

# Site Visit to Northern Cass

## Exploring Personalized & Competency Based Learning



Key Takeaways and Implications for Pipestone Area Schools

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# Purpose of the Visit

- To learn about and observe personalized and competency based learning in action
- Northern Cass is a high-performing model already implementing a similar system

## Trip Overview:

- Classroom observations (K–12)
- Meetings with teachers and district leaders
- Meetings with student focus groups
- Team members who attended: From Elementary - Dr. Willert, Jennifer Moravetz, Lisa Pease, Emily Speer, Emily VanHoecke, Jenn Weber, Kris Reinhard, Samantha Terry, Emily VanHoecke, Stacy Lane, Danielle Bauman, and Megan VanDyke



# Demographics

## Pipestone Elementary

- PreK - 5
- 619 students
- 82 staff
- 94.1% Attendance
- Open enrollment in - 14 students
- Open enrollment out - 90 students
- 50.7% low income
- 24.4% students IEPs/504s

## Northern Cass District

- PreK - 12
- 724 students
- 63 staff
- 96% Attendance
- 36% open enrollment
- 6% low income
- 16% IEPs

# What We Observed – The District in Action

Key program components we saw:

- Student goals and teacher goals
  - Goals were posted and visible everywhere
  - Goals were revisited often and progress was tracked
  - Goals were both behavior and academic
- Big 5
  - 5 priority standards that learners must master in each subject per level (grades)
  - Most essential learning targets
  - Students have to show proficiency in each of the Big 5 - allows for mastery of the skill.
- Learner Agency - learners show/take ownership of their learning
  - Not just choosing between two activities/options but understanding what they need to learn, able to make the decision about how they learn it, reflecting on progress, and adjusting when something isn't working for them.
- Example
  - Data driven
  - Student Data Tracking Binder
    - Learners often met with educators to visit learner data together
    - Learners were very aware of how they were performing academically and where they needed to be

# Goal Setting Display



name: Henry

Goals I am interested in.

1. Pack up truck
2. Write book
- 3.

**Goal Getter!**

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| DATE MET:                |  |
| Date Met: <u>3-12-20</u> |  |
| Date Met:                |  |
| Date Met:                |  |
| Date Met:                |  |

**Goals I've met!**

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Date Met: |  |
| Date Met: |  |



# The Big 5

## The 'Big 5'

TEACHER GUIDE


# JAGUARS

Art 7

These are the 5 essential priority standards/elements that earn a score of a 5.

For all other priority standards, must demonstrate growth in each standard and avoid missing assignments while scoring a minimum of a 2.

- 1 Elements of Art**  
VA-D.1.7 Apply organizational strategies to design and produce a work of art that clearly communicates information or ideas.
- 2 Drawing**  
VA-DQ.1.7a Demonstrate persistence in developing skills with various materials, mediums, and approaches in creating works of art or design.
- 3 Painting**  
VA-D.1.7a Apply methods to overcome creative blocks.
- 4 Ceramics**  
VA-D.1.7 Apply and describe criteria to guide making a work of art or design to meet an identified goal.
- 5 Reflection**  
VA-D.1.7 Reflect on and explain important information about personal artwork in a self-statement or another format.



### Child Development School Age Project Rubric

Create and present a child-focused lesson or activity for children ages 6-10. Include a visual component (table or poster) and a hands-on activity. Project should demonstrate an understanding of child development and real-world application.

| Criteria  | 1 - Beginning                       | 2 - Developing                      | 3 - Proficient                                     | 4 - Exemplary                                       |
|---|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| Understanding of Child Development (Ages 7-10)                                  | Limited or inaccurate understanding | Somewhat accurate with minor errors | Accurate and age-appropriate                       | In-depth and thorough understanding                 |
| Lesson/Activity Design<br><small>*Should not be 30-45 minutes</small>           | Unclear or not age-appropriate      | Somewhat clear, needs adjustments   | Clear and age-appropriate                          | Creative, meaningful, and well-suited for age group |
| Visual Presentation<br><small>*Minimum of 6 slides</small>                      | Disorganized or missing elements    | Somewhat organized, lacks clarity   | Clear, clear, and supports topic                   | Highly engaging and enhances learning               |
| Student Delivery & Explanation  | Unclear or unprepared               | Somewhat prepared, lacks confidence | Clear and prepared                                 | Confident, well-rehearsed, and engaging             |
| Connection to Standards/Real Life<br><small>*Should use Age Appropriate</small> | No clear connections                | Some connection, not well explained | Clearly connects to child development or real life | Strong, meaningful application of concepts          |
| Professionalism & Collaboration   | Minimal effort, poor teamwork       | Inconsistent participation          | Professional and collaborative                     | Excellent teamwork and initiative shown             |



# Photos - Data Binders - Math

Northern Cass Elementary Benchmark Assessment Tracking  
2025-2026

Level 2 Learner Name: Henry #

**aimsworld Plus Math**

|      |                        |        |                        |        |
|------|------------------------|--------|------------------------|--------|
| ↑    |                        | ↑      |                        | ↑      |
| 🎯    | 151-152                | 🎯      | 155-200                | 🎯      |
| ↓    |                        | ↓      |                        | ↓      |
| Fall | My score is <u>152</u> | Winter | My score is <u>153</u> | Spring |

**aimsworld Plus Reading**

|      |                        |        |                        |        |
|------|------------------------|--------|------------------------|--------|
| ↑    |                        | ↑      |                        | ↑      |
| 🎯    | 292-302                | 🎯      | 343-400                | 🎯      |
| ↓    |                        | ↓      |                        | ↓      |
| Fall | My score is <u>302</u> | Winter | My score is <u>353</u> | Spring |

**Level 2 Math Scales**

name Henry

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| 100-200 whole and one-digit numbers                              | 100-200 hundred, tens and ones                     | 100-200 and write numbers 100-200 in words         |
|  |  |  |
| 100-200 compare two three-digit numbers using comparison symbols | 100-200 compare numbers within 100                 | 100-200 compare two-digit numbers with 100         |
|  |  |  |
| 100-200 add, subtract, multiply, divide within 100               | 100-200 add, subtract, multiply, divide within 100 | 100-200 add, subtract, multiply, divide within 100 |
|  |  |  |
| 1 2 3 4  | 1 2 3 4  | 1 2 3 4  |
| 100-200 multiply and divide within 100                           | 100-200 multiply and divide within 100             | 100-200 multiply and divide within 100             |
|  |  |  |
| 1 2 3 4  | 1 2 3 4  | 1 2 3 4  |

**Math FOCI Lab Tracker**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| I CAN READ AND WRITE NUMBERS WITHIN 100. |  |  |  |  |  |

**Math FOCI Lab Tracker**

|                                       |  |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
|                                       |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                       |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                       |  |  |  |  |  |
|                                       |  |  |  |  |  |
| I CAN MULTIPLY AND DIVIDE WITHIN 100. |  |  |  |  |  |

# Photos - Data Binders - ELA

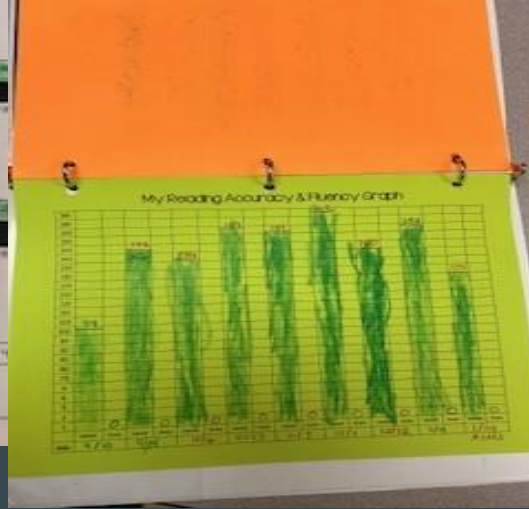
### Level 2 Writing Scales

| Narrative   |   |   |   |   | Opinion  |   |   |   |   | Informative   |   |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| <p>I can write narrative pieces that describe a well-elaborated event in sequence.</p>                    |   |   |   |   | <p>I can write opinion pieces on a topic using reasons to support the opinion.</p> |   |   |   |   | <p>I can write informative pieces that include factual details on the topic.</p>  |   |  |  |  |
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2  | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3   | 4 |  |  |  |
| <p>I can participate in shared research or science observations, book reports, reader responses, etc.</p> |   |   |   |   | <p>I can use the 5-step writing process to develop and strengthen my writing.</p>  |   |   |   |   | <p>Writing Foundations</p> <p>Aa Bb Cc Dd<br/>Ee Ff Gg Hh<br/>Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm<br/>Nn Oo Pp Qq<br/>Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv<br/>Ww Xx Yy Zz</p> <p>I can write uppercase and lowercase letters accurately and automatically for all writing purposes.</p> |   |  |  |  |
| 1   | 2 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2  | 3 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3   | 4 |  |  |  |
| name _____  |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |
| Henry   |   |   |   |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |

### Superkids Spelling #1

### Level 2 Reading Scales

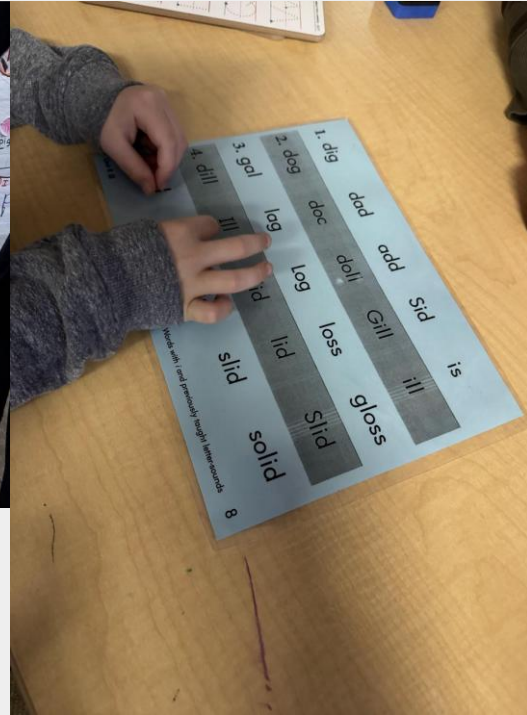
| Beginning of the Year  |   |   | Middle of the Year                                |   |   | End of the Year                                   |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <p>I can read fluently and accurately on grade-level text.</p> |   |   | <p>I can read accurately on grade-level text.</p> |   |   | <p>I can read accurately on grade-level text.</p> |   |   |   |   |   |
| 1  | 2 | 3 | 4   | 1 | 2 | 3   | 4 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| name _____   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Henry  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |



# POSITIVE SCHOOL CLIMATE

- Very positive!
- Words of encouragement in the bathrooms
- Book recommendations in bathroom stalls
- Teacher Information outside of their classrooms (favorites, goals, education)

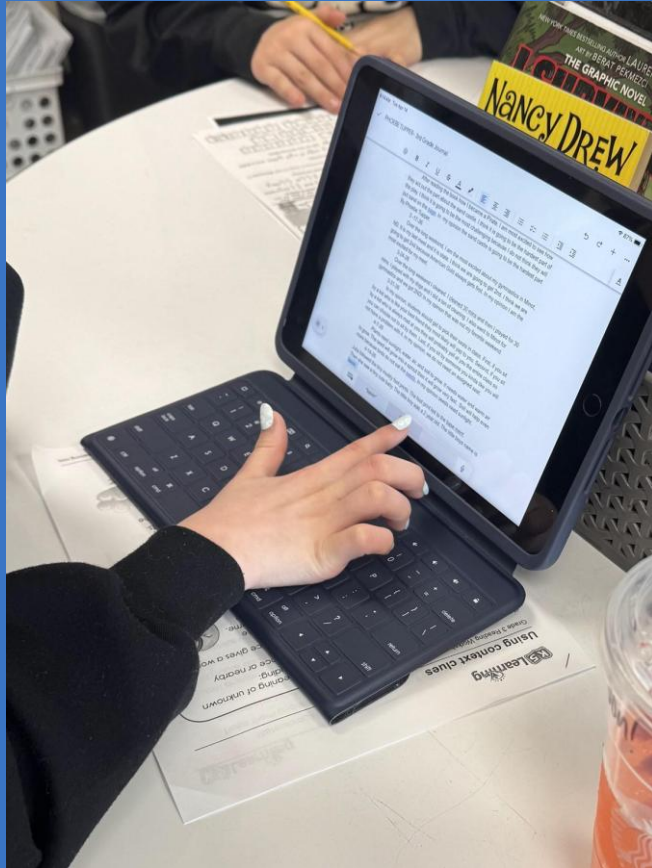




## Preschool Classroom

All day - every day  
Attend specials

Small group centers for one hour in the morning  
Para support in room  
Teacher & para working individually with students



# 3rd Grade - WIN TIME

- Must Do - May Do Choice Board
- Daily writing prompt
- Responded with a typed paragraph

**ELA WIN Time**

| Must Do  | Groups   | May Do   |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Finish Typing Tuesday</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Using Context Clues packet</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Teacher Toads Reading Mystery</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> ORF with educator when called</li></ul> | <p>Haseleu:</p> <p>Margerum:</p> <p>Ellegard: Baier, Riley, Tyllulah</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● silent read</li><li>● free write</li><li>● activity page</li></ul> |

0

Using context clues

Learning

COM

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# Kindergarten Classroom









- Learning targets stated & reviewed with class
- Direct instruction to whole group
- Leveled readers in each student's folder
- Leveled WIN time drawers

**LEARNING TARGETS**





















- I can make the sound for Xx, Yy .
- I can identify the letter Xx, Yy .
- I can read emergent texts.
- I can read heart words.

© Miss Gamba Little Learners

K.F.12b **State** letter sounds in isolation

| Score  | Proficiency Scale  | Learner Evidence  |
|--|--|---|
| <p><b>4</b><br/>Extending</p>     | <p>I can <b>say</b> letter sounds with fluency.<br/>(85% or above an AIMS)</p>   |    |
| <p><b>3</b> ★<br/>Proficient</p>  | <p>I can <b>say</b> the letter sounds.</p>   |    |
| <p><b>2</b><br/>Foundational</p>  | <p>I can <b>recall</b> vocabulary, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consonant, vowel, long vowel, short vowel</li> </ul> <p>I can <b>say</b> some of the letter sounds.</p> | <p>consonant<br/>vowel<br/>long vowel<br/>short vowel</p> <p>" means ..."</p>  |
| <p><b>1</b><br/>Emergent</p>      | <p>I can do 2 or 3 score content with significant help.</p>  |    |

# GOALS

|   |  |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <p>David's Goal</p> <p>be a book challenge</p>         | <p>Avery's Goal</p> <p>Read 3 or 3 books a week</p>         | <p>Emma's Goal</p>                                      | <p>Violet's Goal</p> <p>get on alex path 4th grade advanced</p>            | <p>Will's Goal</p> <p>Finish 40 books a week</p>   |
| <p>Blakely's Goal</p> <p>finish 40 book challenge</p>  | <p>Kamden's Goal</p> <p>help a student with a reading</p>   | <p>Duncan's Goal</p> <p>be kind</p>                     | <p>Bristol's Goal</p> <p>finish 40 book challenge</p>                      | <p>Beck's Goal</p> <p>finish 40 books a week</p>   |
| <p>Rayna's Goal</p> <p>get to 85 on alex path</p>      | <p>Norah's Goal</p> <p>Be a GOOD Role Model!</p>            | <p>Addi's Goal</p> <p>Read at least 3 books a week</p>  | <p>Dalton's Goal</p> <p>10 Dash challenges</p>                             | <p>Lucas's Goal</p> <p>finish 40 books a week</p>  |
| <p>Bryn's Goal</p> <p>Be a good role Model!</p>        | <p>Charlotte's Goal</p> <p>Read 8 or more books a week</p>  | <p>Natalie's Goal</p> <p>finish 40 book challenge</p>  | <p>Pearl's Goal</p> <p>finish 40 Book Challenge</p> <p>36 books read</p>  | <p>Jude's Goal</p> <p>40 book challenge</p>       |

# Kindergarten Takeaways

- Students were very goal driven
- Students had great time management skills
- Students social skills were very advanced
- Limited worksheets & technology
- Class sizes 18 students max
- Multiple opportunities to show what they know
- Balance of control (educators/learners)
- Students were given opportunities to fail
- Focused on standards - not following curriculum
- Subs - teachers absorbed students (teachers preferred this)
- Minimal behaviors - all students were engaged because of choices!
- Learners experienced real life opportunities before graduating (service hours, internships)
- These are the experiences I would want my children (and ALL children) to have when they attend school.
- We are doing so much of this already!

# 5th Grade Takeaways..

- Increased student engagement = decreased student behaviors
- Common Language throughout their system - “our system”
  - Students referenced: I Learn (note days - direct instruction) , I Practice, I Show (final assessment)
- Students took ownership and pride in their learning
- Goals matter and so does reflection
- DJ Slider with control of classroom
- Positive culture and environment
- Everyone wanted to be there
- Skills > Content
- Cross-grade Collaboration
- Students referenced: iLearn, iPractice, iShow
- SEL was supported and integrated throughout the school
- Personalized Learning: If it is best practice for one, why not do it for all?”
- “Brave before Perfect”

# Student Quotes

- 12th Grade Male Student
  - Open enrolled from Fargo where my GPA was 2.6--I didn't care about school--no one did, and classes sucked.
  - At NCHS I now have a 3.8 GPA. I want to be a DOCTOR!
- 11th Grade Female Student
  - We have the same education as kids in other schools, we just have way more flexibility doing it.

QUESTIONS?

# Closing Thoughts

- We are not speaking for everyone in the school - just ourselves
- We need teacher - and community - buy in to make this shift successful
- We still have a lot of questions
- We want to visit again!! --- Come with us! ;)
- We want to start moving in this direction to benefits our learners
- Instead of thinking “What If”, let’s say “Yes, and...”

We will need to put in the work, but it will be worth it!

Start small: God created the world in 6 days and Noah didn't build the ark in a day. We need to make one small change at a time.

THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR LISTENING!