

# Going the Distance:

Monthly News & Updates

March 2023

## SmartLab Program to Transition from NDCDE to Direct Vendor Support

NDCDE has recently undergone several organizational changes, allowing us to reevaluate the scope of our services based on district needs. In October, NDCDE conducted a [needs assessment survey](#) sent to all North Dakota Public School Districts, finding that SmartLabs were our least-in-demand service. Meanwhile, statewide needs related to our primary service, virtual instruction, continue to grow, with our enrollment increasing significantly from pre-pandemic levels. To ensure we are meeting the online instructional needs of North Dakota schools, NDCDE has consequently decided to phase out its SmartLabs program, ending all in-house services on June 30, 2023.

This does not mean that the SmartLab program is ending. Instead, NDCDE is working with existing and new vendors to ensure options are available to maintain all existing SmartLab services from installation to ongoing maintenance. As NDCDE identifies these options through third parties, it is advocating for fair and reasonable vendor pricing and working to identify curricular options to guide student instruction in the labs.

From now through June 30, Ryan Moran, NDCDE's SmartLab specialist, remains dedicated to answering questions and providing level-one SmartLab support services. Ryan will then become a support specialist for our learning management system. On Thursday, March 30, from 2:00-3:00 pm, NDCDE will meet with SmartLab schools to answer questions concerning the transition. Contact Dr. Alyssa Martin if you would like to attend or view the recording: [alyssa.martin@k12.nd.us](mailto:alyssa.martin@k12.nd.us).

## EmpowerU Program Yielding Outstanding Student Outcomes

NDCDE continues to offer EmpowerU courses, with DPI covering 50% of course costs through May 30, 2023. These courses teach students resiliency, self-direction, and goal-attainment skills. NDCDE recently analyzed student outcomes in these courses, with 95% reaching self-goals set at the outset of their enrollment.

Click the image on the right to see all of our EmpowerU outcomes to date. Districts can enroll their students in the courses, using the links below:

- [Middle School EmpowerU Course](#)
- [High School EmpowerU Course](#)

EMPOWERU PROGRAM

**SUMMARY:**  
In response to the increasing need for student mental health support, exacerbated by the pandemic, the ND Center for Distance Education partnered with curriculum provider EmpowerU to deliver 1), Tier 2 social and emotional health education to ND students through a grant, offering school districts a 50% match on course costs for each student enrolled.

EmpowerU aligns its content with CASEL and National Health and Wellness standards, weaving together evidence-based strategies, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), and a wellness focus with therapeutic coaching methodology. CDE offered EmpowerU's middle and high school courses to ND students as wellness electives.

GOAL	IMPLEMENTATION STEPS	OUTCOME
Enroll 50-100 ND students in EmpowerU courses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through CDE's website, social media, newsletter, and targeted emails, promote EmpowerU at least quarterly.</li> <li>Schedule webinars for counselors and administrators to learn about the service.</li> </ul>	Enrollments in EmpowerU courses through CDE are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21-22: 93</li> <li>22-23 (in progress): 26</li> </ul> Total enrollments: 119 <span style="float: right;"><b>MET</b> ✓</span>
Achieve an 80% EmpowerU course completion rate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require that school districts assign a learning coach for each enrolled student to help monitor student progress.</li> <li>Monitor student completion rates through CDE dashboards and reports.</li> <li>Require EmpowerU teachers to engage in regular communication with students.</li> </ul>	Completions in Empower courses through CDE are as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>21-22: 98.8%</li> <li>22-23 (in progress): 83% (20 active)</li> </ul> Average completions (years 1-2): 89.9% <span style="float: right;"><b>MET</b> ✓</span>
Demonstrate that 95% of all completing students show marked growth in EmpowerU outcomes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Verify the use of valid and reliable pre- and post-assessments in EmpowerU courses.</li> <li>Monitor pre- and post-assessment findings.</li> <li>Use additional assessment tools such as end-of-course surveys to help further verify findings on student outcomes.</li> </ul>	Percentage of students who made progress in their goal area (based on pre- and post-assessments): 21-22: 91%; 22-23: 100%; Average 95.5%. In the end-of-course surveys, 95% of learners agreed to strongly agreed that they gained knowledge or skills in EmpowerU courses. <span style="float: right;"><b>MET</b> ✓</span>



## In the Spotlight: Thanking Dr. Greywind for 18 years of service



Dr. Tonya Greywind

After 18 years with CDE, Dr. Tonya Greywind has accepted the position of community-based operations director with Nexus-PATH in Fargo. Her last day as the CDE assistant director was March 10, 2023. While at CDE, Dr. Greywind spearheaded several initiatives that helped the organization grow, including SmartLabs, dual credit, driver's education, and, most recently, developed and implemented the elementary program at the height of the pandemic. She acted as an instrumental voice in virtual education, presenting at statewide educational conferences and the national Digital Learning Collaborative and Virtual Learning Leadership Alliance conferences. She assisted with writing state administrative code on virtual schools. Dr. Greywind continues to serve as an adjunct for CDE through the end of the school year and can still be reached at [tonya.greywind@k12.nd.us](mailto:tonya.greywind@k12.nd.us). CDE is grateful to Dr. Greywind for her service and extends congratulations on her new exciting role.

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## News Briefs

## HB 1398 Passes: CDE's Next Steps

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### CDE Prepares for Summer Driver's Ed Rush

With summer just around the corner, schools are preparing for peek season for educating new drivers. NDCDE has a partnership with North Dakota Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (NDDTSEA), under which we provide our learning management system (LMS) and technical support services to help driver's education teachers throughout the state deliver online driver's education developed by NDDTSEA. NDCDE recently attended this organization's annual conference to guide teachers on using our LMS and proactively troubleshoot common tickets that we receive from teachers and students when taking this course. Hundreds of students receive driver's education through this partnership annually. To view all the schools and independent driving schools participating in this program, visit our [NDDTSEA Driver's Education Dashboard](#). If you would like information on offering the driver's ed course through your school/organization, please complete the [Driver's Education Course Request Form](#).

HB 1398, commonly called the cybersecurity education bill, has been approved by the ND legislature. It will require all approved schools in the state to provide computer science and cybersecurity instruction to elementary and middle school students. At the high school level, approved schools must make available one unit of computer science or cybersecurity. This unit, which can be fulfilled by completing courses in math or science focused on these content areas or requirements in a school board-developed integration plan, will become a graduation requirement after July 31, 2025. NDCDE advocated for this legislation based on [numerous studies](#) that found correlations between offering computer science content and improved student learning gains.

To help schools implement this new law, NDCDE is taking the following steps:

- CDE already offers an elementary scratch coding course and is currently piloting additional elementary curricula to provide young learners with various options for learning the basics of cybersecurity and computer science.
- CDE offers a full year of coding at the middle school level and is working with curriculum vendors to identify additional opportunities to expand its offerings at this level.
- Within our high school curriculum, CDE offers two full years of coding courses and one year of cybersecurity coursework. It is actively working with several educational and industry partners to expand technology curricular pathways to secondary learners.

CDE plans to scale its current offerings to meet the demand for the courses covered by HB 1398. Watch for additional information on CDE course offerings and adjunct teacher hiring announcements for cybersecurity and computer science in this newsletter in upcoming months,