers, instructional coaches, curriculum directors, technology integration specialists, and other educators seeking advanced expertise in teaching, learning, and instructional leadership.

Because the specialization focuses on instructional innovation, digital learning, and research-based improvement of teaching practices, it is relevant to educators across grade levels and settings. In an era of rapidly evolving instructional technologies, hybrid learning environments, and increasing expectations for student outcomes, school systems require leaders who can guide instructional improvement even if they do not hold formal administrative positions. As a result, demand for advanced credentials that strengthen instructional leadership capacity extends well beyond superintendent preparation and reflects broader workforce needs within K-12 education. For many educators, the Ed.S. will serve not only as preparation for formal leadership roles but also as an opportunity to deepen instructional expertise and advance within the profession without leaving the classroom.

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

[8] <https://projectionscentral.org/Projections/LongTerm>

[9] <https://projectionscentral.org/home>

[10] <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?

While September does not typically show a high number of superintendent vacancies, since most positions are filled prior to the start of the school year, the underlying evidence still points to an urgent and ongoing need for leaders. At the national level, a current search on Indeed.com lists 17 superintendent positions open across the country, underscoring the competitive market for qualified candidates.

Closer to home, the challenge is even more pronounced. In a July 2023 article, Keloland quoted School Administrators of South Dakota (SASD) Executive Director Rob Monson, who stated: “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 highlighted that 28 superintendent positions opened in South Dakota in 2023 alone, nearly one-sixth of the state’s 176 districts. These vacancies were not the result of new leaders entering the pipeline; instead, they were filled almost entirely by administrators moving from one district to another, a phenomenon the article referred to as the “superintendent shuffle.”

This pattern illustrates two critical realities. First, the supply of qualified superintendents is not expanding, but rather being redistributed among districts. Second, rural and smaller districts often find themselves at a disadvantage, losing leaders to larger systems with greater resources. Even when every position is technically “filled” by September, the churn of leadership and shrinking applicant pools reveal a system stretched thin. The

need is therefore not measured only by current job postings, but by the fragility of the leadership pipeline itself, one that urgently requires investment in new, adaptive leaders to sustain South Dakota's schools.

At the same time, demand for advanced preparation in instructional leadership and innovation extends beyond superintendent vacancies alone. Many school systems are increasingly relying on instructional coaches, curriculum leaders, technology integration specialists, and teacher leaders to support improvement in teaching and learning. These roles often require advanced graduate preparation but do not necessarily lead to administrative licensure. The Learning, Instruction, and Innovation specialization within the proposed Education Specialist degree responds to this broader workforce need by providing experienced educators with advanced expertise in instructional improvement, digital learning, and systems-level change. For many educators, the Ed.S. will serve not only as preparation for district leadership but also as a pathway to strengthen instructional leadership within schools while remaining in classroom or teacher-leader roles.

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

In South Dakota, program graduates can expect to earn a salary of \$83,390 [11]

[11] <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes119032.htm#>

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...

Please see attached letters from Trent Osborne, Mitchell Reed, Jim Hulscher, Donovan DeBoer, Don Kirkegaard, and Rick Melmer.

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 Moorhead	MN :	Specialist in Educational Leadership	39	44
Wayne State College	NE : Nebraska	School Administration / Educational Leadership	10	20
Pittsburg State University	KS : Kansas	Educational Administration	20	41

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

Please see the attached letter from Tyler Severson as an example.

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 are expected to be new to the university and neither NSU or BHSU expects new students to be re-directed from other programs at the university.

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.

The Education Specialist in Adaptive Leadership in Education is designed to serve educators who have already earned master's degrees and are seeking advanced credentials, superintendent certification, or expanded leadership expertise. With teacher certification renewal in South Dakota requiring continuing education, and most districts offering salary advancement for advanced degrees, a locally delivered Ed.S. program at Northern and BHSU will provide a natural pathway for ambitious educators to advance their careers while continuing to serve their schools and communities.

Northern's graduate programs have shown strong growth, enrollment in master's-level programs has increased 49% between 2019 and 2023, demonstrating sustained regional demand for advanced education. Building on this pipeline and given that the University of Sioux Falls awarded 13 Ed.S. degrees in 2024, Northern projects a similar trajectory, especially as the only Regental institution positioned to serve the northeast region of the state.

Projected Enrollment by Year Six (all students, not just new):

- Year 1: 5–6 students (pilot cohort)
- Year 2: 8–10 students
- Year 3: 10–12 students
- Year 4: 12–14 students
- Year 5: 13–15 students
- Year 6: 14–16 students

By Year Six, total enrollment is expected to stabilize at 14–16 students across both specializations. This mirrors statewide demand, aligns with USF's current output, and reflects realistic capacity given South Dakota's educator workforce.

This level of enrollment is sustainable, comparable to existing programs, and ensures Northern will contribute meaningfully to South Dakota's leadership pipeline without oversaturating the field.